



# THE SMOKE SIGNAL

Cobb County Fire & Emergency Services

Spring, 2009

## COBB FIRE LOSES 2 OF ITS OWN

Retired Fire Chief Nathan Wilson passed away at the age of 68 on Monday, March 9 after battling cancer for many years.

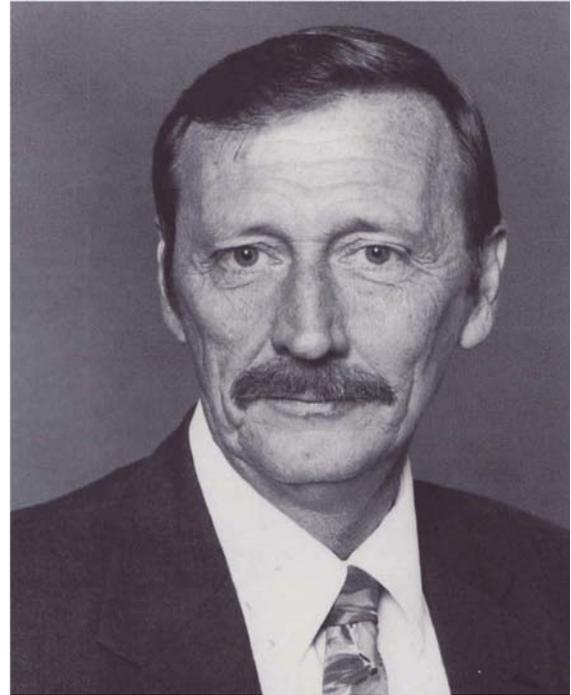
A lifelong Cobb County resident, Nathan began his career with CCFES in 1965, first assigned to Station 12 in the old Gritter's District. He worked his way up the ranks, and served as the Fire Marshal for 5 years until he was appointed Fire Chief in 1993. Nathan retired on December 31, 1996. Prior to his career with Cobb Fire, Nathan served 4 years in the U.S. Navy (2 on active duty, followed by another 2 years inactive). He was a graduate of Marietta High School.

He is survived by his wife Carolyn; son Christopher; daughter Elizabeth; and other family members. Nathan Wilson will be truly missed.

Contributions in Nathan's memory may be made to the American Cancer Society of Cobb County located at 1825 Barrett Lakes Blvd. Suite 280, Kennesaw, GA. 30144.

Retired Lieutenant L.C. Carter passed away on March 26, 2009, days shy of his 63rd birthday. L.C. began his career with Cobb Fire in 1973, and retired in April 2000 after 27 years of service. He was devoted to his CCFES friends and remained involved with the Department throughout his retirement.

L.C. bravely fought serious health issues, and is survived by his wife Carmen; son Ron; and daughter Carla.



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Complimentary copies are distributed to all Cobb Fire and Public Safety facilities, and placed in the Fire Administration Common Files under "Smoke Signal".

*This issue will also be uploaded to our website: [www.cobbfire.org](http://www.cobbfire.org)*

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*Cobb County...Expect the Best!*

**COBB FIRE IS A DEPARTMENT OF COBB COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

Samuel S. Olens, Commission Chairman  
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Tim Lee, District 3 Commissioner  
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## DAMON GENSEL UPDATE

Since Damon's leukemia diagnosis this past November, the Cobb Fire family has been rallying around him and his family. Please help CCFES continue to support Damon in his struggle by supporting the activities set up to assist him in this fight.

The best odds for long-term remission is a bone marrow transplant, which Damon will undergo shortly. As of this time, Damon has a 1% chance of finding a perfect match for a bone marrow donation. The test for bone marrow compatibility is quick and totally painless, consisting merely of swabbing the inside of a potential donor's mouth with cotton swabs. The cost for this screening is \$52, but these fees are waived for anyone who will donate whole blood or platelets. If you are interested and have not yet participated in this effort, you can contact Cindy Carroll at Fire Headquarters for more information at (770) 528-8000, or Atlanta Blood Services at: (404) 459-8744 (Nekori Skinner or Angela Howell). Atlanta Blood Services has a Donation Center at Northside Hospital and a new Cobb location in the Whitewater Plaza on Cobb Parkway (the same office building as Concentra).

