



The Tailboard

WFD's Quarterly Newsletter

Waco Fire Department

1016 Columbus Ave.

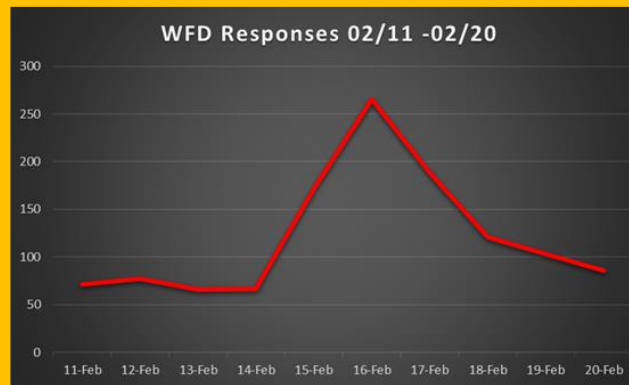
Waco, TX 76701

[@WacoTX Fire](https://twitter.com/WacoTXFire)



Winter weather tests WFD

Beginning on February 11th, snow, ice, and freezing temperatures began affecting the City of Waco and the Waco Fire Department's responses before most other city departments. The sustained event produced several rounds of cold temperatures and freezing precipitation causing electrical and fire issues initially, transitioning into broken water pipes, and the need to assist with transportation to warming centers for affected populations due to long periods of no electrical power. Emergency response peaked on 02/16 when 265 calls were answered by Waco Firefighters. Additional staffing and deployment of personnel adjustments were made to meet the demands of the citizens. Firefighters responded to 1217 calls in 9 days, including 31 structure fires.



(Daily avg. for incidents is 49 calls per day – Peaked at 265 on 02/16)

Date	Responses
11-Feb	71
12-Feb	77
13-Feb	66
14-Feb	67
15-Feb	172
16-Feb	265
17-Feb	189
18-Feb	121
19-Feb	103
20-Feb	86
Total	1217



2nd Alarm Apartment Fire on Richland Drive on February 19th..

About the name...

The Tailboard

By: Tracy Blackshear, Lieutenant

Firefighting jargon includes a diverse lexicon of both common and idiosyncratic terms. One such term is "The Tailboard." The common definition of tailboard is: A portion at the rear of the fire engine where firefighters could stand and ride or step up to access hoses in the hose bed.



The man second from right, is my Grandfather, R.B Blackshear. That's where I got the bug. He was a good firefighter, but he was a great man. This was evident to me at his funeral. He was not a line of duty death (LODD), but you could not have gotten another person or fire apparatus in the church or parking lot. The countless people that he impacted, he spoke to or helped on or off duty, and neighboring departments that knew him. His circle of influence was greater than I think he knew.

In my career, I have been blessed to be a part of some great conversations. All of these have taken place in two prominent places. Around the kitchen table and on the Tailboard of an engine, rather after a call or just in the apparatus bay. I have listened to firefighters brag about their kid's achievements, talk about marriage, I have seen the fear and excitement of first-time dads talk about new babies, heard fishing and hunting stories, listened to the history of our department, talk of calls, meals, funny pranks and the how it used to be stories. I have seen laughter that makes you cry, I have seen heated debate over tactics or strategy, usually ending in an agreement to disagree. But none the less, a lot of the world's problems have been solved or fussed and discussed on the tailboard of a firetruck.

Although I am not as "salty" as some, I do have a love for this job. Not a shift has come that I woke up and dreaded having to come to work. For me this isn't just work, I feel called to it. I have no grandiose vision that the fire service will not go on without me. Take your finger out of a 5-gallon bucket of water and it's still ...5 gallons of water. But, I do want to invest in this department. I want to leave it better for the next group of rookies that hit the floor. It could be, or may be, your son or daughter.

Elon Musk once said, "I could either watch it happen or be a part of it." I hope this newsletter not only provides a steady flow of information for our Department, but I hope that it's a place where you can voice concerns, brag on your family's achievements, share your losses and your victories. Pose questions and share lessons learned. Hopefully, this will "spark" a new trend in our local fire culture, and become what it was intended to.

To tie all these ends together, The Tailboard was the only name that made sense to me, it's the place where information is passed on. I want to be a positive influence on my circle. I want to leave this job better for those behind me, I want my family to remember me as a great man, which happened to also be a firefighter. It's easy to watch from the bank, it's harder to get into the current and make a change. Matthew 7:13-14 puts it like this, enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few will find it.

