



# e-INFOFIRE NEWSLETTER

State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas

*Promote, Unify, Represent and Educate the Fire Service of Texas*



**VFIS OF TEXAS**

The Insurance Leader for Texas Emergency Service Organizations since 1985.

ACCIDENT & SICKNESS | LIABILITY | AUTO | PROPERTY | WORKERS' COMP

## March 2023

## Have you heard? The SFFMA portal has new modules and features! Check it out.

### Try these Cool New Features:

#### A Lookup Tool to:

- Verify membership & certification info.
- Find individuals or departments.
- Verify SFFMA-issued certifications.

#### For the Individual:

- View completed training.
- Generate training objectives report.
- View written and skill test results.
- View completion of other required training.
- View and print SFFMA certifications.

#### For Department Administrators:

- Enter/submit objective-based training classes.
- View training completion status.
- Generate training completion reports.
- View written and skill test results.
- View completion of other required training.
- View/print SFFMA certifications and membership certificates.
- Access to the Coordinator Hub.



**Check out the new membership cards!!**



[www.sffmaportal.org/](http://www.sffmaportal.org/)

### Next features just around the corner:

- Paying for exams or certifications.
- Uploading training certificates.

*Captain Travis Sanford (left), District Chief John Roulston-Bates (right) running toward a fire at a*

plastics factory (providing auto aid) in Walberg, Texas. Submitted by Williamson County ESD #10 (Coupland and Thrall Stations).



## What's New, SFFMA?

SFFMA has a long, proud tradition of being an advocate and a resource for the volunteer fire service in Texas for nearly 150 years. But we know times change and we have to retain our roots while exploring new avenues for bringing value to our members.

We have several initiatives happening, or already in action, and we want to share them with you.

**More help** – SFFMA recently brought in some reinforcements in terms of outreach, marketing and communications. Kim Hilsenbeck, a public relations practitioner for more years than she can count on two hands and both feet, is helping us address areas where we need a little help, including upping our social media game. She also happens to be a fire wife of 21 years. We are grateful to all the departments that are responding positively by sharing photos and helping Kim tell the stories of our volunteer fire fighters across the state. She will also be writing portions of this newsletter and each month will profile a member and possibly a department, too. She will need your ideas and cooperation so y'all be on your best behavior. You can reach Kim via [EMAIL](#).

**New online portal / web overhaul**(read more below) – SFFMA recently launched its refreshed website, adding valuable tools to make it more convenient and easier to accomplish what you need to do. The site has an updated, wonderfully functional new portal for certifications. We believe this is going to streamline the certification process and minimize any inconvenience or past headache. Give the new portal a try and see if you agree! [CLICK HERE](#). Jump right to the online portal [HERE](#).

**Recognition** – Being a volunteer firefighter is sometimes a thankless job. It's additional time separate from your "real" job and time away from your family and friends. Yet volunteers across the state give the same blood, sweat and tears as paid staff in larger departments. They train and get certified and fight the blazes, all because most want to make a difference in their community. But as the saying goes, Odd hours, No pay, Cool Hats. (Speaking of which, stay tuned to the May issue of e-Info FIRE for a documentary style film featuring a family of volunteer fire fighters in Beeville!)

So SFFMA is going to do better at recognizing the critical importance of volunteers in the fire service. How?

**Tell their stories.** We are using this newsletter, our website and our Facebook page to share the trials and tribulations of volunteer firefighters in Texas. Whether it's sharing photos, giving kudos or doing a member spotlight, we will up our game to bring your stories to your communities and beyond.

**Build relationships.** We are interested in helping you recruit and retain volunteers. We want to get to know your local media folks. How else can we help? If you are interested in ideas for recruitment and retention, please reach out and let's work together to enhance the volunteer fire service in Texas.

**Baseline member survey.** We recently launched a [web-based survey](#) to capture a range of input



from our members and even folks who aren't members. This data will help us in our recruitment and retention efforts. It will also give us a benchmark against which we can measure future success and see where we can do better.

Take note: we ARE listening to your feedback, whether it's been informal or via our recent survey.

**Advocate and educate.** We want to emphasize that our executive leadership continues its efforts to educate members of the Texas State Legislature through testifying at committee hearings and bringing the issues to light. Funding is a constant source of frustration for nearly every volunteer department. Folks like Billy Tidwell and Donny Boggs have been to the capitol building in Austin multiple times, fighting for SFFMA members and all volunteer fire service personnel. It takes time and effort, but they know it's worth it. Check out the story a bit later on what they've been doing.

