

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



CITY OF RIO RANCHO, NEW MEXICO

FROM THE FIRE CHIEF'S DESK BY PAUL BEARCE

This past year marked the first full year with me serving as the Chief of Rio Rancho Fire Rescue (RRFR). In 2019 we saw some highs and lows. When I was appointed as Fire Chief, I was asked what I wanted my legacy to be. After some thought, I came up with my answer. I would like to be thought of as a Chief who truly cared about firefighters. During my tenure riding on an engine or a rescue, I took a lot of pride in helping to make someone's life better. Whether it was a victim of a house fire or a medical patient, I found satisfaction in helping them through a crisis. I now serve a different role in our organization, but I still get the same fulfillment by helping our firefighters do their job better, and have focused my efforts to make our organization stronger.

It is certainly not a secret that my passion has been addressing the behavioral health issues that face firefighters. I have made it a goal to develop programs to help our personnel survive the stressors that we face. With the assistance of some dedicated RRFR personnel, we have increased our outreach efforts with the Peer Support Team and have included several mental health providers in the implementation of our program. In January, we hosted an Assistance to Firefighters Grant funded suicide prevention course. The two instructors, Mary VanHaut and Chief Greg Flynn were both dynamic. I was so taken by their stories that I requested the New Mexico Fire Chiefs Association bring them to our annual conference in the fall.

As we anxiously awaited for their presentation, RRFR experienced the loss of one of our members. In June Lt. Colin Rice passed-away. His death was a blow to our collective sense of well-being and his absence will continue to be felt for many years. I have a special place in my heart for Colin. He was dedicated to the Peer Support program and to helping others in our profession. I will continue to remember Colin for his dedication and passion for his job and he will be missed.

With a new focus for our behavioral health initiatives, I went into the annual Chiefs Conference on a mission with the goal of bringing a new program to our state. Chief Flynn's department had recently adopted a program aimed at increasing awareness for the mental health of their firefighters. The Yellow Rose



Campaign (YRC) was created by the Michigan Fire Chiefs Association and adopted as a Labor/Management initiative in the West Bloomfield Township FD. After the fall conference, New Mexico is the second state to adopt the YRC. In a very emotional session, Chiefs from across the state took the pledge to reduce the stigma associated with mental health stress and vowed to support the men and women under their commands.

In a similar effort, the Rio Rancho Firefighters Association (Local 4877) and the Executive Staff of RRFR, are planning on creating an initiative under the YRC banner this summer. Our plan is to develop a challenge coin to represent our collective commitment to supporting each other throughout our careers and reduce the stigma of mental health stress. It is my hope that we will all take

the pledge and be there for each other in the future. We also have a provision to provide compensation to personnel seeking an annual mental health evaluation with our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider.

In addition to our behavioral health initiatives, we have a robust medical evaluation program, which involves a fitness evaluation, lab work, and a physical exam from our PA Jeremy Kersey. The goal of the program is to give our personnel a proactive approach to their own health. RRFR is also working on several other programs to help reduce the health risks

associated with being a firefighter. We have already installed filters on all of our diesel apparatus to reduce our exposure to the exhaust, and created a hood-exchange after working on the scene of a structure fire. The additional gear washer and dryer from a grant will help us reduce the toxins in our bunkers. Future initiatives include our new non-structure fire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) uniforms that will reduce the time we spend in our bunker gear, and design our fire trucks with the new "clean cab" concept to help reduce potential toxins in the passenger compartment.

It is my hope that this year our collective efforts will make our department an example for others to follow when it comes to protecting the health and wellness of our firefighters. As always, stay safe and let's take care of each other.



When we reflect on the closing of 2019 and begin 2020 in our department, we must recognize that we had some of our greatest challenges and had some of our greatest triumphs over the last year.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude to each and every member of RRFr for the way everyone pulled together to honor one of our Department's members. The thing that will forever separate 2019 from previous years was the death of Lt. Colin Rice. The department honored Colin by standing watch over his body 24/7 and provided support to his wife Brittany and two young boys, Braylon and Landon.

We were able to honor our fallen brother and his memory with dignity and grace deserving of a truly remarkable man. Although this event would, in most cases, overshadow just about any accomplishments of 2019, our exceptional men and women continued to excel in all aspects in providing service to our community. Our personnel continue to raise the bar and exhibit excellence.

In early 2019, we were in the middle of the 13th Academy class's 16-week program, which ultimately graduated 12 men and women to join our ranks. The training division didn't stop there. They continued to train the entire department in numerous facility drills and help all of us maintain our annual required training of 228 hours per firefighter. They also ran Academy class 14, graduating 10 more highly motivated men and women.

Since this was our first academy where an EMT license was not a requirement, six of the graduates went through an additional six weeks of training taught by our very own Brandi Luce. She was able to achieve a 100% graduation rate.

During the year, we witnessed numerous retirements as well as promotions in various roles within RRFr. Battalion Chief Michael Denison, Firefighters Rob Mitchel, Jose Martinez, Tony Rodgers,



Crews battle a house fire in Northern Meadows.

and Engineer Matt Lucero all retired after completing 20 years of service within the fire service. These retirements resulted in some upward movement and promotions. Adam Arrossa was promoted to EMS Battalion Chief and BC Sandoval moved to the floor to supervise C-Battalion. Dave Hoeksema took over as the EMS Captain where he has recertified half the department and revamped the Continuing Education training program. Engineer Jimmy Wenzel was promoted to Captain and resides at Station 3 on C-Battalion. Chris Mandeville was promoted to EMS Lieutenant where he currently serves A-Battalion. Jason Spaeth and John Oliver were both promoted to the position of Engineer.

In addition to all the excitement of new academies and promotions, we received a Federal grant to add six new firefighter positions to our ranks to help meet the increasing demands for RRFr's services. These positions were hired in late 2018, and began serving in full-capacity in the spring of 2019. We also expanded our program to address EMS community outreach through our RioCares.

A new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), or union contract, was reached after months of negotiations by both the City and the Union's negotiations committee. The contract includes raises for everyone across the department as well as incentivizing Paramedics and adding longevity pay for our more tenured employees. This contract will be in effect for the next four years.

We graduated two of our own from Albuquerque Fire Rescue's (AFR) paramedic program, with Keadrick Kingery and Aric Ray earning their medic license after an 11-month program. Both performed exceptionally well with Aric Ray being named the valedictorian of the program. Both have been on the streets and have kept very busy utilizing just about every skill learned while in paramedic school. With their successes we have continued to send more people to paramedic school.

