



**VALDOSTA FIRE  
DEPARTMENT**

## A Department Without Limits

Editor:  
Sgt. S A Miller

### BIRTHDAYS:

**LT JORDAN  
WASHINGTON 02/03**

**FF DARYL  
LEVER 02/03**

**SGT LAMONT  
WILLIAMS 02/05**

**LT CHAD ROE 02/11**

**BC JASON  
ROWAN 02/11**

**FF DEAN  
JARRET 02/13**

**SGT RYAN  
STRICKLAND 02/14**

**FF JAY CARTER 02/16**

**FF CARLTON  
COUCH 02/18**

**FF ROGER  
CHASTAIN 02/23**

**FF LLOYD  
CUMMINGS 02/24**

### CHIEF'S TOPIC OF THE MONTH

This month, my heart would not allow me to talk about anything other than the recent events that adversely affected our neighboring communities. I read a quote on Facebook by Daryn Kagan that said, "Bad things do happen in the world, like war, and natural disasters. But out of those situations arise stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things." We have read the heart-warming stories about the communities coming together, the Red Cross warehouses overflowing with donations and how first responders worked endlessly to search for trapped or lost citizens. However, one story I really would like to share is a great example of people doing extraordinary things is the story of the GSAR Task Force members and their significant others. During the midst of the storm, they made the ultimate sacrifice sending

their loved ones out to help others in need. I feel we often overlook how committed and dedicated our significant others are to our profession. Although, most do not consider themselves a hero, they will always be a hero to me. So, to the significant others of Brian Boutwell, Jason Rowan, Jeffery Thibodeau, Jeffery Talley, Chad Roe, Michael Crump, Marcus Haynes, John Herpin, Justin Ply, Ricky Alderman, Caron Wright, Ryan Strickland, Derek Willis, Joe Bruhl, Matt Davis, Jarret Dean and Chief Broome, I would like to sincerely thank you for being a significant part of our overall deployment operations in Adel and Albany. Without your support, our overall missions would be to no avail. The Valdosta Fire Department salutes you. In closing, let's please continue to



Freddie D. Broome, Fire Chief

pray for the families and community of Adel and Albany. Thank you again for your continuous support and dedication in making the Valdosta Fire Department a "Department without Limits".

### WELCOME TO THE FAMILY (FOR A WHILE)



Make sure you take a moment and say hello to Damian Moore, a Valdosta High School student participating in the Great Promise Partnership. Damian will essentially be doing a ride-a-long at Station 1, Monday thru Friday, from 1300-1700hrs every day until graduation as a part of this work-based learning program. Damian's family moved here from Warner Robins back in 2009 and is a member of VHS's Navy Recruit Officer Training Program though he is also interested in the fire service saying, "I like helping. I like giving back to the community." So when you see Damian at Station 1, or on scene with Engine 1, help him to understand what we are doing and why. Welcome to the family, Damian.

### POINT OF INTEREST

- Have a strong opinion about a topic of concern to our fire department? Feel free to submit a piece for review and possible publication in the newsletter

**ATTA BOY—DONE DID GOOD**



Erick Guerrero, a participant in our Shop-with-a-Firefighter Program, sends his deep and heartfelt thanks for the gifts he received. He also sends his rendition of a fire truck for us to admire (pictured left). In the upper left of the picture, Erick writes, "Thanks and God Bless all the firefighters."

A special glitter-covered thank you from the clients at Parkwood Development Center "for all of the gifts they received from the Mayor's Motorcade. They enjoy the Fire Truck every time it comes. Also, thank you Chief Broome for wearing that awesome suit!! We expect something flashier next year!"

Engine 4/B-Shift personnel (Pictured right: Lt. Dwight Primrose, Sgt. Lamont Williams, and FF Stanley Dickson) made several local kids' day by posing for a picture and showing them the fire truck.



From Facebook:

Roy G. Levine, Managing Member of Randall Associates, owner of La Quinta Inn and Suites on Clubhouse Dr., sends his thanks to the Valdosta Fire Department for "its response to our fire at 3:00 a.m. on December 29th. I know that when firefighters respond at that hour of the morning to any structure where people are asleep firefighters know that their lives are on the line to get people to safety. Thanks to your firefighters, the building was evacuated safely and the fire was extinguished with minimal water damage... I also appreciate the fire ground support from the Valdosta Police Department and Emergency Medial Services sent from South Georgia Medical Center. Our guests expressed gratitude to us for everyone's response, as well. Thank you again."

Carla Hawkins, Education Specialist with the Multicultural Donation Education Program of the LifeLink Foundation, sends her congratulations to the fire department for winning the two-month Heroes Challenge. There were 162 new donor designations acquired in the Valdosta/ Lowndes County area. "Thanks again for this friendly competition that will potentially save countless lives! And it was a pleasure working with you all! Again, thanks for everything!"