Thanks for being an SFFMA member and for taking a few minutes to read e-Info FIRE each month. Got a question, idea, kudos, complaint or suggestion? Shoot us an [email](#) or connect with us on FB and send us a note through Messenger. We are listening and want to hear from you!

## Member Spotlight

We're kicking off a new monthly series: the SFFMA Member Spotlight, (Spotlight for short). In this segment, we're sharing the stories of our members – how did they become volunteer firefighters, how long have they been in the fire service, what is their day job, and other cool tidbits. And of course, everybody's favorite: lots of photos!

First up:

### Joshua Garza

Assistant Chief

Port Isabel Volunteer Fire Department

Joshua Garza, a 21-year volunteer with Port Isabel Volunteer Fire Department, knows his service to the community is valuable despite being unpaid. It's been such a part of his life in Port Isabel that he rose through the ranks to become assistant chief.

He serves his native city in other ways, including being a Patrol Sergeant with the Port Isabel Police Department.

While his "real" job is as the Building Official for the City of Port Isabel, Joshua embraces his roles as a patrol sergeant and as a firefighter.

He said he got into the volunteer fire service knowing it wouldn't pay anything, but he also knew it was important to his community, both residents and businesses. When a fire breaks out, the residents of an area expect firefighters to show up and help them. It's generally on their worst day that he meets city residents. He said he realizes the job isn't always easy but it's what good neighbors do.

"I knew by volunteering I'd be helping my neighbors, friends and even family members," he said. "I'm from Port Isabel and we are committed to being good neighbors."

Looking back, he said being part of the fire service has been a great journey.

"I've learned so much and had incredible experiences," he said. "There has also been sadness and sacrifice along the way."

He sees things most of his non fire service friends probably can't imagine. As an assistant chief with the department, he is occasionally called to be a spokesperson for media stories.

"Sometimes I'm on camera for a story about a fire and have to explain what happened to the public," he said.

But the work – though unpaid – is rewarding.

In 2021, Joshua along with two of his colleagues, received recognition from the City of Port Isabel for "their heroic efforts during a fire in late May where their actions saved the life of a local resident," according to a proclamation read during the council meeting.

Joshua and his wife Elsa have four children ranging in age from 14 to 22. So far, one of them is currently serving in the military, while another has volunteered with the fire department and his daughter is currently an EMS medic pursuing her goal of becoming a doctor.

Thank you, Joshua, not just for being our first spotlight but for taking care of your community and helping those in need. We appreciate you!



Assistant Chief Joshua Garza with Port Isabel Volunteer Fire Department teaching volunteer firefighters.



Assistant Chief Joshua Garza with Port Isabel Volunteer Fire Department leading a public education session at a local school.





Assistant Chief Joshua Garza with a crew from the Port Isabel Volunteer Fire Department.

Port Isabel Assistant Fire Chief Joshua Garza stopped by the SFFMA HQ store during a recent leadership training weekend.



Port Isabel Assistant Fire Chief Joshua Garza (center left) along with Fire Fighter John Sandoval and Officer Antonio Martinez were honored with a proclamation by Port Isabel City Council for their heroic efforts during a fire where their actions saved the life of a local resident.

### **Nominate a member spotlight!!**

Know someone in the volunteer fire service in Texas who deserves to have SFFMA tell his or her story? We want to know! We will give preference to SFFMA members, but any volunteer firefighter in Texas is able to be nominated. **Email Kim** your nomination info and include a way to contact both you and the person you're nominating. Thanks – we think this is a great way to help get the word out about what it means to be a volunteer firefighter.

### **Photobook**

Beginning this month in e-Info FIRE, we're also making a concerted effort to show more pics of our members around the state. Each issue will have a section called Photobook. We need your help! Send us your recent/current photos and a short summary of what and who are in the photo (give us the who, what, when, where info). Each month we will share the photos on FB and in the newsletter, and **we will give your department credit** for sharing the pics. Show SFFMA members all the cool, awesome and wonderful things your volunteer department is doing. Please **email photos to us** by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. You can also create a Google drive account and share the link. Just be sure to include all relevant info about the photos you submit. **Check out more awesome submitted photos on the [SFFMA Facebook page!](#)**



Beeville VFD Captain Rob Reyes, Lieutenant Jaime Hernandez, Lieutenant Jason L Hernandez, battling a structure fire on N Morris St.



Beeville Volunteer Fire Department at a fully involved structure fire; shown here are LT. G. Garcia, FF. J. Norquist and an unnamed firefighter.