Currently, we have Deidre Maurino attending the hybrid class at UNM's EMS academy and both Chris Garcia and Roman Lucero attending AFR's more traditional paramedic program. All are slated to graduate early summer of 2020. With members stepping up to attend the yearlong paramedic school programs we can ensure we have our very own home-grown paramedics who continue to make Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue leaders in pre-hospital medicine. Thank you for all who have attended and shown interest, it is reassuring to know that some of you may one day be tending to a member of my family in their moments of need.

In reflecting on 2019, I can say that we proved what it means to be a brother or sister in the fire service. We have stuck together through thick and thin as we faced adversity and extreme grief; all the while continuing to do our jobs and accomplishing our tasks. We have continued to grow our department and simultaneously improve our profession. We will continue to prove to the community and ourselves that we stand strong as one. RRFr personnel have all exceeded my expectations. I ask that we all reflect on the last year, look at what we have accomplished, be proud, hold our heads high and know we are all part of an amazing family that will always support one another. I look forward to what 2020 will bring and know we will make this year even better than the last.

TRAINING OUR NEWEST MEMBERS BY CAPT. MICHAEL LEGENDRE

Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue graduated two 16-week cadet academies in 2019. The 22 members of these two Academy classes account for roughly 20% of our department's staffing. The task of training a new firefighter is not an easy one. Our department could not have done it without a progressive training department, highly motivated Academy Instructors, dedicated FTOs and the perseverance of these new members.

Academy Class 13 started with 15 cadets and graduated 12 Firefighters on March 14, 2019. This was our largest Academy since Academy Class 6 in 2007. This Academy started on November 26, 2018. It was a very cold, harsh winter but that did not stop the members of Academy Class 13 from completing their training. Good luck and welcome to the family.



Academy Class #13

In Omnia Paratus
"Ready for Anything"

Three months later Academy Class 14 started with 11 cadets and graduated 10 Firefighters on September 26, 2019. Academy Class 14 started on June 6, 2019 in the dead heat of the summer. The brutally hot Academy days only added to this group's fortitude. Welcome to our department Academy Class 14. We know that all of you will be very successful on your End of Probation Test.



Academy Class #14

Calm the Chaos



All Academy Classes culminate in an amazing graduation ceremony where colleagues and families can celebrate the new probationary firefighters' move into field training.

Incident Details

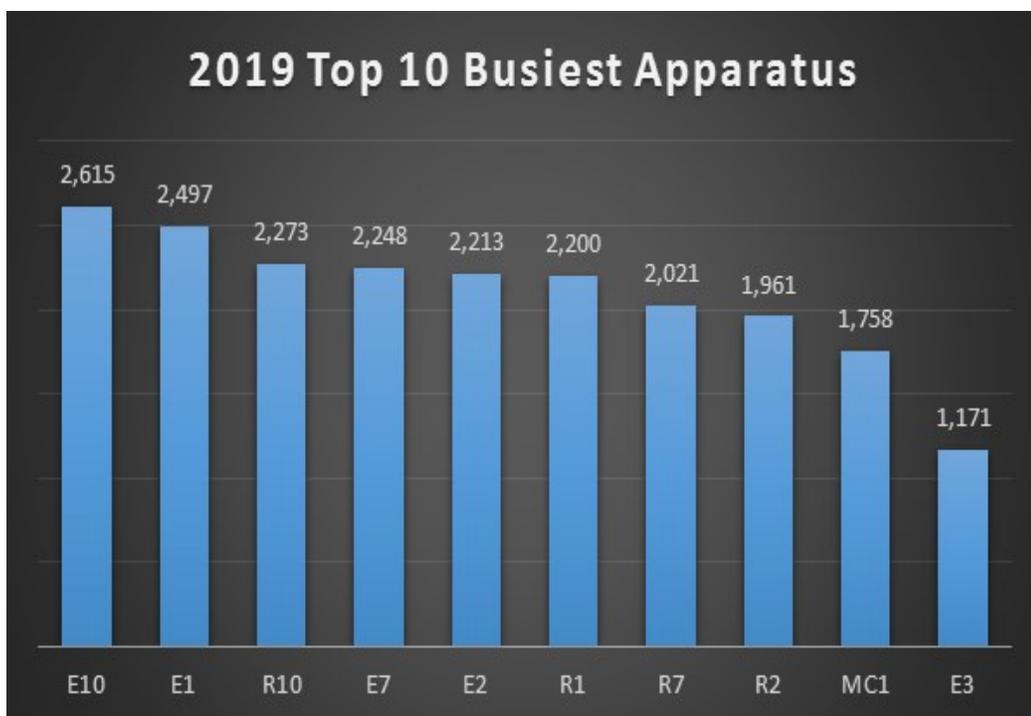
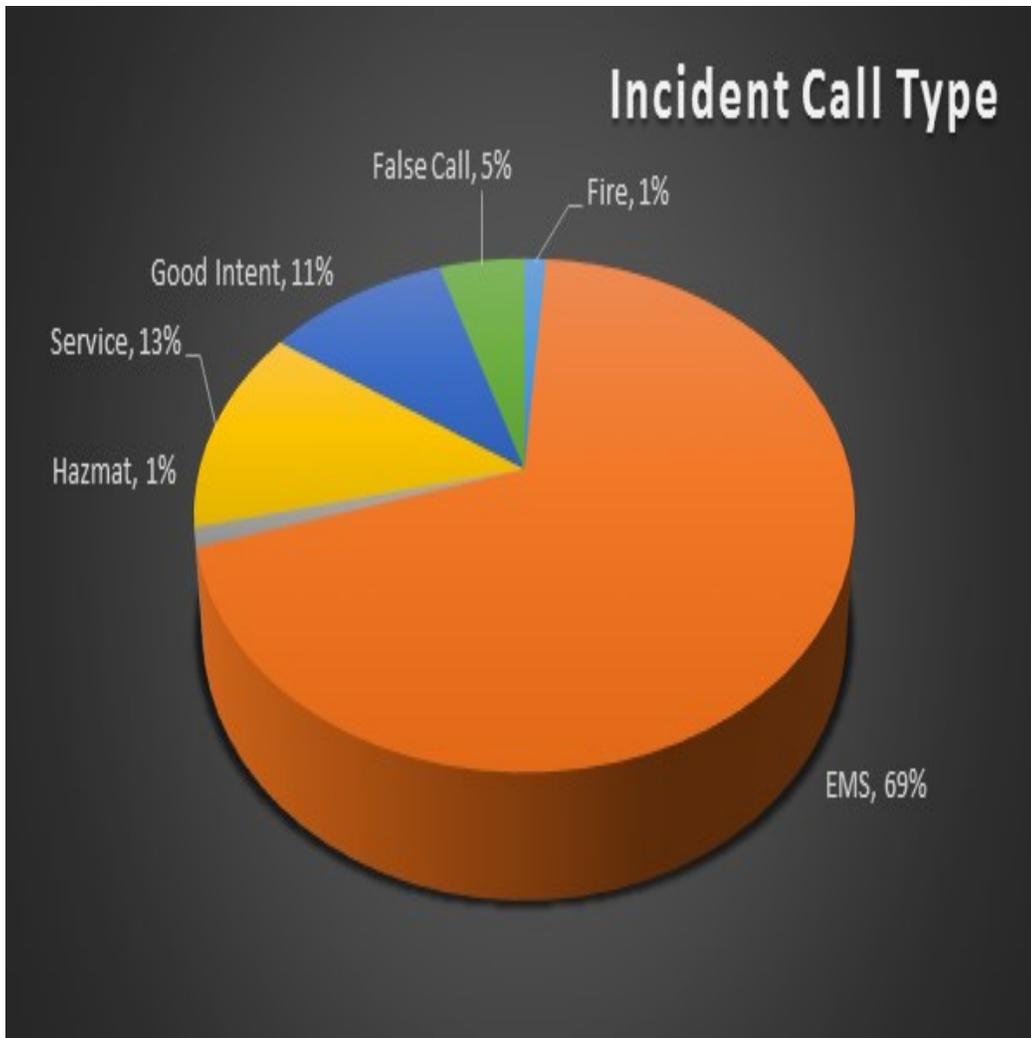
Total Calls:

Calls Per Station:

Station 1: 4,567
 Station 2: 2,168
 Station 3: 810
 Station 5: 1,139
 Station 7: 2,323

**Apparatus Total
 Emergency
 Responses:**

Engine 1: 2,494
 Engine 10: 2,612
 Rescue 1: 2,190
 Rescue 10: 2,282
 MedCom 1: 1,245
 Battalion Chief: 839
 Engine 2: 2,076
 Rescue 2: 1,852
 Engine 3: 1,085
 Rescue 3: 981
 Engine 5: 1,168
 Rescue 5: 1,088
 Engine 7: 2,291
 Rescue 7: 2,039



Left: Apparatus designation are as follows:

- E indicates Engine responses
- R indicates Rescue responses
- MC indicates the Med-Comm (roving paramedic supervisor)

Notable Calls for Service

March—House fire on Tesuque Court; approximate damages of \$300,000



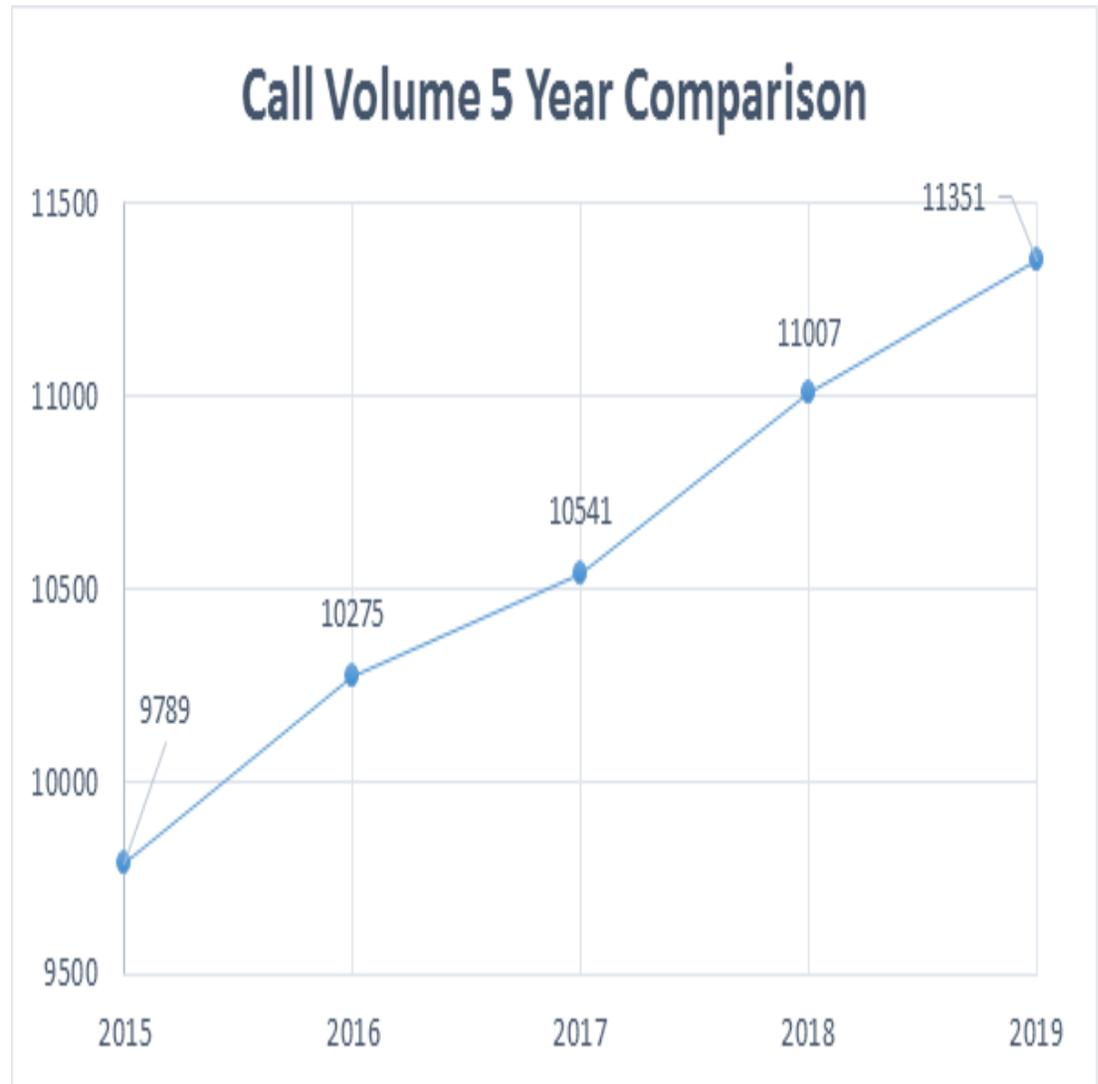
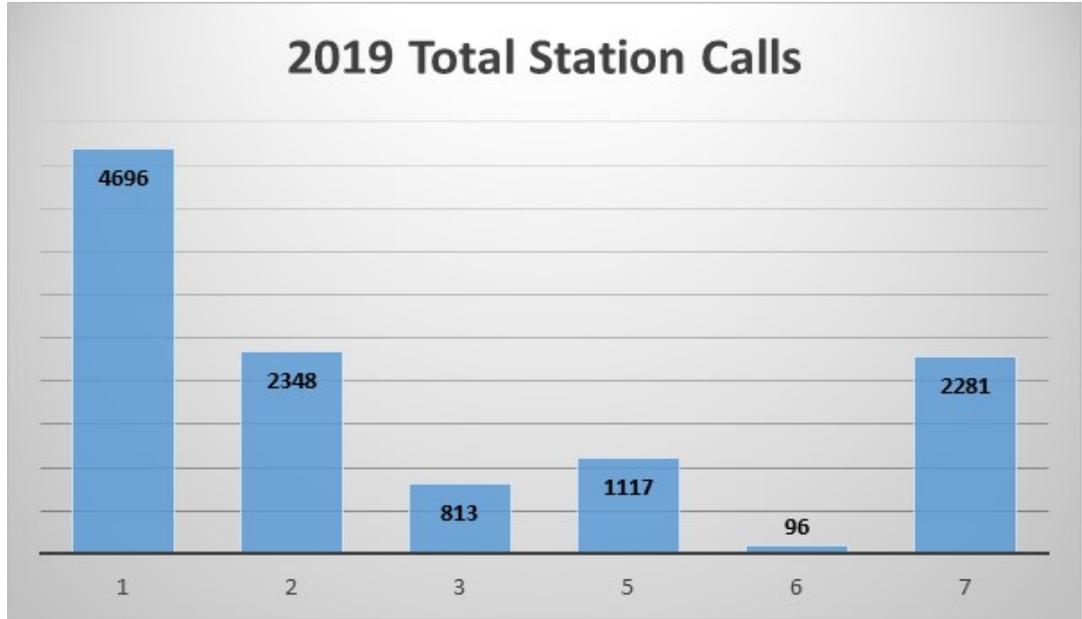
May/June—Multiple rafters and boaters rescued from the Rio Grande after historic water flow levels caused damage to Willow Creek Trail and created dangerous conditions.

