

# ARKANSAS ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS



February 2024

## 2024 WINTER WORKSHOP

The 2024 Winter Workshop was a huge success.

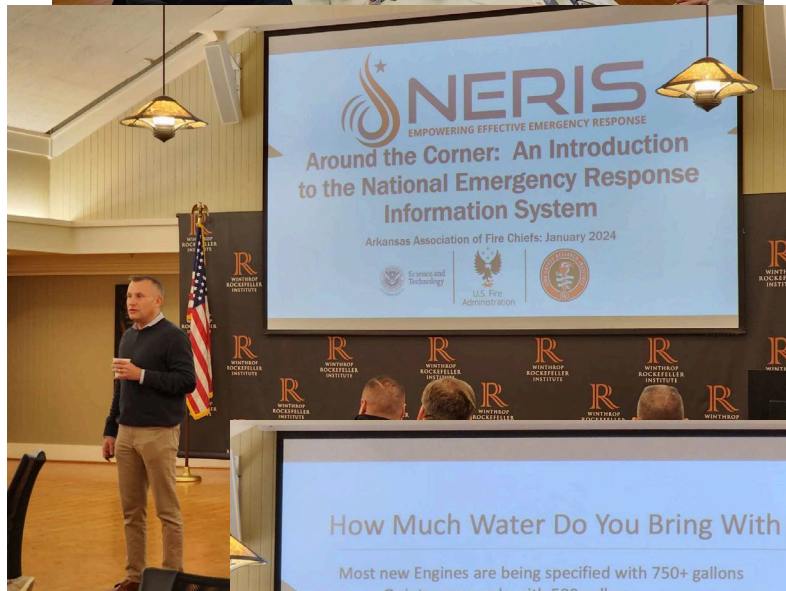
### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope your 2024 is off to a great start!

If you missed the 2024 Winter Workshop, you missed a great time! Please make plans to attend the 2024 Arkansas Fire Convention in Hot Springs during the first week of June.

Don't forget to vote in the upcoming March primary election. As leaders in our communities, it is important to get involved and help shape the future of your community.

Thank you!  
Jeremey Criner, President  
(479)-644-0599









The AAFC met at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute on January 25-26, 2024 for the annual Winter Workshop.

The following speakers presented:

**Deputy Fire Chief John Vanatta** – A Tradition of Change: Using the Past as a Springboard to the Future

**Fire Chief (ret) Dennis Reilly** – Five Trumpet Firefighting

**Fire Chief (ret) Tom Jenkins** – NERIS – Around the Corner: An Introduction to the National Emergency Response Information System

**Fire Chief (ret) Dennis Reilly** – Building the Team That Everyone Wants to Join

Following the speaker presentations, the membership took some time to evaluate our current Association: What do we do well? What do we not do so well? What does our Association need to look like in the next 5-10 years? Here's some brief highlights of the responses:

**Strengths:** Name recognition, representation on state boards, representation from certain areas of the state, desire to include all departments, communication, increase in memberships, winter workshop, legislative representation, networking, political presence, open cooperation, transparency, good relationships

**Weaknesses:** Lack of engagement, succession planning (members other than the Fire Chief), training offerings, financial security, unity, lack of district meetings, lack of district representation, recruitment of new members, communication, engagement with other associations, participation voids, lack of regional participation, website, new chief training

**Future Desired State:** Executive Director, more formal committees, new chief training, sustainable funding sources, scholarships and recruitment of new members, participation from all areas of state, regular district meetings, more robust educational opportunities, more coordination with other associations, recruitment campaign, review and learn from other state chiefs associations

What's next? The Executive Board is reviewing the discussion points listed above and will be formulating a list of strategic initiatives/objectives that we can all begin to implement. Our Association has so much potential and some good momentum moving forward! Let's all jump on the bus and help move our Association to greater heights!!

## 2023 SUMMER CONFERENCE RECAP

The following members were elected at the convention in June:

Secretary-Treasurer – Stewart Bryan (Greenwood)

District 1 VP – Ben Hammond (Sheridan)

District 3 VP – Brad Hardin (Fayetteville)

District 5 VP – Justin Thornton (Nashville)

In addition to the above elections, Fire Chief Ed Davis (Hot Springs) was selected to represent the state of Arkansas to serve as a liaison to the Southwestern Division of the IAFC.