(About the name...Continued from pg 2)

I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to remind the department and the new hires of the devotional that is sent out. Just call or email me if you're interested in being added to the list. 254-495-6135

I leave you with Proverbs 27:17

17

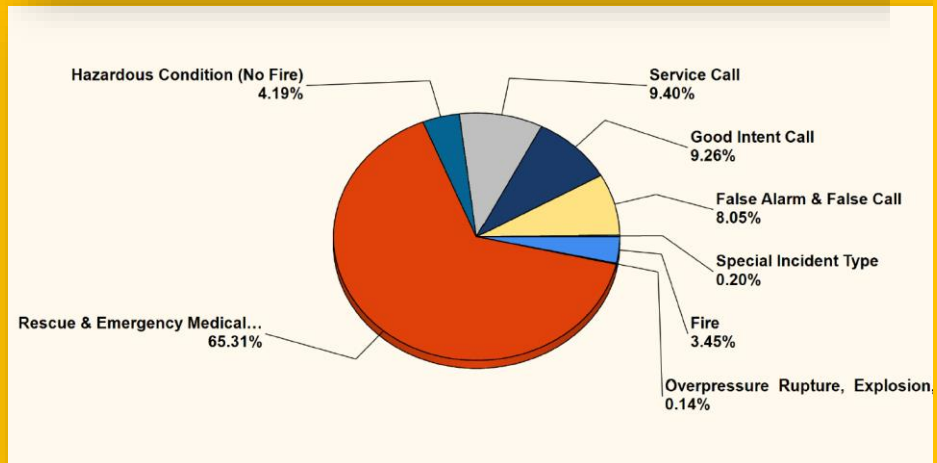
As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Keep looking up,

Lt. Blackshear E1C

First quarter statistics for 2021

MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fire	193	3.73%
Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat(no fire)	6	0.12%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	3088	59.66%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	213	4.12%
Service Call	728	14.06%
Good Intent Call	431	8.33%
False Alarm & False Call	506	9.78%
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	2	0.04%
Special Incident Type	9	0.17%
TOTAL	5176	100.00%



Dive Team's first operation

On March 23rd, the WFD Dive Team was requested to assist with retrieving a sunken vehicle from the Brazos River at Brazos Park East. The operation was successful and the City's investment in training and equipment adds another layer of capability to the WFD's resume.



Waco Firefighters and HazMat Team personnel responded to assist McLennan County agencies to a major fire at the Waco Walking Stick Co. on February 26th.

Retirements, new hires, and promotions

The following members retired from WFD in the first quarter of 2021:

- Eng. Duane Kalina on January 15th with 31 years of service.
- Lt. Shawn Mason on January 31st with 31 years of service.
- Battalion Chief Don Yeager with 31 years of service.



D. Kalina



S. Mason



D. Yeager

The following new hires joined WFD in the first quarter of 2021:

- Firefighter William Carey
- Firefighter George Garcia
- Firefighter Dustin Fox
- Firefighter Zachary Sullivan
- Firefighter Drew Watters
- Beau Hart – Customer Service Representative in the Fire Alarm Office



New Firefighters' swearing in ceremony



B. Hart

The following members promoted in the first quarter of 2021:

- Engineer Brady Skinner on January 17th
- Lieutenant Richie Campbell on February 14th
- Battalion Chief Greg Lippe on March 14th



B. Skinner



R. Campbell



G. Lippe



Upcoming Events

The following upcoming events are scheduled for the Waco Fire Department:

- May 4th - Training Captain Written Exam (9 AM)
- May 27th Training Captain Assessment Center (Time TBD)
- June 5th Civil Service Entrance Exam for Firefighter (8 AM)
- June 5th Practice Physical Agility Test (1 PM following written exam)
- June 12 Practice Physical Agility Test (8 AM)
- June 19th Physical Agility Test (8 AM)

* All Events at the ESEC Campus

Consider applying to the National Fire Academy

The application period will open on April 15, 2021, and remain open until June 15, 2021, for courses starting in October 2021 at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Not only is the campus environment a beautiful setting with which to focus on learning, but high-level instruction in a variety of courses is available. WFD leadership has always supported attendance, which is fully funded through the U.S. Government. Courses can be found in Community Risk Reduction, Command, Hazardous Materials, Leadership, Investigations, Management, Safety, and many other topics. While on Campus, take a moment to reflect on those in the fire service that made the supreme sacrifice at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial on campus. This serene setting is something that every firefighter should see in their career. The names of three Waco Firefighters: Norman Kendrick, Robert Brandon, and Jimmy Fox are memorialized forever with bricks on the pathway leading to the memorial. For more information on how you can apply for a course at the National Fire Academy, go to their website or follow the link below:

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/training/nfa/admissions/apply.html>



The names of Waco Fire Department members who've died in the line of duty on the memorial bricks at the National Fall Firefighters Memorial at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland.



Accreditation, what's it all about?