Dalhart Volunteer Fire Department cotton stripper fire with firefighters Lakresha Roush and Ryan Beattie. Submitted by Ryan Beattie.



**NVFC Training Summit**

June 23-24, 2023 | Oklahoma City, OK

**REGISTER  
NOW**

**TRAVEL STIPENDS AVAILABLE**

## Advocate and Educate

This is 2nd VP Billy Ray Tidwell testifying before the Texas State Legislature on Feb. 7 in support of the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Grant program (2604) and its importance to the volunteer fire service. Your SFFMA leaders give their time and expertise to help volunteer departments across the state.

Since its inception in 2002, this grant program



has been extremely successful in helping fire departments get much-needed vehicles, training, and equipment.

Due to the usefulness of the program, demand (\$200M) exponentially outpaces funding (\$16.2M). When you do the math, you can see why folks like Billy are working with legislators to offer more of this vital funding.

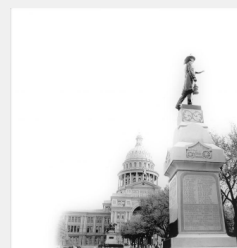


1st VP Donny Boggs and Rep Angela Orr at the Texas State Legislature earlier this year.



## **SFFMA Volunteer Firefighter LODD Memorial Service To Be Held at Texas State Capitol, April 5**

The SFFMA Firefighters' Memorial Service for Texas Volunteer Firefighters who passed away in the line of duty will be held **April 5, 2023, 10 a.m. at the Texas State Capitol**. This memorial service is open to the public.



The firefighters being honored this year are:

- Chief Curtis Brown, Dalhart FD, Dalhart, TX
- Asst. Chief Jonathon Coco, Maxwell Community VFD, Maxwell, TX
- Firefighter Hunter Coco, Maxwell Community VFD, Maxwell, TX
- Asst. Chief Ross Estabrooks, Tri-Lakes FD, Pittsburg, TX
- Firefighter Danny Ireton, Stanton VFD, Stanton, TX

- Firefighter Dylan Rodiek, Jollyville VFD, Austin, TX
- Firefighter Brendan Torres, Dalhart FD, Dalhart, TX
- Capt. Wesley Vandever, Sugar Hill VFD, Mount Pleasant, TX

Most years, the memorial service takes place at the south steps of the Capitol, but this year, because of construction at the Capitol building, the service will take place at the Memorial statue, on the South lawn. Flags that were flown over the Capitol building will be presented to each family of the honored firefighters, and the firefighters' names will be engraved on the circular monument around the original Memorial statue.

We invite you to join us in honoring these firefighters who gave their lives in service, and in supporting their families, by attending the firefighters' memorial on April 5. If you have questions or need more information, please email [Events](#).

## June Conference Update

Are you attending the 147<sup>th</sup> Annual SFFMA 2023 Conference June 9-14 in McAllen? We hope to see you there!

The SFFMA Annual June Training Conference & Convention isn't just a way to get out of town for a few days. It's jam-packed with training and classes to help your organization thrive, give you new tools and ideas for being the best volunteer you can be, and learning more about successful recruitment and retention techniques. This year we have a few new tricks up our sleeve, so don't miss out!



Find conference details on the SFFMA webpage, including the schedule, which is [here](#).

Please note: We are utilizing a third-party service for registration this year, and we will have online registration available on our [website](#) by April 1.

The Speaker Selection and Training Committee members distributed requests for presenters and are finalizing details of the training schedule. Our schedule will be posted online as soon as it is available.

Hotel Information is available [HERE](#). For other questions about conference, please [email us!](#)

Speaking of the conference, need an incentive to attend? How about if it is free? Complete our SFFMA Marketing Survey by April 20 and you'll be entered into a drawing to win one of two free conference registrations\*! That's right – take a quick survey (conveniently linked here) and you could win a free entry to the June conference! Complete the [survey here!](#)

\* Must be a current SFFMA member in good standing to be eligible for the drawing.





(l-r) Kyle Stephens, Henry Perry, Kelcey Trotty, Mike Richardson. Hospitality Night, 2017, San Marcos.



Taste of the Valley, 2016 Conference, McAllen

## Names for the Annual Conference Memorial Service Program Needed

The Conference Memorial Service will be held 10:30 a.m. Sunday, June 11, 2023, at the McAllen Performing Arts Center, 801 Convention Center Blvd, McAllen, TX.

Please email us a list of names of members from your department or district who have passed away since May of 2022 for inclusion in the program. Be sure to note department name, individual name, date of death, and whether it was a Line of Duty Death, as determined by the State Fire Marshal. Names can be added until mid-May, but it is important to have as many names as early as possible so that the program can be constructed in plenty of time to be printed.