## AAFC Meet and Greet

The 2023 Arkansas Fire Convention returned to the Hot Springs Convention Center in June. The AAFC held a membership meet and greet one afternoon. This was a great time of network and fellowship with our fellow chief officers from across the state.

Check out some of the pictures below!





## DISTRICT MEETINGS

The AAFC Executive Board is continuing our efforts to bolster our association and seek involvement from all areas within the state of Arkansas. Part of this effort includes hosting at least one District meeting each year in every District. We've had a few successful events and expect to have a few more as time goes on. Each District Vice President is coordinating these events within their District. If your department is interested in assisting with this effort, or if you would like more information, please reach out to your District VP.

District 1 – Ben Hammond – [sheridanfd@windstream.net](mailto:sheridanfd@windstream.net)

District 2 – Marty Hamrick – [mhamrick@jonesboro.org](mailto:mhamrick@jonesboro.org)

District 3 – Brad Hardin – [bhardin@fayetteville-ar.gov](mailto:bhardin@fayetteville-ar.gov)

District 4 – Ricky Terry – [chief\\_terry@outlook.com](mailto:chief_terry@outlook.com)

District 5 – Justin Thornton – [j.thornton@nashar.org](mailto:j.thornton@nashar.org)





## AAFC LEADERSHIP MEETS WITH GOVERNOR SANDERS



Pictured left to right; Fire Chief Brad Hardin, Governor Sarah Sanders, Fire Chief Jeremey Criner, Fire Chief Jason Hunt

Members of the AAFC Executive Board recently met with Governor Sanders to discuss the state of the fire service in Arkansas. Several topics were discussed including recruitment/retention issues, fire marshal's office funding, Act 833 funding, and other future legislative items.

## NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER REGISTRY (NFR) FOR CANCER

I am pleased to share some information about a new effort by The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to understand and reduce cancer among U.S. firefighters: the ***National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer***. In 2018, Congress passed the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act, which directed NIOSH to develop a registry to study cancer among firefighters. The only way we can increase the data set is by contributing our personal experiences and related history that you're willing to share. You may skip questions that you prefer not to answer. Additionally, firefighters who have not been diagnosed with cancer will provide important data (a diagnosis is not required). The information collected is confidential and firefighters join through a secure website.

The NFR also includes those who have left the profession, retirees, ARFF, inspectors, investigators, instructors, volunteers, and wildland. Please share with fellow firefighters you know.

[Join the NFR Today!](#)

## IAFC-SWD UPDATE

The SWDIAFC held its Fall Conference in Baton Rouge Louisiana on October 16-20. The conference featured several keynote speakers including Deputy Assistant Chief Frank Leeb from FDNY, Chief Jason Hovelmann, Chief Scott Thompson and numerous other presenters who you would frequently find teaching at national conferences.

Other actions and topics of conversation coming out of the meeting were:

- Meeting with Tony Roberson FEMA Region 6 regional administrator
- Scheduled a board trip to Texas to meet with FEMA about the AFG process
- Discussion regarding the formation of an Incident Management Team? Determining the process of team formation: defining deliverables concerning training and qualifications for membership
- Planning the 2024 SWD-IAFC Conference scheduled for October 20 to 25 in DENTON Texas
- Chief John S. Butler, IAFC President and Fire Chief of Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department (VA), was in attendance at the conference to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the IAFC. Ceremonies commemorating the event were held on October 20<sup>th</sup> in Baton Rouge.

## CONGRATULATIONS!



**FIRE CHIEF BRAD HARDIN ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**

## ARKANSAS FIRE ACADEMY UPDATE

- Volunteer Weekend was amazing again – 2024 is October 11-13
- Live Fire Instructor and Live Fire Instructor in Charge pilot have been delivered
  - Live Fire Instructor will be ready for delivery in January
  - Instructor in Charge will be ready in the spring
- IFSAC seals are \$25 and are not optional – Seals for prerequisite classes are \$5
- All certificates are sent electronically – if you still need a paper certificate just let us know
- We will finalize the roster for standards class 30 days prior to the start of class
- We are going to tremendously enhance oversight into chapters programs being delivered – this will include random proctored chapter testing – but chapter testing is required
- First Aid Provider is the prerequisite for all fire academy certification classes. This will provide training above first aid and CPR, but below first responder. The class will be for skills enhancement and information only, it will

not lead to any certification. This will provide training above basic first aid and CPR, but below first responder. EMR will be a course offering available for delivery once it is done.

