

WNCAF Quarterly Meeting
Gastonia Fire Department (Gaston County)
July 20, 2022

18:33 – President Griffin called the July quarterly meeting to order with 116 members representing 16 counties.

President Griffin introduced Gastonia Fire Chief Phil Welch who welcomed the association to Gastonia and Gaston County.

Chief Welch introduced Gastonia Mayor Walker Reid and City Manager Michael Peoples.

Pledge of Allegiance: Gastonia Fire Department Captain Mike Carpenter.

Invocation was given by: Captain Mike Carpenter.

18:45 – Meeting recessed for the meal. Meal sponsor: Atlantic Coast Fire Trucks, Rhinehart Fire Service, and Stewart Cooper Newell Architects. Meal was prepared by CaroMont Health Park concessions.

19:20 - Meeting Reconvened.

President Griffin recognized the 2022 WNCAF Officers.

- President Robert Griffin – Edneyville Fire Department
- 1st Vice President Shane LaCount – Mooresville Fire Department
- 2nd Vice President Earl Withers III – Dallas Fire Department
- Secretary Anthony Penland – Swannanoa Fire Department
- Treasurer Dean Coward – Saunook Fire Department
- Past President Todd McMurry – Polkville Fire Department
- Highlands Region Director – Bryan Buchanan – Fletcher Fire Department
- Mountain Region Director – Trevor Key – Colletsville Fire Department
- Foothills Region Director – Tim Tench – East Lincoln Fire Department

19:25 - Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports

Motion moved by Tom Kelly seconded by Trevor Lance to accept the secretary's report as emailed and/or posted to the website. Motion Passed.

Motion moved by Brian Piercy seconded by Trevor Lance to accept the treasurer's report as presented. Motion Passed.

19:22 – Agency Reports

NCSFA – Tim Bradley

➤ **Relief Fund**

- The Treasurer's Financial Report is due October 31st, based upon the year close at June 30th. Please remind them the system is open for them to begin submitting the report on line.
- In addition, this year the Chief will again submit the Certificate of Eligibility at the same time they are doing their roster at year end, rather than a separate report in October to OSFM. The submittal is integral to the roster system on-line. That report, like the roster, is due by January 15th.
- Each year staff spends the last week of October trying to contact Relief Fund Treasurers to get their reports submitted. If they are not submitted the local relief fund will not receive a check in 2022. Please help us by telling Chiefs to remind their Treasurers to submit the report and bank statements.

➤ **Relief Fund Fiscal Year 2021/2022**

- During the last year there were 541 requested uses of the local Relief Fund totaling \$2.7 million dollars. We continue to see an increase in request and uses of the relief fund. The highest use is Destitution or Financial hardships followed by supplemental insurance funding requests. The increased use follows the General Assembly guidance in 2014 that we either use it or lose it.

➤ **Conference Update**

- This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 10th-13th, 2022. We have 2 great keynote speakers this year, one of Thursday and one of Friday. Dr. Denis Onieal, former Deputy US Fire Administrator and former Superintendent at the National Fire Academy will speak Friday morning and Commander Rorke Denver, retired Navy Seal will speak at the opening session of conference Thursday morning. We look forward to a great week of fellowship, education and seeing what's new and innovative in apparatus, technology and equipment for the fire service and our first responders.
- On Tuesday of this year's conference at 12:00 noon we will have a combined Summit of the State and Regional Boards to discuss current issues. This will include the Eastern Western, Piedmont, NCSFA, NCAFC, and staff from OSFM.
- Attendees will enjoy a free exhibitor floor again this year and we have extended Saturday's hours till 2pm. Free conference tee shirts will be given to all full conference registrants.
- On Thursday, August 11th, during the SAFRE Opening Session we will once again be honoring those members of NCSFA who have achieved either their 25 or 50 Years of Service by presenting them with an NCSFA Service Award pin. If you have reached one of these milestones, please join us and get your service pin.
- The lineup of education sessions is top notch this year and is being pushed out on all social media platforms. The speaker and topic lists are generating a lot of discussion and exciting surrounding this year's conference.
- Our banquet, as always is being held on Saturday night, and our Memorial Service & a candlelight memorial service will be held Thursday afternoon. Please remember to sign up for banquet.
- The On-Line registration ends July 28th. Anyone interested in attending the banquet should purchase a ticket by then as well.
- The golf tournament has been moved to September as a separate event. Please follow our web site for announcements on how to sign up for the Golf Tournament.

