

# THE SECOND ALARM

BRINGING VALUABLE RESOURCES & NEWS  
ONE ALARM AT A TIME

JUNE/JULY 2015

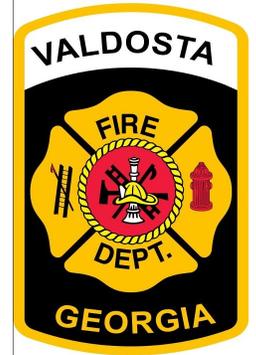
SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE



VALDOSTA FIRE  
DEPARTMENT

## A Department Without Limits

Editor:  
Sgt. S A Miller



### BIRTHDAYS:

**BC RONALD SKRINE** 06/03

**FF BLAKE DAUGHERTY** 06/08

**SGT BLAKE WHITEHEAD** 06/14

**FF STANLEY DICKSON, JR** 06/15

**SGT JOE BRUHL** 06/19

**ALISA COLLINS** 06/26

**LT JEFFREY TALLEY** 06/28

**LT BARRY RICHARDSON** 06/30

**LT CAROLYN MCMILLAN** 07/08

**SGT WADE BRIGGS** 07/14

**LT EDGAR TOOLEY** 07/15

**SGT CHARLES TATCH** 07/26

**LT JUSTIN PLY** 07/28

**FF TANGELA ROWE** 07/29

**BC BRIAN BOUTWELL** 07/30

### CHIEF'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH

I recently traveled to Jamaica and had the opportunity to turn-off my cell phone and emails and enjoy a brief moment of mental relaxation. The weather was perfect, the ocean waters were spectacular and the mountain views were my place of tranquility. While sitting by the pool, I was reading my daily inspirational messages and read the following passage by Iyanla Vanzant:

"It would be great if all people were nice and loving. Unfortunately, they are not. There are many people who are in great deal of pain and on certain days these people will, consciously or unconsciously, inflict their pain on you. If you should encounter angry words or unkind actions today, take a deep breath, reach deep within yourself and greet the lack of love with love."

On my trip I was reminded that "Life is too short to worry

about what people say about you. Hurt people, "hurt people." Most people say bad things about others because they don't have anything good to say about themselves. We may not be able to change the world overnight, but we can start changing our department and communities by "greeting the lack of love with love." I want to challenge everyone to take an opportunity to say something kind or positive towards a co-worker, friend, a subordinate, or supervisor within our department. I'm almost certain that we can find more kind and positive words to encourage each other than negative words in the effort to discourage and hurt each other. If you can't find anything you probably need to look within first and find something kind and positive about yourself. This month I have



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

decided to use the "kind word challenge" as the Chief's Topic of the Month. I will start off by saying "Je t'aime." Thanks again for all your support and dedication to make our department "A Department without Limits."

### WELCOME TO THE FAMILY



FF Laval Harrison graduated from the Georgia Fire Academy on 04May2015. Welcome to the family, FF Harrison.

Pictured: Capt. Clinkscales, BC Robinson, the graduate himself, Chief Broome, BC Boutwell, and BC Skrine.

## ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD



Valdosta Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Payton, Jr. and Utilities Director Henry Hicks honored Robert Devlin as the May 2015 Employee of the Month at the May 21 City Council meeting. Devlin received a framed certificate and his name appears on a plaque displayed inside of City Hall. At the meeting, Devlin also received a check for \$200, which he donated to the Valdosta Fire Department's Give Burns the Boot fund to help local burn survi-

vors.

Thanks to all VFD personnel for participating in this year "Give the Boot to Burns" drive. This year we collected \$10,203.97. 10% of that will help fund our Jr. Fire Marshal program and 90% will go to the Burn Camp.

Thanks to Brian Geary and Gail Green of CFA #1 for assisting with counting money during the annual "Give the Boot to Burns" drive.

Thanks to Carolyn McMillan, Scott Watson, Darriet Gordon, Robert Mercer, Tyshon Reed, Tangela Rowe, Trey Cothron, Keith Niehanke, Deanna Rowan, Chris Stevick, Benny Kennedy, Brian Boutwell, Matt Davis, Jeff Thibodeau

for representing VFD and supporting the department's training mission at this year's Firefighter Weekend at Georgia Public Safety Training Center. This was not only one of the largest turnouts for VFD but also the largest turnout of all Fire Departments at this year's event.

Beverly R. Blake, Chair of the Southside Library Boosters, Inc., thanks us for our support in helping to make the annual Juneteenth Celebration a success.

Lorren Oliver, Director of the Personnel Board of Jefferson County, sends thanks to BC Brian Boutwell for participating in the their Firefighter Assessment Process back in mid-June.

## NOTE FROM THE CAPTAIN GALLAGHER

I found this on my desk while looking for something else...so surprise there. This is called "firefighter words to live by". I do not know where it came from but it is both insightful and funny.

