

## **St. Johns County Fire Rescue Department History Summary**

Before 1974, limited fire protection was provided to St. Johns County residents through an interlocal agreement with the City of St. Augustine. The St. Augustine Fire Department responded to structure fires that occurred in unincorporated areas within ten miles of the city limits. Fire protection was provided to the remainder of the county by ten volunteer fire departments, all of which operated as independent agencies. None of these departments received financial assistance from the county, instead relying strictly on donations.

In 1974, a taxing ordinance was adopted for the purpose of funding capital purchase and operating costs for the counties volunteer fire departments. This system remained in place until 1995, when population growth and increased demand for service initiated several studies of the fire departments and their ability to provide emergency services. The final report included numerous recommendations regarding the administration and delivery of emergency services within the County. The major components of the plan included creating a formal relationship between the County and the volunteer organizations and the consolidation of the County's Emergency Medical Services with the fire service.

The plan was implemented in *October of 1997*, when forty-eight (48) EMS paramedics cross-trained as firefighters and joined seven (7) career firefighters, thereby creating the County's first career staff of fifty-five (55) firefighter/paramedics. The volunteer fire departments continued to face the challenges of greater demands for service, an increasing population, a changing risk environment, and stringent training mandates. As the numbers of emergency responses continued to increase, there were decreasing numbers of volunteers available to respond to calls. Recognizing that the County had outgrown its ability to depend on a volunteer force, the Department began staffing engines and stations throughout the county with career firefighters. The Department continued to be faced with the challenges of enhancing the existing services, while addressing growth and development throughout the county on a budget that was originally intended to fund a volunteer service. The Department began developing a Master Plan in 2002 to address enhancement of existing services and plan for the impact of expected growth on its future ability to provide fire protection and emergency medical services. This plan, which addressed staffing, facilities, equipment, and 911 emergency communications, was presented to the Board of County Commissioner's in 2003. The Board approved this plan in an effort to fund St. Johns County Fire Rescue and provide for the mission of public safety.

In 2022, St. Johns County Fire Rescue responded to over 56,026 calls for service. As of this date, St. Johns County Fire Rescue currently employs over 400+ professional firefighters and administrative personnel, staffing 17 Fire Stations across St. Johns County.

## FIRE CHIEFS

### **Robert V. Hall Jr. Fire Rescue Chief 2001 - 2011**

Chief Robert Hall Jr. was at the forefront of public safety leadership for the majority of his career. His career began over 30 years ago as one of the 1st Paramedics in the State of Florida. Chief Hall rose through the ranks serving in many different roles and becoming St. Johns County Fire Rescue Chief in 2001. As Chief of St. Johns County Fire Rescue, Chief Hall supervised one of the fastest-growing departments in Florida. Since 2001, Chief Hall had overseen the expansion of St. Johns County Fire Rescue from a small career Fire Rescue system supported primarily by volunteers into the full-service career department that operates today. During his time as Chief, St. Johns County Fire Rescue opened multiple new fire stations in the fastest growing sections of the county in addition to fully staffing an additional 14 pre-existing volunteer stations with career personnel. St. Johns County Fire Rescue hired over 150 operations personnel and associated fire truck, ambulance, and equipment purchases with this expansion. His leadership and public safety planning have allowed St. Johns County Fire Rescue to successfully expand and grow into one of the best public safety systems in Northeast Florida.

### **Carl A. Shank Fire Rescue Chief 2011- 2018**

Chief Carl A. Shank was directly involved in delivering emergency services in Saint Johns County for over 25 years. Chief Shank began as a volunteer in the Palm Valley area then transitioned to a full-time St. Johns County employee in January 1987. Appointed Operations Chief in 2001, Chief Shank helped plan and build the re-organization of Fire Rescue services countywide. In 2008, Chief Shank was appointed to the position of Assistant Chief, which he held until he assumed the roles and responsibilities as the St. Johns County Fire Rescue Fire Chief in December 2011. Chief Shank was involved in the professional development of the countywide emergency response capabilities, the statewide emergency response system, and his personal career development throughout his career. Chief Shank was instrumental in developing and implementing the Department's progressive Marine Rescue program and established an exceptional emergency service in fire suppression, EMS, hazardous materials response, urban search and rescue, and water rescue.

### **Jeffrey A. Prevatt Fire Rescue Chief 2019 – 2022**

Chief Prevatt began working part-time for St. Johns County Emergency Medical Services in the fall of 1980, completing training as an Emergency Medical Technician in 1981. Chief Prevatt officially started his career full-time for St. Johns County on

February 1, 1982, becoming certified as a Paramedic in 1983 and a Firefighter in 1985. Chief Prevatt advanced through the St. Johns County Fire Rescue ranks, serving as a Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief, Deputy Chief, and Assistant Chief. He also worked part-time for several years for the emergency helicopter service at Baptist Medical Center in Jacksonville. During his tenure, Chief Prevatt has been the manager of multiple major projects and progressive improvements. Chief Prevatt was the project manager and department representative on the \$25 million 800 MHz county-wide interoperable radio system. He coordinated the research, development, and implementation of this highly prioritized public safety project, finalized in 2013. In 2019, Chief Prevatt was appointed Fire Rescue Chief, managing, and overseeing all aspects of Fire Rescue Services.

In December of 2022, Fire Rescue Chief Jeffrey A. Prevatt retired after 40 + years of dedicated service to the residents and visitors of St. Johns County.

### **R. Scott Bullard** **Fire Rescue Chief 2023 – Present**

Fire Rescue Chief Raymond Scott Bullard is a 21-year member of St. Johns County Fire Rescue who has served the department in operational ranks of Firefighter, Engineer, Lieutenant, Captain, and Battalion Chief.

During his career, Chief Bullard has completed formal education in addition to developing excellent job performance and leadership skills. Chief Bullard has built a framework of positive relationships and experiences that will provide him the tools to perform at the highest level as the Fire Rescue Chief.

Chief Bullard holds a Bachelor's degree from Columbia Southern University in Fire Administration, an Associate's Degree from Florida State College at Jacksonville in Fire Science and the Managing Officer Designation from the National Fire Academy in Emmetsburg, Maryland. In addition, Chief Bullard holds an extensive list of fire service and public safety specific certifications and courses focusing on operational and administrative subjects.

Chief Bullard was selected as the 2013 Fire Rescue Paramedic of the Year and has been instrumental in the development of several department initiatives such as the Firefighter Development Program and the Live Fire Instructor Training Program.