➤ **NCSFA History**

- Several years ago, the Statistician position on the Board was changed to Statistician/Historian. A year or two later the NCSFA Board initiated a project to write and publish the 135-year history of the NCSFA. The Board contracted with Mike Legaros of Raleigh to do the work, coordinated by our Statistician/Historian Dennis Pressley. The Book has been completed and will be presented at conference. A copy will be mailed to all fire departments, dignitaries, the State Archives, and the NFA Learning Resource Center.

➤ **Insurance Renewal**

- The Board of the North Carolina State Firefighters' Association has approved some changes in our benefits and our insurance carrier. Effective July 1, 2022, the Line of Duty Death Benefit has been increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000. This will provide increased security to the families of our members killed in the line of duty. There are several other increases and changes as well, including but not limited to a Safety Vest Benefit and coverage for preparation and transportation of remains called a Repatriation Benefit. Our new Insurance Carrier for this coverage, in addition to our 24-hour Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance, is VFIS of North Carolina.
- There will be more information forthcoming in the immediate future, but should you have an LODD or accidental death that you believe involves our coverage after July 1st, 2022, please contact our office for information on how to submit the claim. As soon as possible, our web site and supporting documentation will be updated to include the new forms and submittal information. We appreciate your patience while we update our social media to reflect the recent improvements, and send information out to each department.

➤ **Legislation**

- **Legislative Day** was a success. Each Representative and Senator was presented a gold leaf parade helmet shield with their name on it designated as a Firefighters Friend. This has been extremely successful with many of them posting on their websites. It was given for their support of the firefighter cancer legislation.
- The following is a brief legislative summary of enacted legislation during the short session of the combined 2021/2022 session of the NC General Assembly that affects the emergency services. It includes key issues addressed, but is not all inclusive. It involves those issues tracked by the Joint Legislative Committee of the NCSFA that were passed and enacted. For specific wording or detail, please refer to the Chapter Law or final version of the passed bill, which is referenced.
- **Recap 2021 Session**
 - **Firefighting Foam Registry Created**
 - Amends Chapter 58-82B and creates an AFFF (foam) registry of foams that contain PFA's. The registry is to be managed by OSFM within DOI, requiring fire departments to report annually items such as inventory, AFFF foam needing to be disposed of, and usage of AFFF at incidents. OSFM then reports combined information to the Environmental Review Commission.
 - **Volunteer FD Grant Program Changes**
 - Creates base allocation matchless grants of \$10,000 from a special fund to eligible departments to mitigate the impact of Covid 19, and additional \$35,000 grants upon application. It also requires the Commissioner to hold \$1,000,000 in reserve for 2021-2023 for emergency fire department request. Eligible fire departments are those eligible for the VFD Grant program in GS 58-87.

- **Workers Compensation Fund for Fire and EMS**
 - For fiscal years 2021-2023 and 2023-2024 eligible units using the VSWC Fund shall not be required to pay premiums. This does not mean you do not have to submit your paperwork, only an exemption from premiums.
- **Pilot Program for Firefighter Cancer Insurance**
 - Allocated \$7.5 million for each year 2022 and 2023 to the Department of Insurance to create a Pilot Supplemental Firefighter Cancer Insurance policy for all rostered firefighters diagnosed with malignant cancers after January 1, 2022. It requires the firefighter be on a roster, have a minimum of 5 continuous years' service, and file a claim before June 30, 2023. It prevents benefits if the firefighter is receiving Workers Comp benefits for the same cancer. It provides reimbursement up to \$12,000 for out-of-pocket medical expenses, a lump sum benefit of \$25,000 for each diagnosis up to \$50,000, and disability benefit of 75% of monthly pay for career firefighter up to \$5,000 per month, and volunteers a monthly benefit of \$1,500. Disability benefits are limited to 36 months. This program has been implemented and is handled by VFIS of NC.
- **Expanded Type of Cancers Covered by LODD**
 - Adds two types of Cancer that will be covered by LODED, Oral Cavity and Pharynx, and changes Intestinal Cancer to Cancers of the Small Intestine. This brings the total covered to 6:
 - ❖ Mesothelioma
 - ❖ Testicular
 - ❖ Cancer of the Small Intestine
 - ❖ Esophageal Cancer
 - ❖ Oral Cavity
 - ❖ Pharynx
- **2022 Additional Passage**
 - HB 103 Appointment Bill
 - The following appointments were made by the Speaker of the House and President Pro-Tempore of the Senate:
 - Speaker of the House:
 - ❖ 911 Board - John T. Cole (Tommy) of Alamance County until Dec 31, 2025
 - ❖ Melanie Neal of Guilford County until Dec 31, 2025
 - ❖ Phil Howell of Ashe County Until Dec 31, 2025
 - ❖ Fire and Rescue Commission - Kevin Gordon until June 30, 2025
 - President Pro Tempore Senate:
 - ❖ Fire and Rescue Commission - Vernon Massengill of Caswell County until June 30, 2025
 - ❖ 911 Board - Greg Foster of Alexander County Until Dec 31, 2025
 - ❖ Thaddeus Southers of Forsyth until Dec 31, 2025
 - ❖ Edward Kerlin of Wake County until Dec 31, 2025