- Meets all requirements of 1001
- Semi-truck is ordered and the mobile burn building will be finalized and ordered tomorrow that we received an AFG grant for and hopefully be in a city near you soon thereafter!
- New burn building on campus is done
- Adjunct instructors may order clothing via a form that will be sent to adjuncts soon as well as posted on the website
- A full time instructor on campus has been hired and will start January 1
- New curriculum in development phases:
  - Incident Safety Officer: In process
  - entire 1006 series: In process
  - Inspector III: complete
  - Telecommunicator, Health and Safety Officer, Public Fire and Life Safety Educator: research underway
  - Plans Examiner: complete/SME review
  - Live Fire Instructor: complete
- Considering delivery of JPRs around the state quarterly
  - Let us know if this is needed
- We are going to be “shelving” 3 to 5 classes a year to provide us an opportunity to make necessary revisions and updates
- Traffic Incident Management class is available – you NEED to offer this class
- Going to add new registration forms as well as a student evaluation to our website
- Please make sure we have a good email and an SID for you
- Provision of prerequisite information is going to be a requirement of students in January
- NFIRS reports can be done directly online by fire departments
  - The system will move to this exclusively in the future
- Please continue to provide us with your constructive feedback so we can better serve you, while minding your manners with our staff – Deputy Director Goodwin and I are more than willing to visit with you when you are unhappy – leave everyone else out of it, anything else will not be tolerated
- We received funding (nearly 6M) from the Governor for multiple items from our capital budget

### \*\*\*ANNOUNCEMENTS\*\*\*

#### NEW EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT APPOINTED

As you may have heard, our former EVP Jason Hunt recently resigned his position as the Fire Chief in Arkadelphia to take a position in the private sector. Chief Hunt was a great asset to our Association and will be missed. If you get the chance to reach out to him, please do so and thank him for his service and congratulate him on his new endeavors.

With his departure, the AAFC bylaws require the Executive Board to fill the vacancy. On February 6, 2024, the Executive Board voted to fill the unexpired term of Executive Vice President with Fire Chief Chad Moore (Cabot). Chief Moore will fulfill the term that is set to expire this summer. Please join me in thanking Chief Moore for his willingness to serve our Association and help move our mission forward in the state of Arkansas. **Welcome aboard Chief Moore!**

#### 2024 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Check out our new website! <https://arfirechiefs.site/>

You can now pay your membership dues and register online! <https://arfirechiefs.site/membership/>



## ARKANSAS FIRE CONVENTION 2024

According to the AAFC Bylaws, “the President, Executive Vice President, District 2 Vice President and District 4 Vice President shall be elected on even numbered years.” If you are interested in serving on the Executive Board, please make plans to attend.

**The AFC Banquet will be held on Friday this year!** Make plans to attend.

<https://www.arkansasfireconvention.com/>

## 2024 SOLAR ECLIPSE

Start planning for the 2024 Solar Eclipse set to take place on April 8, 2024. <https://www.arkansas.com/things-to-do/outdoors/skygazing/2024-eclipse>

The Arkansas Division of Emergency Management has shared a planning checklist on their website. <https://www.dps.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024-Solar-Eclipse-Planning-Checklist-Final.pdf>

## RECENT ATTORNEY GENERAL OPINION

### Opinion 2023-120

**Requested by Mr. Blake Pennington, Senior Assistant City Attorney**

*Q1) Is the custodian’s decision to disclose the requested records consistent with the Freedom of Information Act? You indicate that someone has submitted a FOIA request for records concerning the termination of a former police officer who was employed by the City of Fayetteville Police Department. The former police officer in question objects to your decision to release the personnel action sheet and the termination letter because “he does not know the requestor and did not want the requester having the termination letter.*

*RESPONSE: In my opinion, your decisions are consistent with the FOIA, and the former officer’s objections are not grounds to withhold the records from disclosure.*

*For more information, read the entire response. [Full Letter Response](#)*

**Arkansas Fire Statistics:** Through the end of 2023, Arkansas reported **33** civilian home fire fatalities. This is similar to the 2022 statewide home fire fatality total of **35**. Below is a snapshot of the Arkansas NFIRS incident type summary from 2021 (the latest data available from the USFA).