Email questions to Heather or call her at 512-454-3473, extension 112.

Thanks for your help with this – we want to be sure that everyone is included and honored for their service.



### TFA Fundraiser

TFS is hosting a cornhole tournament on Saturday, June 10 during conference in McAllen! Registration will be June 9 and 10 in



### Pumper Races at Conference

If you'd like to participate in this year's pumper races, please contact Heather Lundy to REGISTER BEFORE MAY 1. If we get 6 teams before May 1, we will leave registration open until 12-noon on Saturday.

The Firefighter Gauntlet will run again this year as a exhibition.

Thank you!

the exhibit hall. Please contact **Renee Evans**

or **Melissa Thomson** with questions.

Proceeds benefit the TFA scholarship fund.

Join us for a fun event benefiting a good cause!

**Stephen Donnelly**

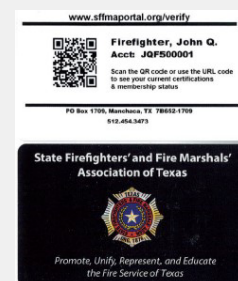
Racing/Competition Chairman

## Taste of the Valley



## Membership News

We hope everyone loves the new Portal and is finding it much easier to use than the old system. We are excited to announce that membership cards are being mailed this week! The cards have a new look this year with a QR code printed on the back of each one. The great thing about this is that the cards will never expire and current information for each firefighter will be readily available. You will be able to verify membership and certifications which will be updated as new certifications are acquired. Scanning the QR code will take you to the portal to check on the status of membership or certifications (*sample image to the right*). Please contact **Membership** with any questions.



## Certification Updates

We have worked over the last few weeks to update the list of certifications in the database to reflect the many transitions and name changes that have taken place since 2008. By doing so, we hope to make things a bit more clear as to retaining older certifications just under new names. For example, Level II Instructor was renamed to 1041: Instructor I back in 2008. We have





also lined out the many changes to firefighter certifications in 2012, 2015, 2020, and 2023.

With your new membership cards you'll have the ability to scan the QR code on the reverse side, and then enter your account number to get to a list of certifications issued.

At their meeting on Thursday, March 9, the Certification Board voted to make some substantial changes to the **Certification Program Manual** to document many of the application and testing process changes incorporated into the new Portal program.

- Naming a Coordinator no longer requires submission of a signed application form. Entity's Head Portal Administrator can name a new Certification Coordinator at any time by assigning that access level through Portal. Each entity is allowed one Certification Coordinator.
- Certification issuance no longer requires submission of signed application forms. The Portal system will verify all training and prerequisites before certification can be requested.
- For certifications not requiring examinations, fees will go directly toward issuance.
- For certifications requiring examinations, fees will go toward exam eligibility. Additional exam attempts will require an additional fee payment. Submission of documentation in place of examinations will also consume the fee. The one-year waiting period after three failed exams has been removed. Instead, individuals may continue to test but testing fees will be incurred.
- Individuals will be able to upload their own course completion certificates. Their department's Coordinator will have 30 days to review and either approve or reject with cause. After 30 days with no action, notification will go to the Zone Representative so that they may address consistent delays in approval.

#### *Grant Programs*

These days money can be tight, but there are multiple grant programs available for the fire service. SFFMA has a list of grant programs on our website [HERE](#).



### **Montgomery County Emergency Service District #2**

#### **Tanker for Sale**

2004 International Tanker built by Pierce.

Sealed bids accepted until March 20, 2023 at noon. Interested? [Click here](#) to read more.



### **Apply Now for New Turnout Gear and Helmets Through MSA and DuPont's 2023 Globe Gear Giveaway**

13 departments will each receive four new sets of turnouts and four helmets!

MSA Safety, DuPont Personal Protection, and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) have partnered for the 12<sup>th</sup> year to award volunteer fire departments in need with state-of-the-art turnout gear and helmets through MSA and DuPont's 2023 Globe Gear Giveaway. **Enter today!**

## Structural Fire Fighting: Initial Response Strategy and Tactics, 3rd Edition

IFSTA's Structural Fire Fighting: Initial Response Strategy and Tactics, 3rd Edition prepares the reader to serve as the Incident Commander who must evaluate an incident, assign resources and coordinate the incident plan. This new edition encompasses decision-making during emergency response, especially initial decisions upon arrival, and incident planning. The purpose of this manual is to provide the initial Incident Commander with the strategic and tactical concepts that can be applied to various situations using available resources.



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