- HB 661 passed allowing 15-year-olds to participate in fire certification courses in the Community College system passed
- House Bill 315 passed and includes Various Arson Law Changes. It became Chapter Law 2022-8. The bill makes several changes to NC Law regarding Arson and Unlawful Burning, changes and adds some definitions, and changes penalties on several felony laws.
 - One notable series of changes involves background checks for career and volunteer firefighters. The City, or County that a fire department may contract with, must ensure that a background check is obtained for any individual applying for a volunteer or career position on a fire department. The existing wording requires a department to cooperate with law enforcement or background Security representatives in obtaining fingerprints and criminal history on any member, but new language allows the department to charge the member for any background check if they desire.
 - Another significant change is in regards to criminal findings concerning arson or unlawful burning. While certain crimes may justify dismissal or denial of an application, there are certain arson and unlawful burning crimes listed that would automatically prohibit an individual from serving in a volunteer or career capacity on a fire department. This includes denial of an application or dismissal of a current member. Changes also give authority to deny an applicant for just cause, and lists specifics issues to be considered for denial, even if not included on the list of crimes that would prohibit serving.
 - In the case of a County Fire Department, the Fire Marshal or County must ensure these checks are done, and in the case of a municipal department, the Chief must ensure these checks are done for any applicant.
 - (This is just an overview of the new laws. Please review the Chapter Law completely and discuss it with your City Attorney, personnel director, or County Fire Marshal/Emergency Management Director.)
- SB 201 Passed and includes language permitting the NC Association of Fire Chief's License Plate.

➤ **Staying Active Legislatively and Capital Impact**

- Right now, we have 1104 active Advocates on Capital Impact. That means out of 50,000+ firefighters, just over 2%.
- We would prefer to have many more, but the system is designed to allow people to join, not force or bulk sign them.
- If you want to keep up with what's going on and be a part of promoting and getting good legislation passed, join up. At the very least it will give you weekly updates and contact information for all of your representatives.
- Log on to NCSFA, click on the Legislative Banner called Capital Impact, or look under the Legislative Flag. Provide your email, design your own password, and provide your home zip code. It allows for much more, but that is all that is required. It takes less than 3 minutes.

➤ **Videos**

- Over the past year the NCSFA Board, as well as a few guests have been recording short 3 - 4-minute videos on NCSFA programs, benefits, and instructions. As these become available, they are being published to our website. Be on the lookout for those as they are excellent to show to your departments during meetings in relation to current events and benefits. Here is a list of those completed:
 - The importance of keeping your roster updated throughout the year and certifying/submitting by the Jan. 15th deadline
 - Legislative Issues
 - Scholarships
 - NCSFA App & other forms of our social media
 - NCSFA Debit Card
 - Overview of the New Chief's Guide
 - History Project Overview
 - Keeping your beneficiary forms updated
 - NCSFA 101 – who we are and why we are doing these videos
 - PTSD issues – how to handle: FRAP, Peer Review, FF Fund Board Funds
 - Being involved in your regions/regional boards
 - Email addresses, why we need them
 - Relief Fund Uses
 - Conference – what we offer and why you should attend
 - Educational video just for the website on Relief Fund Audits

➤ **First Responders Day: September 11, 2022**

- Please remember and start planning events for First Responder Day, September 11th. This is a designated holiday in NC, established in 2017 by the General Assembly.

OSFM – Tony Robinson/Norman Franklin (Quarterly Report will be sent out with minutes)

➤ **AFFF Foam Division**

- Assist all NC Fire Departments with accurate reporting of quantities stored and/or used, locations of, and potential exposures from AFFF. Provide education on the health and environmental effects of AFFF.
- Personnel For Western Region
 - Davie Summey, Division Chief. Davie.summey@ncdoi.gov.
 - Russ King, Foam Research Analyst. russell.king@ncdoi.gov.

➤ **Training Props**

- OSFM has some training props if anyone is interest in using same please contact OSFM.