June—Mutual aid fire in Placitas for house fire which destroyed large home. One firefighter from RRFR injured.

Sept.—Large house fire on Brown Bear, causing \$400,000 in damages.

Oct.—Asbury Court house fire causing \$300,000 in damages.

Oct.—Historic Country Club fire destroyed the abandoned clubhouse. Crews on scene for three-days mitigating the flames and completing the investigation.



INVOLVED IN OUR COMMUNITY

In 2019, we reached out to the community with many special events, charitable efforts, educational outreach, and programs offered by our firefighters. Here is a list of our efforts:

- Project Heart Start Day, and other venues—Mass public CPR education program;
- RioCares Program provides outreach for and follow up visits to our patients and victims of trauma;
- Fire Camp—Three-day hands-on summer camp for pre-teens;
- Annual Open House—Station 1 Open House and Halloween Costume Contest for kids;
- Fire Prevention Month—All young elementary students receive annual fire prevention message;
- Transported Santa to several children’s holiday events;
- 9/11 Ceremony—To honor those lost in the terrorist attacks;
- Reading to kids at various schools;
- Serving holiday meals to kids at the Children’s Hospital and seniors in Rio Rancho;
- Participated in several career days at local schools and recruiting fairs;
- Random Acts of Kindness provided help to residents in need;
- July 4th and Holiday parade;
- Pink T-shirt sales to benefit breast cancer research and domestic violence awareness efforts;
- “Fill the Boot” campaign for the MDA
- New Mexico Firefighters event for St. Baldrick’s Foundation, raised critical funds for children’s cancer research;
- Fire station tours;
- Battle of the Badges blood drive—FD vs PD;
- And, Remember the Night for firefighter behavioral health.



Above: FI Brian Bratcher works a park-event with the Roadrunner mascot.



Left: FF Aaron McDevitt coordinated the St. Baldrick’s Event for children’s cancer research funding.



Left Top: Members of the Command Staff were joined by other Fire Chiefs and Chaplains to honor the souls lost on 9/11.

Right: Santa (aka Capt. Jake Bailey) greeted kids at the annual CASA party for kids.



Left Bottom: Kids of all ages enjoyed our annual Open House & Halloween Costume Contest.

In 2019, Rio Rancho Fire’s personnel completed a total of 46,548 hours. These hours are comprised of Fire, EMS, Haz-Mat, Officer, Driver, Wildland, and Career Development training. Firefighters are required to complete 228 hours of Fire Training and 40-60 hours of EMS Training per year, depending on level of EMS licensure. Our personnel averaged 423 hours of training in 2019. This number is substantially higher than last year largely due to the two Academy classes.

2019 Training Highlights

Academy Class 13 graduated 12 cadets in the 16-week academy. The Graduates were:

- Reece Lucero (Top Cadet)
- Juanita Najera
- Adam Archuleta
- Lydia Fernandes
- David Garcia
- Brent Philipbar
- Reagan Rice
- Nathan Esquibel
- Eric Diehl
- Marissa Henson
- Kyle Scheppmann
- Mathew Guevara

Academy Class 14 graduated 10 cadets in the 16-week academy. The Graduates were:

- Michael Muniz (Top Cadet)
- Matthew Armstrong
- Dylan McGuire

- Gabriel Castillo
- Garrett Mahoney
- Alejandro Naranjo
- Eric Wellman
- Dominic Arzola
- Ryan Rood
- Crystal Bustamante

Several members attended the following classes to enhance and improve their knowledge base:

- Dozer Operator (40 hours)
- Fire Service Instructor I (40 hours)
- Fire Service Instructor II (40 hours)
- Fire Service Instructor III (40 hours)
- Fire Officer I (40 hours)
- Fire Officer II (40 hours)
- Fire Officer III (40 hours)
- Engineer Academy (40 hours)
- Engineer Academy Train the Trainer (40 hours)
- Haz-Mat Awareness and Operations (40 hours)
- Incident Command Systems – 300 (24 hours)
- Incident Command Systems – 400 (16 hours)
- Officer Development Certification Course (40 hours)
- Professional Standards Investigations (40 hours)
- Structural Firefighting (40 hours)
- Structural Firefighting Train the Trainer (40 hours)

- IPMBA Bike certification courses
- Heavy Rescue Team courses
- Peer Support courses

The 228 hours of Fire Training includes six Facility Drills which are three-hour hands-on drills. The Facility Drills conducted this year include:

- First-Five Minutes Drill
- Solar Panel / Electrical Systems Drill
- Hose Handling Drill
- Extrication Drill
- Bailout Drill
- Several Captain’s Choice Drills



FF Mary Philips tosses a rope bag during swift-water training.