- The only safe assumption is to assume the worst.
- One should not stand too close to people who are always bandaged up.
- In most cases, extinguishing the fire solves the majority of problems.
- Effective analysis must always be mixed with water in order to put out the fire.
- You should never develop a plan that is so smart that you can't explain it to the people who will carry it out.
- The fire department is usually not called because someone did something smart.
- The incident commander should be the first person who thinks there is a fire burning and the last one who thinks it's out.
- Safety zones and escape routes work best when everyone knows where they are.
- If the fire is not going out, then you are not putting enough water on it.
- You should avoid situations that are so exciting that you don't survive.
- Instructions are most effective when they are understood.
- The very worst plan is no plan; the next worst plan is two plans.
- If you have lots of ideas, you need a lot of equipment.
- Very little on the fire ground falls up.
- Safety prevents meetings.
- You can fool the spectators, but you can't fool the firefighters.
- Retreats are superior to funerals.
- If you are not dressed to play, stay in the bleachers.
- Don't assume that you are communicating just because you are talking.
- The longer you take to make a decision, the fewer options you have.
- Never challenge a fire to a footrace.
- When they say "somebody do something", you're the somebody they are talking about.
- Never eat more than your facepiece will hold.
- Never trust a smiling dog.

## EMPOWERING BUGLES—NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

## Inspirational Leadership Lessons from the Fire Department

By [Tom Pandola](#) on May 28, 2015 in [Creative Leadership](#)

Working as a program manager for a mid-size company, my chief operating officer approached me to discuss a possible promotion. Our company was in the process of making some strategic leadership changes, and I was being asked to take on a region three times the size of my current region. After a brief discussion, the COO finished by asking me a pointed question. He said, "With three work locations situated many miles apart from each other, how will you handle a region this large?"

I had a simple answer: "The same way I handled my battalion while serving as a fire battalion chief with the LAFD." My reply was short and to the point – but requires a more detailed explanation.

Like most people, I am the product of past experiences that ultimately shaped who I am. My professional past includes 25 years with the Los Angeles City Fire Department, with the majority of that time spent leading others through challenging situations like fires, floods, riots, earthquakes and more.

As a fire captain and battalion chief, I was in a position that required leadership skills that could inspire a workforce to perform in extraordinary ways. For example, it was important to provide leadership for the various firefighting teams to successfully turn chaos into control at a wide array of emergency situations. To make this happen quickly – rolling up on-scene I would always announce over the radio for all levels of leadership to hear: "On-scene and in command." This five word statement seems like a formality, but actually, it represents a mental checklist for critical actions that will make any leader more successful in whatever he or she is trying to accomplish through the efforts of others.

When a leader "takes command" they are initiating organized and well-coordinated teamwork. Taking command of a fire emergency, a new business position, or anything for that matter, will empower a workforce by defining the chain of command: the management and leadership for deciding operational priorities. This simple fire-tested and business-proven process also serves to establish channels of communication, the methodology to acquire necessary resources, and the authority for all future directives.

### 1. Develop Situational Awareness

As I eagerly accepted the new position of Regional Director, I realized that I did not know much about the current situation in that region. Faced with this lack of knowledge, I needed to take command in similar fashion as I had during my firefighting career every time I responded to a new and unfamiliar emergency situation. This would allow me to develop situational awareness, which included learning as much as possible about the resources that I was now accountable for. I consider resources to be: people, things, money, and time. I started with the most important resource by interviewing all of the people who worked in my region, with special attention given to the first level leaders (my direct reports), at each work site.

### 2. Two-way Communication

Having in-depth conversations with the people on my team, I was consciously practicing two-way communications in order to learn what my team already knew about the current situation. The simple art of two-way communications is to remember that we speak, and then listen; or listen, and then speak. Trying to do both at the

same time just doesn't work. So, we must listen to understand, and then speak to be understood. This communication style also means that information and ideas flow in two directions. We can't successfully develop situational awareness without following the process of two-way communications.

### 3. Define Success

Beginning to see the current situation for what it was, I could begin to develop some ideas on what I needed to improve upon and how those improvements would happen. I was able to define success in a way that everyone would understand what they were trying to accomplish as we all moved forward, together.

Just imagine teams of firefighters working to extinguish a major fire, or teams of business people working to develop a product line, or provide excellent customer service; but the leader of each group had not defined what success looked like. Both examples would be a chaotic mess with a very low chance of delivering a good outcome. When a leader takes command, everyone involved knows their definition of success.

### 4. Set and Prioritize Goals

Once I had identified what success would look like in this region, my next step was to set and prioritize goals that would deliver success. It is important for leaders to set goals for their team, and even more important to prioritize those goals. In firefighting, distractions and competing priorities were always present. Knowing the goals in priority order made it possible for all levels of leadership to make good decisions. Similarly, in business I have found there are always competing interests and distractions that can cause anyone to lose focus. Make known the priorities for team goals so all your people can make good decisions, allowing them to do the right things for the right reasons and at the right time.

### 5. Be Accountable

The final step in taking command is to be accountable. Take ownership for your actions, and the actions of your teams. Being accountable is accepting your position, and your duty to serve the responsibilities of that position.

Do you have important work to accomplish through others? When you think about it, by taking command of my new position I had created a vision for how I would improve the current situation within my region. When you take command of whatever you and your team are doing, you will have a vision for a desired future to share with all involved. Lead to inspire by using a process that has been fire-tested and business-proven to bring about the successes that can only happen through the efforts of others.

Both firefighting and business organizations require leaders who know how to take command and to lead with vision. Take these five critical steps and be on your way to becoming a more inspirational leader.

Whatever your task, profession, or position: use these five steps to think and to act as though you are on-scene and in command. Remember that command is vision, and visionary leaders are inspirational leaders.

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