Rep. Austin Scott 16 hrs · 🌟

These guys have been at it non-stop all over South Georgia. Thank you, Georgia Search and Rescue.



## EMPOWERING BUGLES—NOTES ON LEADERSHIP

### The Best Leaders Use These 3 Hard Words

By Lisa Kohn

I see it with my clients. I see it with my colleagues. I see it in myself. It's damn hard to admit when we don't know something. Somewhere along the line, we came to believe that being a leader meant being sure. Knowing the answers. Having the best and rightest solution to every problem.

It's not true.

The strongest leaders I see are the ones who admit what they don't know and what they're not sure of, and who reach out to others for opinions, advice, and perspective. But why is that so hard to do?

Why have we come to expect our leaders to be infallible, and ourselves to be infallible? It's a huge – and impossible – mantle to carry.

It might be our culture based on independence, a pioneering spirit, and “just do it-ness,” but it almost doesn't matter where it comes from. What matters is our ability to throw that constraining belief aside and start afresh, and to be willing, as leaders, to take a deep breath and say, “I don't know.” We need to:

- **Admit when we don't have the answer** – It takes a bit of willing to be vulnerable and to not appear omniscient, but we have to acknowledge our lack of surety and knowledge, and let that not be a bad thing.
- **Surround ourselves with smart people** – Effective leaders know that while they don't know everything, there are people who know the things they don't. The best leaders make sure that they have smart advisors, that the people around them know at least as much as they do, if not more.
- **Be open to other perspectives** – Having smart people and ideas around you doesn't help if you'll ask for – and then reject – other opinions. Successful leaders know that not only do they not know everything, but that they also don't always know best.

“...we came to believe that being a leader meant being sure.”

- **Find people who've walked this road before** – Experience is one of the best teachers. If we're faced with a problem we can't figure out, chances are there is someone somewhere who has dealt with the same – or at least similar – situation. We're much better equipped to figure a way out if we turn to someone who has “been there, done that.”
- **But remember that experience may blind us to innovation** – While experience is beneficial, it also can cause us to not see the differences, and nuances, in the current situation. It's a best practice to trust your understanding of a situation, based on a record of success, and then at least once, second-guess your understanding to make sure you're not falling into ruts.
- **Just say it** – Jump in. Take the plunge. Be willing to risk it. Say, “I don't know,” and see what happens. Does the world fall apart? Do you lose the respect of others? (If so, you probably never had it in the first place.)

“Say, ‘I don't know,’ and see what happens.”

The strongest leaders I know are the ones who know what they know, and admit what they don't know and what they're not sure of. The strongest leaders I've seen reach out to others for opinions, advice, and perspective. They consider it, weigh it against their knowledge and truths, and make a Thoughtful decision.

The strongest leaders I know are willing to say, “I don't know,” and look for the answers.

About the Author: Lisa Kohn is an accomplished leadership consultant, executive coach, author, and keynote speaker with a strong business background and a creative approach. She has over 25 years of experience, including over 15 years direct consulting, coaching, and speaking with Fortune 500 clients in areas of leadership, communication styles, managing change, interpersonal and team dynamics, strategy, and execution.

Reprinted from: <http://leadchange.org/the-best-leaders-use-these-3-hard-words/>

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

### 7 Reasons for Annual Firefighter Physical Tests

By Sara Jahnke

*It is more important to know firefighters' physical abilities each year than at the beginning of their careers*

I have heard a lot of discussion about annual physical assessment tests — whether they are a good idea, if they are necessary, how relevant they are, how well accepted they are and whether the world will end if a department implements one.

Not to ruin the punch line, but the answer to the last question has been "no" for every department I have worked with that has adopted one for their incumbent personnel.

It is true that introducing a PAT in a department that has never had one can be a scary and daunting experience. The concern that "they are trying to get rid of us" is common. But I

have yet to see a case where it is actually warranted.

However, it does point to the need for a well-designed and relevant test and even more to a process for rehabilitation for those who struggle to finish the test in an appropriate time.

Opinions about what a test should include vary. While some departments have used traditional fitness tasks as their measuring stick, others find that the fitness tasks seem unrelated to actual fireground performance.

Asking how running a mile or doing pushups for 2 minutes directly relates to a firefighter's ability to crawl into a burning building is a valid question. Interestingly, the best fitness predictor in the literature of performance on fireground activity measures is actually a 400-meter sprint — about a quarter mile. This makes sense given fighting a fire is more of a sprint than a marathon.