Capt. Jeff Wenzel and Eng. Norm Michel work the “doll house” fire path simulator.

2019 Training Totals:

Total training hours:	46,548
Total EMS training hours:	5,661
Total Fire training hours:	40,887
Required annual training per employee:	268-288
Average hours completed per employee:	423

Presidential Visit to Rio Rancho Challenges Fire Personnel

In September of 2019 the City of Rio Rancho was informed by the Secret Service that President Trump would hold a campaign rally at the Santa Ana Star Center. This information was sent 10-days prior to the scheduled evening of the event. The City, along with leadership from RRF, RR Office of Emergency Management, and the Police Department went into full-planning mode.

Resources from the State and from neighboring jurisdictions were contacted to assist Rio Rancho with the planning for an anticipated large event. The safety of the attendees and the crews would be a top priority. A command center was established at City Hall, medical facilities were set up in adjacent building, and the Emergency Operations Center was activated.

Numerous RRF personnel, along with volunteers and paid-staff from many agencies were all assigned to provide critical roles in the large operation. Coordination, creativity and flexibility were key to the success of the operation.



Left—DC Richard Doty served as the Operations Chief for all fire/EMS personnel.

Below—The Bike Team provided mobile medical support at the site.



Life Saving Award



Rio Rancho Parks & Recreation staff were honored by Mayor Gregg Hull, the City Council, and members of RRF's Executive Officers for saving the life of a small child who was pulled unconscious from the waters of Haynes Pool. The lifeguards began critical life-saving procedures prior to the arrival of EMS crews. The young girl was present at the ceremony to thank the lifeguards for their efforts.

CERT Highlights



- During 2019, CERT volunteers donated 1,400 hours to different department related trainings or events. They participated in eight community events, like St. Baldrick's, Bataan Memorial Death March, Project Heart Start, the Halloween Open House, and 17 different trainings or exercises to support Emergency Management and the Fire Department.
- Three CERT classes were conducted in 2019 with a total of 41 participants; 37 CERT graduates completed CPR/AED training during the three classes offered throughout the year.
- Special Projects Coordinator Rose Martinez helped instruct the CERT Youth Camp in Portales in June.



Interagency cooperation can lead to the development of valuable relationships among first responders and our community partners. This past year, Emergency Management

worked with RRRFR, Rio Rancho Police officers, and Rio Rancho Public Schools staff to conduct an emergency drill at Lincoln Middle School.

The Office of Emergency Management Division (OEM) staff, with the help of many volunteers, filled a busy year with training, exercises, and even a presidential visit.

OEM assisted in coordinating a Presidential campaign visit at the Santa Ana Star Center on September 17, 2019. The City had 10 days to plan for the visit. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated that day to support on scene operations.

Emergency Management received \$470,562 in grant money from State Homeland Security funds for Heavy Technical Rescue Team training, PD's SWAT training and equipment, Rescue Task Force training and equipment, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, Emergency Management operations and to create a Hazardous Materials Response Plan.

Rio Rancho OEM partnered with Rio Rancho Public Schools to host an Active Threat Integrated Response Course at Rio Rancho High School in June 2019. The course was free through Federal Emergency Management Agency and instructed by Louisiana State University. Members of RRRFR, RRPD, RRPS, and some neighboring jurisdictions were in attendance. This hands-on course taught responders how to coordinate a response to an active shooter incident utilizing both fire and law enforcement to save lives.

RR OEM invited leadership from the faith-based community to a meeting on community and emergency preparedness at Meadowlark Senior Center in September.

RR OEM partnered with Children Youth and Families Department to provide emergency preparedness/safety training to foster children at Sandia Vista Elementary

School in February.

The Division also conducted an EOC exercise in February. The exercise tested the City's ability to respond to a health related emergency.

The NM Department of Health hosted an Access and Functional Needs Workshop on April 23, at Santa Ana Star Center.

During 2019, there were three EOC call down drills to test systems and procedures.

The EOC had limited virtual activations during winter storms to enhance and streamline communications and requesting of resources.

Incident Action Plans were developed for each day of Pork and Brew and the July 4th events to make the event safer and improve communication with all departments involved with the event.

Emergency Management training continues to push toward National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliance with City employees completing over 125 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) courses online or attending FEMA classes taught here in New Mexico. This included teaching two Incident Command System (ICS) classes for Rio Rancho and surrounding departments with 35 participants instructed. We also taught an Emergency Management Basic Academy course in Rio Rancho for the state and a Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program course for Bernalillo County.

The 2019 season for RRRFR's Wildland Strike Team brought challenges for the team.

Battalion Chief Marc Sandoval conducted a department-wide wildland training for each shift, which consisted of brush truck operations. All personnel were trained on pumping, drafting, hose evolutions, and refresher training on fire shelter deployments in a high wind environment.

Engineer Norm Michel also conducted a bulldozer operator class for any interested personnel who had plans for joining the heavy equipment team. The class introduced basic driving of the transport, parking, loading and unloading of the dozer. It also provided dozer operations relating to cutting fire lines, tree mitigation, and nomenclature of the dozer.

The heavy equipment personnel also assisted in tree removal from the Rio Grande Bosque which was caused by the high water flows and erosion of the river bank.



Training on float-a-pump operations.

Accomplishments for 2019:

- Department wide wildland refresher
- Dozer operations class
- Mitigation of tree removal in the Bosque
- Staffing 4th of July Bosque patrol
- Mutual aid to Albuquerque Fire Rescue
- Hold a testing site for new members
- Increased the equipment rates by 10%

Goals for 2020:

- Have wildland members complete task books
- Qualify additional Engine Bosses
- Qualify additional Heavy Equipment Bosses
- Deploy to at least five wildland assignments
- Assign a new Assistant Wildland Coordinator

NEW TEAM TO PROVIDE CEREMONIAL SUPPORT

BY FF ARIC RAY

Ever since becoming a member of RRRFR, it has been a personal and career goal of mine to implement a Department Honor Guard. I have had the privilege of serving as a member and Honor Guard Unit Commander with my former department, Silver City Fire. I was presented with unique opportunities to participate in numerous special assignments to include, Careflight 5 Memorial Services, Elite Medical Transport Crew Memorial Services, memorial services for the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshots who perished in the Yarnell Hill Fire in Prescott, Arizona; among several other events. My involvement in the honor guard quickly made me realize that one needs to possess strong mental fortitude, discipline, attention to detail and professionalism in some of the most difficult times we face as first responders. It is my intention to instill those traits in the Rio Rancho Fire and Rescue Honor Guard. Our team consists of nine members ranging from the



FF Daniel Wild, a member of the Honor Guard, plays the bagpipes for a City ceremony.

ranks of Firefighter to Lieutenant. Fire Administration has played an integral role and has given their full support for this endeavor to come to fruition. We are still in the beginning phases but leaps and bounds have been made over recent

months. The Team has its sights set on achieving "active status" in the Summer of 2020. The Team can be requested and/or activated for various reasons (e.g. presentation of colors at special events, marching in parades, and providing proper Line of Duty Death Services). It is with my utmost confidence that the Honor Guard will continue to represent RRRFR in a positive light and solidify the professional impact we have on our community. My sincerest gratitude goes out to each and every one of you for your continued patience and support in making this a reality.