➤ **Community Risk Reduction**

- Barry Overman has left Community Risk and moved over to the investigation unit. Alan Buchanan is the interim division chief of Community Risk.

NC Forest Service

- **Staffing**
 - Currently 20-25% Vacancy. Hopefully NCFS will be getting new helicopter by next spring.
- **Fall Fire Season**
 - Models are showing possible fire season like we had in 2011 and 2016.

NC Emergency Management

- **Governor signs 2022 state budget / legislation affecting EM agencies**
 - Governor Cooper signed the 2022 state budget this week and the General Assembly recently adjourned its short session. There are several new legislative and budget items affecting emergency management agencies.
- **Western and Central Branch Training weeks are upcoming**
 - Western Branch Training Week is scheduled 1-5 August at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College - Woodfin Campus and Central Branch REP Training Week is 26-30 September at Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center. There are seats available for a variety of classes during these two training weeks. Visit TERMS to see course lineups and registration for each training event.
- **EM Forum and DOD Summit to be held August 10, 2022**
 - The summer EM Forum and the Department of Defense Summit will both take place in Raleigh on 10 August. The EM Forum will be held in the Joint Force Headquarters Auditorium beginning at 9am and will continue until approximately 3:30 p.m. The DOD Summit will begin at 1 p.m. downstairs in the State EOC Situation Room. DOD Summit attendees are welcome to join the morning sessions of the EM Forum in the auditorium. Agenda is attached and registration is now open in TERMS
- **Monitoring the tight diesel fuel market**
 - NCEM continues to work with our government and industry partners to monitor the diesel market for signs of any tightening or market shortages in the coming weeks and limit any impacts to communities. We know that any tightening or shortage is likely to impact the ability of many first responders and critical infrastructure agencies to fuel their vehicles and continue operations. We recommend local jurisdictions create or update fuel contingency plans to ensure critical functions can continue during a fuel shortage. Jurisdictions should also enter into agreements with local fuel vendors to prioritize first responders and critical infrastructure agencies during any shortage.
 - There is also a Statewide Term Contract in place with Macro Companies, Inc. for emergency fueling for jurisdictions. Details on the statewide term contract and how to access it are located here: 405E-Emergency Source Fuels.
 - Should we have an incident occur that severely tightens the market, Counties may also request emergency fueling support from the State using WebEOC under the following conditions:
 - A State of Emergency has been declared at the local level due to a disruption in fuel supply.
 - A State of Emergency has been declared at a state level due to a disruption in fuel supply.
 - The local agency requesting support has completed the recommended steps above.
 - NCEM stands ready to assist you with contingency planning and implementing those plans to keep your communities safe and resilient.

19:40 - Old Business

19:40 - New Business

1. Proposed Bylaws Amendments

- Secretary presented three bylaw amendments that were discussed by the executive board. These proposed amendments will be sent out with the minutes and posted to the website. Three sections of the bylaws are being brought forth for amendment that will bring the WNCAF in line with the NCSFA/NCAFC as it pertains to Officers (Section V), Ascension of Officers (Section VI, Letter h), and Voting Rights (Section VII, Letter C). A vote will be conducted at the October meeting on the amendments. ***Note: NCAFC will be having a vote on amendments to their bylaws at annual conference. If that vote requires an amendment to the WNCAF bylaws those amendments will be sent out in the allotted time frame to have a vote at the October meeting.***

2. Nominating Committee Report – 2023 WNCAF Officer Positions

- 2nd Vice President
 - Bryan Buchanan – Fletcher Fire Department
 - Tom Kelly – Riceville Fire Department
- Treasurer
 - Dean Coward – Saunook Fire Department
- Secretary
 - Anthony Penland – Swannanoa Fire Department
- Highlands Region Director
 - Forest Shehan – Blue Ridge Fire Department
 - Zac Cicillian – Skyland Fire Department
- Nominating Committee:
 - Todd McMurry – Pvfd1288@yahoo.com.
 - Brian Piercy - bpiercy1115@gmail.com.
 - Trevor Lance - tlance@skylandfire.com.
 - Andy Webster - awebster@coolspringsvfd.org.

3. Relief Fund Overview

- Treasurer Dean Coward of the WNCAF also serves as the Finance Director of the NCSFA. Treasurer Coward gave a brief overview of the relief fund reporting requirements and items that he has seen during his annual audit of fire department's relief funds.

4. Next Meeting

- Hosted by: McDowell County Firefighters' Association.
- Meeting Location:
Tom Johnson Camping Pavilion
348 Resistoflex Rd.
Marion, NC 28752.