While more traditional measures of fitness may be statistically related to fireground performance, many departments are moving toward measuring tasks that are more representative of the fireground. Despite the debate, there are significant benefits to adopt-

ing PATs at the department level. Here are seven of them.

#### 1. It measures where personnel are.

Everyone likes to think they are fit and capable to do the job — and many firefighters are. But it's hard to know for sure if there is no objective measure in place. It also is impossible to know how a firefighter ranks compared to others without a standard set of tasks everyone performs the same way.

In a study on firefighters' self-perception of health and wellness, we found that firefighters had to be nearly morbidly obese (a body mass index of more than 39) before they perceived themselves as being obese. In short, we are not good at guessing our own health.

#### 2. It measures change over time.

Maybe even more important than an assessment of ability at any point are the trends across time. Fitness and physical abilities typically decline with age.

Seeing trends

across time are a good wake-up call when things start to slip. This also speaks to the need for a well-designed test that can be done consistently across time so personnel can use it as a measuring stick. While testing new evolutions every year sounds appealing for variety, any change in the standard practice makes comparisons difficult.

#### 3. PATs ensure minimum competency.

PATs are not designed to stack rank how good personnel are at firefighting. What goes into being a good firefighter is more complex than just the ability to perform the tasks of a test while not on the fireground.

What the test does do, however, is identifies who is and who is not able to complete minimal tasks that are required on the fireground.

#### 4. PATs identify individual weaknesses.

It is important for individuals to know what their relevant weak-



## HEALTH AND WELLNESS—CONTINUED

nesses and strengths are for the tasks on a PAT. If it is particularly difficult for a firefighter to do a dummy drag, it's important to know that before the same firefighter hits the fireground and has to do the task for real.

In addition, any relative weaknesses or difficulties in completing tasks can point to areas of focus for improvement when planning training and workouts.

### 5. What is good for the candidate is good for the incumbent.

National adoption of the Candidate Physical Ability Test was a milestone for the fire service. Testing candidates and knowing they are physically capable of doing tasks required on the fireground is an excellent screening measure. Yet, knowing that the personnel already on the job can do the same thing is even more important.

Typically, recruits are in the best shape they will be at the point they graduate from recruit school. Knowing what they can do at that point is helpful, but may or may not be a good predictor for later in their careers.

Anecdotal reports from one large department showed that recruits gain 15 pounds on average their first year on the job. And we know firefighters gain an average of 2.2 pounds a year. It is likely that this weight gain comes at the cost of fitness and readiness.

### 6. It speaks about a department's culture.

Departments vary in the way they implement their PATs, when and how they complete the test and how seriously they take the results. But, regardless of the implementation, it sends the message that physical performance is a consideration for doing the job.

### 7. It makes firefighters think about expected abilities.

Lately, I have worked with Kingman (Ariz.) Fire Department to develop its PAT. It has been an interesting experience.

Kingman is a great department with a lot of forward thinking and dedicated firefighters who are excited to get the processes together. As part of the process, we conducted focus groups with some of the crews and asked what fire ground activities they have to perform, what they think about a PAT, and who they think should be able to do the required tasks.

The discussion always circled around to the need for everyone on

the department who responds to calls to be able to perform every task — a conversation the firefighters started, not me.

While the likelihood of some personnel having to perform all tasks was low given their position in the department, they said that they are in the business of worst case scenarios and that being prepared for worst case is in the job description.

I got the impression that there were some reservations about implementing a department-wide PAT, which has been part of the process for every department I know of that has done it. But the process and conversation led to a lot of insights about the importance of such a test.

One of the most effective ways in the social psychology literature to get people to support an issue is to have them argue for it. In some ways, just the process of developing a test in a collaborative way with the line personnel highlights the need for the test.

A department would not put a truck in service that could not perform the tasks necessary on the fireground because it would put both the firefighters and civilians at risk. I have yet to hear anyone claim truck checks should be abandoned because it's better to not know if there is a problem with the truck.

Aren't the personnel being put on the truck even more important than the equipment they are riding?

About the Author: Sara A. Jahnke, Ph.D. is the director of the Center for Fire, Rescue and EMS Health Research at the National Development and Research Institutes. She was the principal

investigator on two large-scale, DHS-funded studies of the health and readiness of the U.S. fire service and on a study on the health of women firefighters. She is a co-investigator of several studies focused on fitness, nutrition and health behaviors in firefighters. She completed her doctorate in psychology with a health emphasis at the University of Missouri – Kansas City and the American Heart Associations' Fellowship on the Epidemiology and Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease. You can reach her at Sara.Jahnke@firerescue1.com

Reprinted from: <https://www.firerescue1.com/fire-chief/articles/56802018-7-reasons-for-annual-firefighter-physical-tests/>