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division focused a lot of effort on training, operations, and procedures during 2019. Continuing Education (CE) hours, which are required to maintain medical licenses, comprised over 5,500 hours for all personnel. RRFR completed 17,370 EMS assignments/classes. RRFR returned to Albuquerque Fire Rescue (AFR) for paramedic training with two of our own members attending the 11-month program. In true RRFR fashion, we had two remarkable students who both proved to be leaders, one of which earned the valedictorian honor. These individuals represented RRFR very well and have set the bar high for future members.

For the first time Rio Rancho hosted our own in house EMT courses. We found that we were capable of accomplishing anything with planning, effort and relying on the strengths of our own members. Through this program, we also re-established a strong connection with CNM.

EMS continues to be the highest requested emergency response



PHI Air-Med helicopter transports a patient from a crash on Unser.

from RRFR by our citizens, and we will continue to focus a lot of effort to keep our personnel trained to meet the demands of providing the highest level of medical care to our community.

The Summer of 2019 proved to be very challenging time for RRFR's EMS Division. In a retrospective review of some of our policies, we revamped some of our processes to help meet new demands on our resources. Although our old polices met the industry standards, we had to make adjustments in order to

address a new focus on accountability.

The EMS Division then had one of the largest changes in some time with a new Battalion Chief taking the reins. Administration worked with the Union in changing some of the requirements for the Division's Captain position. With that, we have now welcomed Capt. David Hoeksema into the division. We do look forward to the challenges of improving/expanding our already high level of patient care, and our delivery of education of our members. RRFR will continue to be one of the front runners in the State when it comes to EMS.

Bike Team Deploys to Rescues By FF Jeremy Martinez

The Emergency Medical Services Bike Team had an active and productive year.

The year started out with the addition of six new members who went through the rigorous three-day Int'l Police Mountain Bike Association training course. This included riding at night to prepare for events when the EMS Bike Team is called for duty after dark.

The EMS Bike Team had a total of 190 training hours for the year and were called for duty for a total of 220 hours. This includes providing EMS coverage on the 4th of July for several events including the fireworks display. The team was also present for all 3 days of the annual Pork and Brew where the team was able to quickly respond and mitigate several EMS situations.

The EMS Bike Team also participated in several large incidents. The team deployed four team members to provide EMS coverage well into the night for the Presidential visit in



The Bike Team trained on varied terrain to be prepared for different riding conditions.

September. The team was also deployed to a Search and Rescue incident in September. The team was deployed to the Valles Caldera to search for a mountain biker who had been missing for several days. The search for the lost mountain biker had been going on for several days when the EMS Bike Team arrived. The team was able to locate the rider who had fallen from his

bike and was badly injured. The team was able to stabilize the patient and get him extricated from the scene.

The EMS Bike Team has some new endeavors in our future. The team is branching out to be more active in search and rescue operations. The team also hopes to coordinate with more local entities that provide EMS bicycle coverage. We are currently coordinating with other local agencies to be used as a resource. The team also hopes to replace some aging gear and get cycling gear for all members.



RRFR personnel have been hosting the Fire Camp for kids from the Parks and Rec summer program for many years. In 2019, the camp was moved to Mariposa Basin Park to help with the camp's various activities. One of the more popular events is the modified combat challenge in which kids get the opportunity to perform various firefighter tasks.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR *BY DARREN BRAUDE, M.D. EMT-P*



RRFR personnel train with pig-lungs during an EMS continuing education class.

Medical calls represent the majority of the daily work for our crews and I am very proud of the care Rio Ran-

cho Fire Rescue provides to our community. I recently attended the National Association of EMS Physicians annual meeting and left reassured that we continue to be at the forefront of progressive fire-based EMS programs.

Community EMS also took a huge leap forward with the hiring of Shianne Mitchell as our first full time community paramedic and Rio Cares program. Shianne

has brought great enthusiasm and an exciting vision for the future.

Staffing was the major EMS challenge in 2019 but our Basic and Intermediate Life Support crews really stepped up to the plate with support from our paramedic captains and Medcoms. From extensive chart review I can say that patient care has not suffered. Speaking of Medcoms, the EMS Lieutenant position really started to establish itself this past year with the off-loading of community EMS responsibilities to Shianne and a focus on responding to high acuity calls.

The prehospital cardiac ultrasound Special Skill program has also been a great success. It always makes me proud to review ultrasound clips and agree 100% with our Medcom interpretations. As we look ahead to

2020, I am anticipating additional Special Skills and updates to our EMS guidelines.

Physician Assistant Jeremy Kersey still works closely with the Medcoms, and me to provide outstanding in-house occupational medicine care to be sure that our crews stay healthy during their careers here and on into retirement. The program has only become stronger thanks to his vision.

Finally, I would like to appreciate BC Marc Sandoval for all his hard work leading the EMS Division these past few years and thank BC Adam Arrossa for stepping up to maintain continuity. It is also amazing to have strong support for the EMS mission from Chief Bearce and Deputy Chief DeFillippo who have both held EMS leadership roles in the past.

Awards, Promotions & Retirements



The Annual Award winners are: FF Brad Kornrumph, second from left; FF Eric Kaufman; PM Mike Earnest; and Capt. Jake Bailey. They are shown with DC Richard Doty, left, DC Jimmy DeFillippo, and BC Adam Arrossa.



FF Rob Mitchell was given a proper send-off at Station 3 for his retirement.



BC Adam Arrossa, Capt. Jimmy Wenzel, and Eng. Jason Spaeth at their promotions ceremony.

PM Tony Rodgers was greeted at Station 1 on his final ride home after his retirement.