AAFC District Map

**For more information Check out the AAFC website**

<https://arfirechiefs.site/news-events/>

**Check out the on-campus offerings from the Arkansas Fire Academy!**

<https://www.sautech.edu/training/afta-on-campus-schedule/>

**Follow the AAFC on social media.**

<https://www.facebook.com/ArkansasFireChiefs>

**If you or someone in your department would like to help coordinate our social media efforts, please have them reach out to Chief Criner or any AAFC board member.**

**See you at the AFC in June!**

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*"The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionable integrity." —Dwight D. Eisenhower*

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

- Get plugged in to the state and national fire service! Here are some helpful links to get involved.

- o Arkansas Association of Fire Chiefs <https://arfirechiefs.site/>
- o International Association of Fire Chiefs <https://www.iafc.org/>
- o Southwestern Division – IAFC <https://www.swd-iafc.org/>
- o U.S. Fire Administration <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/>
- o National Fire Academy <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/>

## UPCOMING ITEMS OF INTEREST

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CHECK OUT THE AAFC WEBSITE**

[HTTPS://ARFIRECHIEFS.SITE/NEWS-EVENTS/](https://arfirechiefs.site/news-events/)

### MARCH

LOPFI Quarterly Meeting – March 7, 2024 – 9:30 a.m. – Little Rock <https://lopfi-prb.com/lopfi/calendar-of-events/>

Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board Meeting – March 13, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. – ADEM Offices, North Little Rock

### APRIL

Solar Eclipse – April 8, 2024 – Statewide

Arkansas Fire Protection Licensing Board Meeting – April 9, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. – AFPLB Office, Little Rock

### MAY

### JUNE

Arkansas Fire Convention – June 5-9, 2024 – Hot Springs – <https://www.arkansasfireconvention.com/>

LOPFI Quarterly Meeting – June 6, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. – Little Rock <https://lopfi-prb.com/lopfi/calendar-of-events/>

Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board – March 13, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. – Hot Springs Convention Center, Hot Springs

Arkansas Fire Protection Licensing Board Meeting – June 11, 2024 – 10:00 a.m. – AFPLB Office, Little Rock



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### ARKANSAS STATE FIRE MARSHAL DENNIS FREE

WHO:	DENNIS FREE
POSITION:	Arkansas State Fire Marshal
DEPARTMENT:	Arkansas Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire Protection Services
YEARS OF SERVICE:	30 years with Little Rock Fire Department, 12 years with AR Fire Marshal's Office
FAMILY:	Wife-Mary Ruth (33yrs); 6 kids; 7 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren
FAVORITE HOBBY:	Love to deer hunt with my sons, aggravate my wife and believe it or not, coming to work
FAVORITE BOOK:	"Bible", just wish I was better at living by it. Oh, and don't forget (NFPA Standards, Fire Codes all 3 Volumes, IFSTA Training Manuals), LOL.
FAVORITE MOVIE:	So many, any John Wayne, Jimmy Stewart, James Gagney, Audie Murphy, Micky Rooney, I guess you can see where I'm going with this, I'm very old school with the movies.
AFFILIATIONS:	Arkansas Fire Marshal's Association, Arkansas Fire , Arkansas Fire Licensing Board, Arkansas Fire Protection Services Board
AWARDS AND COMMENDATIONS:	No professional awards or commendations other than being blessed with the opportunity to have this as a career and gain as many friends I have made over the years.
INTERESTING FACT:	I guess the most interesting fact is that the three LRFD captains that signed my probation papers, actually signed them and let me stay in the fire service.
ANY OTHER INFO:	I first really got interested in the fire service at an early age, growing up playing baseball for North Little Rock Firefighters and visiting with them at the fire stations. Then I had several relatives that were firefighters in North Little Rock, Little Rock, and Conway. As I stated above, I truly love to come to work and knowing that the decisions that this office makes will help prevent a fire and help prevent the loss of life not only to the public but will also help to prevent a loss of life for firefighters during an incident by enforcing the proper building and fire codes. My phone is 24/7 (501-519-3803).

