

LCFA NEWS

FILL THE BOOT - 2007:

By Rick Couri:

Congratulations to the firefighters of LeFlore County for a great Fill The Boot campaign. Due to the efforts of all who participated, the total amount raised was \$18,843.28. Spiro and Pocola worked on 25 August 2007 and Poteau, Hog Eye and Heavener worked on 01 September 2007.

Poteau firefighters aided by Hog Eye Captain, Deanna Crandell set up at the Wal-Mart intersection and raised a total of \$7,001.00. Pocola firefighters raised a total of \$6,008.00; Spiro firefighters raised \$3,442.04 and Heavener firefighters raised \$2,032.24.

Thanks to First National Bank in Poteau who aided the Poteau effort by advertising the event on their new sign; to Arvest Bank for counting the monies for Poteau and Heavener and to Sonic for providing free meals for firefighters who aided in the Fill The Boot effort.



Poteau Fire Chief, Jon Pickel and son Mark (Mark is in the full turnout gear) show how to Fill the Boot. Poteau Captain, Bob Carter was also aided by his son, Adam in making this years event the greatest ever for the LeFlore County Firefighters Association.

Next Meeting
13 September 2007
Kiamichi Technology
Center in Poteau
6:30 pm.

THANK YOU:

By The Family Of Harvey Lee Carter:

"Thank you for the check from the LeFlore County Firefighters Association and for the wonderful way the fire departments paid their respect and showed support for our family the day of Harvey Lee's funeral.

Thank You – Family Of Harvey Lee Carter".

GETTING THERE AT WHAT COST?

By Bob Hawley
Shady Point Fire Chief

Historically, there have been a number of myths associated with emergency services that unfortunately apparently are still believed as truths. Do you subscribe to the myth, "white smoke won't hurt you if you breathe it in", or, "if you cover your ears you can't tell how hot the room is", or what about "you have to drive fast on every emergency because every second counts".

The reality is that none of these hold water, especially the last one, as practical study after study show quite the opposite and life surely disproves the last one. According to a recent review of the US Fire Administrations database for line of duty deaths, while cardiac arrest still leads the pack for both volunteer and career firefighters, there is a shocking increase in the numbers of the firefighters in both categories dying from trauma in

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vehicle crashes. Consider these current facts. Of the 69 firefighters that have died thus far in 2007, 12 resulted from motor vehicle crashes. Almost half of these were firefighters driving their own vehicle to either a fire ground or to the station and not one of them were wearing a seat belt and all had excessive speed listed as the contributory cause. 2 involved a tanker that left the roadway and rolled (again no seat belts in use), while another struck a school bus that thankfully was not carrying children at the time. 5 of the dead firefighters were career and the rest were volunteer providers who ranged in age from 19 to 75 (yes a 75 year old firefighter). *Again I ask at what cost do we rush to an emergency scene.*

While driving an apparatus is the one thing that is required of every single emergency response, there is precious little training mandated for emergency vehicle operators (EVO). Most departments simply figure if you can drive your pickup that you can safely operate an apparatus that weighs in excess of 30,000 pounds. According to the volunteer Fire Insurance Service (VFIS), an insurance company that specializes in fire service insurance needs, only 7% of all apparatus crashes involve fire related causes. Intersections account for 24%, followed by rollover crashes at 13%; rear end crashes 11% and "all other incidents" accounting for 45% over a three-year claim period. When you consider 'frequency' of crashes, 53% can be attributed to driver error, while 59% of the most severe crashes are attributed to driver error. These facts should demonstrate the dire need for improved training in the operation of the apparatus we depend upon.

VFIS also looked at the types of calls involved and whether or not it was a true emergency and found that in a number of incidents the emergency response by apparatus was not justified. Although VFIS does not underwrite privately owned vehicles (POV), they do highly recommend that departments prohibit members from responding to an emergency scene in their POV, nor allow an 'emergency' response in a POV to the station. Instead, the insurance company recommends that volunteer members respond to the fullest adherence to state law and remind their members

that the four-way flashers on POVS were designed to signal others that the vehicle is disabled by the side of the road.