Capt. Andrew Garcia, FI Robert Brady, and FF Rob Mitchell were honored for 20-years of service.



Eng. Matt Lucero was greeted at Station 1 for his retirement ride home.



Left: Capt. Jimmy Wenzel receives his certificate from the Managing Officer Program.

Right: BC Mike Denison is greeted at Station 1 for his final retirement ride home.



FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION BY FIRE MARSHAL J.J. GARCIA

The Fire Prevention Division had another successful year with some exciting changes. We have taken the lead on a number of projects to increase the Division's abilities and outreach. These changes included the addition of a Fire Prevention Team. The Team's concept became a reality with an aim at providing specially-trained firefighters to deliver a strong fire prevention message to school kids, civic organizations and other groups. Five Fire Prevention Team members hit the ground running and were a huge help to a successful fire prevention program that was held in October. It is our intention to keep this team moving and motivated to help spread the message on preventing fires.



Engine 3 crew gives a tour of their truck.



FF Matthew Guevara places a fire hat on a young attendee of the Mayor's Sunday is Sunday.

The Fire Prevention staff completed a little over 1,500 inspections in 2019. Total fire inspections increased 2.5% from the previous year. This increase was due to new businesses opening in Rio Rancho. Residential building and subdivision planning also kept our staff busy as they worked with the City's Planning Review Committee.

We continued to provide businesses with a liaison for them to better understand the code requirements and navigate through the approval process. We are hopeful that this proactive approach will create a more business-friendly environment in the City to attract more commercial development.

We successfully completed a goal from last year which was to adopt the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC 2015). With this change, we will enhance our relationships with the City's Development Services Department and their building division, as well as the State Fire Marshal Office.

Another goal met from last year was developing an Arson Task Force for the state. This concept involves a collaborative effort of arson investigators from across the state who work together on larger fires to investigate them with more efficiency and use the resources from larger jurisdictions to assist when large fires or fatal fires occur.

We successfully were able to use the task force team for the Asbury fire, which involved a fatality and the largest fire Rio Rancho has had which was the Country Club fire.

The Fire Prevention Division will continue our goal to complete our required ICC certifications by coordination this training the State Fire Marshal's Office.

The following goals for this office will be as follows:

- All Inspector/Investigators to become Inspector II ICC certified.
- All Inspector/investigators to become ICC certified Plan reviewers.
- Look for additional resources and programs to be more proactive in community outreach and prevention efforts.

FMO at a Glance

- **Fire Inspections—1,508**
- **Plan Reviews—234**
- **Fire Protection System Reviews—25**
- **Special Events Staffed—75**
- **Children Taught Fire Prevention—6,500**



Last year was a banner year for the Rio Grande Basin Heavy Technical Rescue Team (RGBHTR). The team was activated 37 times throughout the year for a variety of emergencies including:

- Wilderness Search and Rescue (6 incidents)
- Technical Rope Rescue/Extraction (9 incidents)
- Swiftwater Rescue (17 incidents)
- Canine Search – (3 incidents)

Among these calls for service was the RGBHTR's first multi-day deployment. Swiftwater Rescue Technicians took vehicles and equipment to Artesia in anticipation of 50 year flood dangers. While no residents required rescue while the team was deployed, a great deal was learned and some excellent connections made with other technical rescuers in the state.

We conducted internal training throughout the year to maintain competency in our response disciplines, as well as \$31,000 grant funded dollars sending members to certification-level training in many disciplines including Confined Space Rescue, Structural Collapse Rescue, Tower Rescue, Swiftwater Rescue and Boat Operator. We look forward to sending members to more training this year including more members for SCT, High Angle Rope Rescue, and Passenger Rail Rescue.

RGBHTR members also participated in several special events throughout the year, assisting with the ladder climb at both the St. Baldrick event and the Annual Open House Halloween Event at Station 1. We were also lucky enough to partner with the RFR Dozer Team and the City of Rio Rancho Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department to remove several large and dangerous snags from the river that were causing serious dangers to boaters on the Rio Grande.

Our cache was increased again this year as we expended \$27,000 dollars in grant funds to buy some replacement helmets, harnesses, lights, PFDs, some specialized equipment for Confined Space Rescue and Swift Water Search and Rescue.

Most importantly, at the end of last year we added nine new members to our team from various ranks and positions in the department. It has been refreshing to see the motivation and desire for knowledge from our new team members and we look forward to working and training with them.



Members of the RGBHTR Team took part in the Advanced Swift-water Rescue Technician training in the Animas River near Farmington.



The Team used a communications tower to perform training on tower rescue techniques.

Fire Athletes



Team RRRFR ran the stairs in the charity American Lung Association's Fight for Air Climb.



Firefighters Brad Kornrumpf, Steven Castillo, and Reece Lucero represented RRRFR.



RRFR built a flag football team to play in the annual RRHS charity game against RRPD.



Left: FF Alex Bartra won his boxing bout at the Battle in the Bosque charity boxing event.

Right: EM Theresa Greeno, Lt. Jessica Duron-Martinez, and Chief Paul Bearce ran in the Colorado Marathon in Fort Collins. Chief Bearce ran the half while the other two ran their first full marathon.



Eng. Jon Colunga, PM Marcus Gawne, and FF Steven Castillo competed in the Firefighter Muster sponsored by the IAFF.



DC Richard Doty continues to compete in triathlons across the country. Here he does the bike portion of the Mountain Man Triathlon in Flagstaff.



EM Theresa Greeno and Lt. Jessica Duron-Martinez ran the La Luz Trail run last fall.



OEM's Rose Martinez and Lt. Jessica Duron-Martinez climbed the Manitou Steps near Colorado Springs.

Off-Duty Fun, Adventure & Charity



FFs Kirk Ricketts and Nathan Esquibel collect for the annual "Fill The Boot" campaign for MDA at a local grocery store.



Emergency Management's Rose Martinez assisted in the building of a wheelchair ramp.



Capt. Floersheim, Eng. Johnson, Chief Bearce, and Mayor Hull served Thanksgiving dinner during the annual meal at McDonald's.



Above: RFRF personnel have been serving Thanksgiving meals to kids at UNM Hospital for many years.

Left: Chief Bearce read to kids at an elementary school for Fire Prevention Week.



Matt Geisel and FF Jeremy Martinez scaled Cabezon Peak to catch the view from atop.