Since Chief Summers' arrival in Waco, there has been much talk of becoming an accredited agency. There have been many questions about how the accreditation process helps the fire department. First, let's look at what accreditation is. Accreditation is a certification or verification that an organization maintains high standards and achieves professional credentials that may be required (or highly encouraged) in the industry, signaling a level of excellence.

As a professional symbol of competency, accreditation impacts a wide variety of fields, from construction and education to food safety and healthcare. No matter the industry, if you want to prove you perform with excellence, authority, and credibility, you seek accreditation. In the fire service, this process is achieved through the Center for [Public Safety Excellence's Commission on Fire Accreditation International \(CFAI\)](#).

While the number of calls for fires has decreased substantially over the years, the number of calls for medical aid, false alarms, mutual aid, hazmat, and other services has dramatically increased. What this means is, fire departments need to adapt to the changing landscaping of serving the community and implement best practices to deliver the all-hazard emergency service your community expects. WFD recently became a Registered Agency, which is the first of a four-step process to become accredited.

Probably the greatest value to seeking fire department accreditation is the opportunity to get evaluated and assessed by a group of peers. With CFAI, we'll bring in a team of peer assessors to review our department, our processes, our documents, and our overall operation to make sure we are meeting the highest standards. By collecting all of the necessary documentation and taking a deep dive into every area of our department's operations, we'll be able to see the benchmarks we are hitting (or should be striving for) to deliver top-notch, innovative emergency services. We'll use this insight to work with the community to formalize the standards of cover and add to our strategic plan.

To achieve fire accreditation, you need to operate according to industry best practices, which include establishing and maintaining programs to address the safety and wellness of firefighters. Additionally, our facilities and training programs must rise to those same high standards. Going through the process to meet fire accreditation standards will raise the level of performance, safety, and effectiveness throughout the department.

In essence, the entire process will elevate our fire department on every level and fully align our department with best practices and high standards which provides the rationale for funding and builds community trust.

A small group of personnel is already involved in attending training from the Center for Public Safety Excellence to learn about the accreditation process; however, the process will involve the whole department. Stay tuned for more updates as Waco moves forward on this process of continuous improvement to better serve the citizens.

From the chief's desk...



Are we Responsible and/or Accountable?

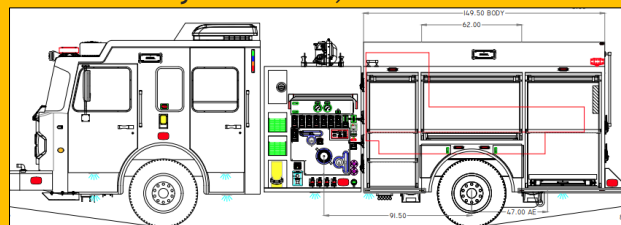
The definition of responsible is (a) liable to be required to give account, as of one's actions or the discharge of a duty or trust. (b) involving personal accountability or the ability to act without guidance or superior authority. Accountable is defined as responding to someone or for some action: answerable. These two words are often used interchangeably, however, I believe that they are not interchangeable. A few examples would be, as a firefighter, you're responsible for understanding and following oral and written instructions, as a Fire Apparatus Engineer, you're responsible for having considerable knowledge of the geography of your assigned district, including the location of hydrants and streets. As a Company Officer you're responsible for the conduct and efficiency of the members under your command. The Battalion Chief is responsible for the Operational and Administrative duties and overall efficiency of a Battalion. I've heard the term "shared responsibility" all of these responsibilities are shared, on the other hand, accountability cannot be shared. Examples of accountability are employees completing tasks assigned, being responsible for the respective duties of their job classification, being consistent in doing the right thing in all aspects of their job, and working towards a common goal for the organization. Accountability can be defined as the "ultimate responsibility". In essence, accountability means consequences both positive (awards, Atta boys, and superb ratings) and negative (written reprimands, suspensions, demotions, and in some instances termination). As leaders of this great organization, we have the responsibility of setting the climate for success, leading by example, establishing a work environment that is inclusive, positive, and highly ethical. To answer the question are we responsible and/or accountable- yes, we are. It has often been said and found to be true that human beings seek accountability and we want to know who is responsible for certain actions and who is accountable for the consequences of those actions. It is clear to me that consistency and accountability are important and it should be our goal to ensure that we take responsibility and hold one another accountable.

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New apparatus update

Several members of WFD went to Brandon, South Dakota for pre-construction meetings at the Spartan facility for the six new engines and one ladder truck that were approved by City Council. The specifications were looked at in fine detail and the end result has been finalized. Construction on the engines should be complete around December of 2021 with the ladder truck taking slightly longer at the facility in Omaha, Nebraska.



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