

St. Lucie County Fire District News Release



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Assistant Fire Chief Bushman Retires from the St. Lucie County Fire District

Chief closes a 34 year career with SLCFD and over 35 with Fire Service

St. Lucie County, FL – When Assistant Chief Chris Bushman started with the St Lucie County Fire District in 1979, Fire Department Headquarters was at North 7th street and Avenue D in Ft Pierce. Operations were conducted out of 7 fire stations spread throughout St Lucie County, and run volume was about 500 to 600 calls a month depending on the season. Today, as Chief Bushman prepares to retire, the Fire District responds to about 3,200 calls a month out of 17 fire stations.

Chief Bushman started his career in the fire service in 1977 as a Forest Ranger with the Florida Division of Forestry. He moved to the Fire District in 1979 and is retiring after serving 34 years as a St Lucie County firefighter. When he joined SLCFD, most of the stations were staffed with 3 firefighters who were cross trained as certified firefighters, and emergency medical technicians or paramedics.

“Whatever the call was, we took the recue vehicle (ambulance), or the fire truck and managed most calls with those three firefighters,” explained Bushman. “Today, we staff all fire stations with a minimum of 4 cross trained personnel and most calls get at least 5 firefighters responding so that there is enough manpower to handle the emergency.”

“The standard of care has changed rather drastically since I started,” said Bushman.

“Both firefighting and emergency medical services has seen a multitude of regulations and standards for both equipment and the types of medications allowed to administer prior to delivering a patient to the hospital. We also have a state approved trauma center in the county which is a tremendous benefit to the citizens.”

One of Bushman’s biggest challenges was establishing a Hazardous Materials response team for the Fire District. This was partly in response to an anhydrous ammonia explosion in Ft Pierce that killed three workers. Also, a growing number of transportation related hazardous materials incidents necessitated this type of specialization as well. Response protocols, equipment, training, and the vehicle itself were prepared and formulated when Bushman was a Lieutenant.

Chief Bushman was also the initial on scene incident commander for the large brush fires that consumed 44 houses in Port St Lucie back in 1999.

“That is just one of the memories that invade your mind from time to time. Mother Nature took control that day and showed all of us who was in charge,” said Bushman.

Chief Bushman has also worked every Hurricane and Tropical Storm since Hurricane David back in 1979. “It’s just what we do, anytime, anyplace, anywhere.”

Chief Bushman has been instrumental in many of the technological changes the Fire District has undergone. Conversion from antiquated radio systems to the more robust and reliable 800 MHz spectrum, computerization of all fire stations and fire rescue vehicles, Automatic Vehicle Location systems, Voice over IP, just to name few.

Chief Bushman will maintain his teaching credentials at IRSC and plans on additional volunteering with local organizations and spending time with his family traveling.