

Highlands County Fire Rescue

HCFR – On the line or threading the needle...

Leaning forward, always ready

ISSUE 4 – February 2019

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HIGHLANDS COUNTY E.M.S. 96% ACCURACY!

Highlands County EMS was recently recognized by Intermedix, our 3rd party transport-fee billing-contractor. Intermedix, who contracts with over 500 EMS agencies across the United States, recognized **HCFR EMS as ranking 5th best amongst the 500** agencies, with a 96% completion/accuracy rate for reports.

HCFR EMS Manager, Deputy Chief Dustin Fitch, credits the hardworking paramedics and EMTs assigned to Highlands County's 9 transport units for this outstanding recognition. On-duty supervisors work daily with on-duty crews to ensure reports are accurate and complete. This diligence helps improve EMS billing results, bringing in over \$3.6M in reimbursement for the EMS program in FY17/18, a +/- 5% increase over FY16/17.

SWAT/MEDICS GRADUATE TRAINING SCHOOL

Paramedic Karin Richardson & EMT Bryan Sands recently completed the arduous Polk County Sheriff's Office Basic SWAT Operator Course.



Of particular note, Karin is only the 4th female to complete the Polk County program. These two join Paramedic Tim Langston as HCFR SWAT/Medics.

PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCY TRAINING

There is a renewed partnership between the Highlands County and municipal public safety agencies – both paid and volunteer. While always working together, there are several ongoing initiatives that take this relationship to higher levels of partnership.



The Sebring Fire Dept. recently joined HCFR HAZMAT Team members in a Hazardous Materials Technician course, put on by 'Cutting Edge Planning and Training'. Final testing (shown here) was held in January at Desoto City station 19.

Other recent training involved all public safety agencies, which included all fire/police/Sheriff's and municipal Departments. Incident command post training was attended by over 120 local responders – that training already manifesting in more effective scene management, including at the January 23, 2019 Sun Trust bank incident.

BATTALION CHIEF KINGSTON RECOGNIZED

Battalion Chief Billy Kingston, who also serves as an Administrative Assistant Chief with the West Sebring VFD, was recently honored by the Florida Jaycees. The Robert (Bob) Aspinall award annually honors the outstanding young firefighter, paramedic, or emergency medical technician, between the ages of 18 and 40, for exemplary service to mankind.

Battalion Chief Kingston was recognized for 20+ years of volunteer service to Highlands County.

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NEW FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SOFTWARE

HCFR's new fire reporting system, ESO Solutions, is set for implementation on March 11, 2019. ESO has been used by EMS for the past 2 years for patient-care-reporting. The addition of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) module ensures an all-inclusive reporting system for fire and EMS. All HCFR entities will use the new software to document responses to meet both NFIRS and FFIRS (Florida Fire Incident Reporting System). NFIRS participation is a requirement for Federal grants.

WELCOMING STRUCTURE & STAFF

In the January newsletter, we introduced you to our new Deputy Chief for Operations, Battalion Chiefs, and staffing at stations 41 and 19.

We are pleased to report that the following EMS employees joined us full time in February:

- EMT Amanda Fant
- EMT Brandy Landers
- EMT John Mendez
- EMT Amanda Nolet
- EMT Kaylyn Pearlman
- Paramedic Nick Kerr

Also in February, the staffing compliment at Desoto City station 19 was augmented with:

- FF/Paramedic Aaron Eures
- FF/Paramedic Ken Fritz

Additional interviews are in process for EMS, Fire, and Emergency Management positions. Hiring is expected in the near future.

NEW COMMAND VEHICLES COMING SOON

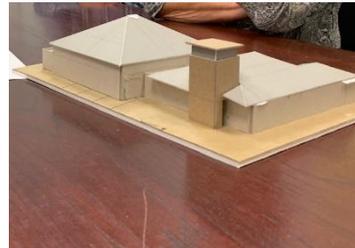
The new red command vehicles, replacing old 130,000+ mile vehicles, will be on the road soon.

Here's a sneak peek!



CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS INCHING FORWARD

All five construction projects are in the planning process. To help minimize costs, existing staff and volunteers will serve as project managers for most of the projects.



A preliminary look at the new station prototype design is shown here. Once revisions are addressed, the

construction project will be set to go out for the bid process.

DRY WEATHER, REQUIRES DUE DILIGENCE

Several large brush fires have kept local fire departments busy, including two "controlled" and/or "prescribed" burns that became 'uncontrolled'. Most of our south-end stations have been kept busy with this series of fires in both Highlands and Glades Counties.

Residents and agricultural interests are reminded to never leave the fires unattended and to use due diligence and obtain all necessary permits before burning. If possible, we would appreciate holding off until the raining season.

NOTE FROM CHIEF BASHOOR:

The federal grant cycle for 2019 was recently announced. HCFR intends to apply for various grants, to augment staffing and equipment purchases. Anyone wishing to help with grant research or grant writing should contact Chief Bashoor at mbashoor@hcbcc.org. In the next issue we'll cover potential grant opportunities.

Answering several questions and as a reminder, here is the web-access location for all HCFR Orders, SOP's, SOG's, Directives, and Memos:

<http://www.hcbcc.net/departments/PublicSafety/documents.php>