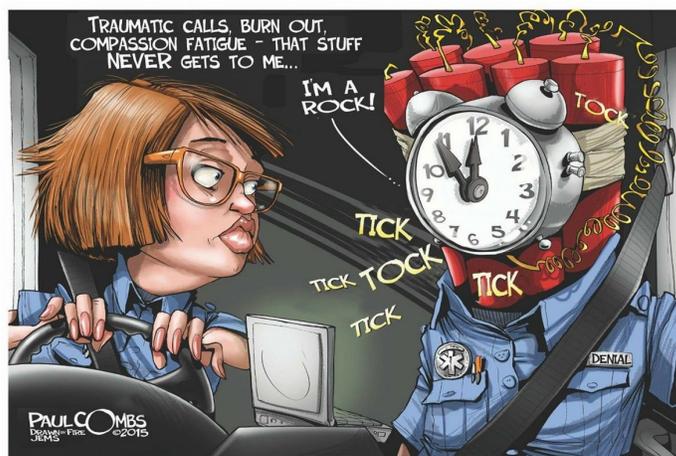
PEER SUPPORT TEAM PROVIDES ASSISTANCE

More than double. That is the number of firefighter suicides in the U.S. compared to line-of-duty deaths in 2019. According to the Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance, the leading research group tracking suicides in our profession, 119 firefighters took their lives last year. There were 57 line-of-duty deaths in the same time.

That sobering figure, coupled with the FBHA research that has found rates of depression and post-traumatic stress disorders among firefighters are as much as five-times that of the general population should be enough to get all of our attention. RRRF's Peer Support Team is committed to serving as the first-line of mental health defense for members of our department and their family members, as we all navigate through our careers.

2019 was an extremely difficult year for RRRF with the loss of Lt. Colin Rice in June. No group felt that loss more than the Peer Support Team, as Colin was one of the pioneers of the team and served as one of the group's co-leaders. In an effort to honor his memory, the team did some collective soul searching, refocused on our purpose and began to look for ways to increase our efficiency and make sure we are doing everything we can for the people who count on us. We decided the best strategy was to increase our educational and marketing efforts so that everyone involved knows that we are available.

Last year the Peer Support Team taught an introductory peer support class to each of our academy classes and started the process of building a department-wide refresher for the entire department. We worked with retired BC Scott Kelley to create a new logo for our team and built an informational brochure that outlines not only our capabilities and contact information but those of the Public Safety Psychology Group, the Albuquerque-based counseling organization that provides the team's oversight and



THERE IS NO SHAME IN ADMITTING YOU'RE HUMAN.

serves as our department's EAP provider. We placed one of these brochures in every MOS' mailbox at Station 1, at every fire station and many city buildings. Late last year the team also finalized its SOG, which is in the final stages of revision and implementation. The document, which outlines how the team operates and why, will serve as a point of reference for not only team members but also anyone in the department curious about our capabilities.

In 2019 the team began to formally track our members' activities using cloud-based, password-protected software. This information, which does not include any identifiers, will allow the team to identify who is using our team and for what. We can use this important data to develop continuing education on specific topics and

reach out to specialists in certain areas for additional help if necessary.

The team, which has existed for seven years, increased its size to 14 members in late 2019 with the help of RRRF's administration based on an industry-best standard that an adequate size of a team like ours is roughly 10 percent of our department. The idea being that by maintaining that ratio the odds are in our favor that everyone in our department will have someone on the team they can relate to. While our Peer Support Team's priority is our own members and their families, we remain an active participant in the larger Metro Peer Support Team, which includes BCFD, AAS and AFR. Our members can be called upon by any other participating department to help facilitate critical stress debriefings or serve as a resource for their members who may want to talk to someone from outside their agency. As a benefit all the resources that exist within those other departments are also at our disposal.

HISTORIC COUNTRY CLUB FIRE



In the evening hours of October 4th, crews were dispatched to a possible fire off of Country Club Drive. When firefighters arrived to the area, they found heavy flames and smoke coming from the abandoned County Club clubhouse. Throughout the next three days, crews battled the blaze despite challenges that faced the operations. Access to the property because of blocked drive-ways was the first hurdle that fire personnel would face. The overwhelming amount of heat and fire taxed the nearby fire hydrants. Due to the collapse of the main roof structure, extinguishment of hidden flames proved to be difficult. Crews flowed thousands of gallons of water from hoselines and master-streams to douse the blaze. Once the flames were extinguished, investigators from RRRFR and the State Arson Task Force began the arduous task of sifting through the rubble for clues as to the origin of the fire. The hard work and dedication of many firefighters and investigators led to a successful operation without injuries. Off-duty personnel, admin staff, and our CERT rehab team also responded to assist. The Country Club fire is the largest commercial structure fire in the history of our community.



The membership of L4877 have continued to show that we are a strong and growing union. Our union entered the year with members enrolled in paramedic school. With the support of the city council working with city administrators, we were able to send three more and are eagerly awaiting their return. We continue to honor founding members entering retirement and we are excited and proud of their retirement endeavors.

While 2019 closed out with a new contract providing groundbreaking benefits to our members, there were multiple other accomplishments celebrated throughout the year. Early in the year members were able to attend the Affiliate Leadership Training Summit. These members attended classes provided by the IAFF. The unique experience and relationships gained are unmatched. Our state association celebrated the addition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) into presumptive illnesses caused by Fire and EMS service. This gives members the ability to help deal with stresses accumulated during our service to the community. L4877 members were out in force with community involvement. St. Baldrick's continued its run with great fun and activities to bring fundraising to childhood cancer research. With organizations like Random Acts, we were able to continue outreach in

the community. Fight-for-Air Climb, benefiting American Lung Association, was a success with a Rio Rancho team competing well. The Fire Muster saw members from Rio Rancho in their inaugural run while Muscular Dystrophy Association was accomplished with pride, continuing a tradition spanning over 60 years between the IAFF and MDA.

The membership of our association grew in 2019, welcoming the most recent graduating classes as they completed their probationary year. Thanks to the grant writing ability of Ryan Floershiem, and working with our administration, the SAFER grant provided six new personnel to our ranks. We were able to expand our Community EMS (RioCares) Program, which has been a long time coming. The commitment to grow and provide the best care to the community was demonstrated with the expansion of this program.

We move into 2020 with expectations high.

We aim to continue challenging ourselves and providing innovative opportunities for our membership. Your local executive board appreciates your continued support. We will continue to advance our relationships with city leadership and our duty of representation. Thank you all for your engagement and support in leading our community.



Saying Goodbye



Lt. Colin Rice
EOW 6/03/19

In June of 2019, the men and women of RRFR said goodbye to Lt. Colin Rice. His untimely death rocked the foundation of our department. We extend our thanks to all of the support we received from neighboring agencies, and for the strength of Colin's family and his colleagues in RRFR. Colin, we miss you.