You might then think to yourself that you have no 'right' to mandate how your volunteers drive their POV. Think again. In other states officers of fire companies, town officials and even individual volunteers have been found legally liable for their illegal actions. Consider the Staten Island jury that awarded \$11 MILLION dollars to the family of a woman killed by a fire truck that was responding to a report of electrical wires down on a roadway. Or what about the 20-year old struck by an apparatus broadside, taken to the hospital in a coma and died three days later. The EVO was charged with failure to drive with due regard and gross negligence. But then you say, "we're volunteers, they can't do anything!" Guess again. According to a lawyer friend of mine the legal liability in such a situation can be spread across the entire spectrum of the organization, including some of your personal assets.

If you've heard the phrase "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem: this really applies here. I am sure that the preceding has ruffled some feathers, but I'd rather do that than attend another emergency worker's funeral. From Chief Officers on down, we have to get away from the thought that we as volunteers are immune from liability. The concept of 'public kindness' is gone and volunteers can and have been sued. I also am of the opinion that we as chief officers have not only a legal authority to enact change, but a moral one as well. The mission of any emergency services organization is first to protect lives, then property. Nationally, over 25% of all firefighters deaths result from either responding to or returning from emergency incidents. We must also realize that the number of civil lawsuits, as well as criminal charges against EVO's is on the increase across our land and unless we mandate change now, we will face a harsh reality in the future. Either through increased (or even unaffordable) vehicle insurance rates or through attending brother firefighter funerals, or both.

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Departmental standard operating guidelines should include the following basics as a minimum. How the apparatus will be driven to the scene and parked; what speed the apparatus will be driven (the posted speed is enough); adverse weather operations; mandatory wear of seat belts at all times; and how the POV will be operated when responding to the station. VFIC recommends that POV's be driven to a scene in order to reduce on site congestions and overall liability and absolutely no emergency signals be allowed on any POV. There must also be enforcement provisions included in any policy that will be carried through for violations. A policy without enforcement actions enhances your liability. VFIS is also a strong supporter for initial, as well as continued driver training programs that will include hands on evaluations. While the present state "Driver Check Sheet" is a start, it is not a driver training program and will probably provide no liability protection when you need it. In conclusion, EVO training for our firefighters is non existent and it is far passed time to establish enforceable policies within your individual department. At my full time job we responded to over 5400 request for service in 2006 and had not a single crash. We have policies, procedures, and mandatory training in place. I've seen extremely poor and highly dangerous driving of POV's of volunteer responders and believe this is a ticking time bomb. **Worse yet, those involved don't recognize the problem.** Chiefs, lets defuse these bombs before they blow up in our faces. Drive safe, buckle up, and slow down to arrive alive.

TRAINING CD'S ARE IN:

I've received the training DVD/CD's. If you don't have a DVD player for your department then attend our LCFA meetings and maybe we can vote to purchase one to be able to check out with the training DVD's.

Be at the next meeting so you will know the rules and know when they will be eligible to be checked out.....

DEPARTMENT CHANGES/UPDATES:

Our Fire Department Directory needs updated. Please fill out information below and mail to P.O. Box 323, Poteau, OK 74953 or email the information to dcrandell@clnk.com

NAME OF FIRE DEPARTMENT:

FIRE CHIEF:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

ASSIST. CHIEF:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

OTHER CONTACT:

PHONE NUMBER:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

DEPARTMENTS ADDRESS:

DEPARTMENTS PHONE:

DEPARTMENTS EMAIL ADDRESS:

Thank You.

If you need to contact President Gillispie his number is 479-719-5595. Publicity Officer Crandells e-mail address is dcrandell@clnk.com.

Please send me some news.....