Many Cobb Fire, Police, and other County employees have been tested and have donated blood or platelets. Two blood drives held for both employees and the public have also been successful. As a matter of fact, the February 18 drive was so successful that donors were turned away due to lack of time and equipment. However, no perfect bone marrow match has been identified yet.

Right: Retired Battalion Chief K. Mark Johnson completes donation paperwork while Damon and Capt. Norm Weber look on.



Left: Retired Fire Chief David Hilton, Eng. Steve Bradley, and Capt. Mike Bennett sign in at the Station 8 donation drive.

## TIPS FROM THE FIRE INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

By Senior Investigator Rod Sanders

Fire investigators use a systematic approach to determine the origin and cause of a fire. This approach is referred to as the Scientific Method. There are 7 recognized steps in our industry that must be followed to formulate a final hypothesis (origin and cause determination). Step 1—is Recognize the Need. This means responding to the fire, protecting the scene and preventing similar fires in the future. Step 2—is Define the Problem. This is the planning stage of the origin and cause investigation. The investigator will do a need assessment, i.e. determine responsibility for the investigation and interviews, protect evidence, and review preliminary findings. Step 3—Collect Data. During this step, the investigator will gather information. This can be done through direct observation, photographs, evidence collection, testing, interviews, etc. Step 4—Analyze the Data. This step is also known as Inductive Reasoning. Inductive Reasoning is developing a hypothesis from a particular experience and proceeding to generalizations. The investigator relies on their training and experience in evaluating the data. Step 5—Develop a Working Hypothesis. Based on the data analyzed during step 4, the investigator will begin to develop a hypothesis to explain where the fire originated and how the fire started. Step 6—Test the Working Hypothesis. This step is also known as Deductive Reasoning. Deductive Reasoning is when conclusions are drawn by logical inference from given premises. The investigator will compare their working hypothesis with all of the known facts to eliminate all reasonable origins and causes for the fire. Step 7—Select the Final Hypothesis. The investigator can select a final hypothesis after the working hypothesis is thoroughly consistent with all the known facts. If after using all 7 steps the investigator cannot eliminate other origins and causes, then the fire should be classified as “undetermined”.

All 7 steps need to be followed to ensure the final hypothesis can withstand peer review and scrutiny. If you ever have any questions, please call us!

Sources cited: NFPA 921 2008 Edition and Forensic Fire Scene Reconstruction, David J. Icove and John D. DeHaan



by Darrell Dunlap

In December 2008, the idea of starting a television show with TV 23 about our Department was approved! No training requirements involved; we will be looking at crews, equipment, facilities, and just having fun.

With Lt. Chris Stone setting up the initial website and handling the taping, editing, and broadcasting, we hope to have plenty of topics for future segments. I got the idea for a show from the Sioux Falls, South Dakota Fire Department.

I would like to thank Chief Sam Heaton, Lt. Chris Stone, Lt. Joseph Bryant, Charles Blackwell, and Norm Spafard for being the first to jump on the bandwagon to get this project off the ground. The first episode should air by the end of April, with many more hopefully to come.

## RECENT RETIREMENTS

**Engineer Thornton “Toby” Koby retired from CCFES on March 30 after 24 years of service. A reception was held in his honor to celebrate the occasion at Station 4.**

**Lieutenant Terry Beadles retired on March 13 after serving over 25 years with the Department. A reception was held for Terry at Station 13.**

**Captain Jim Mykytyn retired on March 2 after nearly 30 years with Cobb Fire. Jim was a longtime member of the HazMat Team.**

**We wish all our recent retirees well in their future endeavors and hope to see them soon!**

## ***SAFETY VILLAGE NEWS***

The Cobb County Safety Village is rapidly approaching completion! This unique complex will be the most comprehensive safety training environment in the Region, where children and adults alike can gain lifesaving knowledge and techniques through hands-on experiences.

The Safety Village Foundation is still seeking partnerships from the private sector to invest in reduced-scale buildings within the 8-acre Village grounds. The streets, sidewalks, and buildings will reflect those located in Cobb County, and will be used as an integral part of the overall learning experience.

Programs at the Village will include:

- Fire and Life Safety
- Car Seat Safety Inspection Station
- Crime Prevention
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Health and Wellness Issues
- Disaster Preparedness
- Pedestrian Safety
- Construction Site Safety
- Workplace Safety

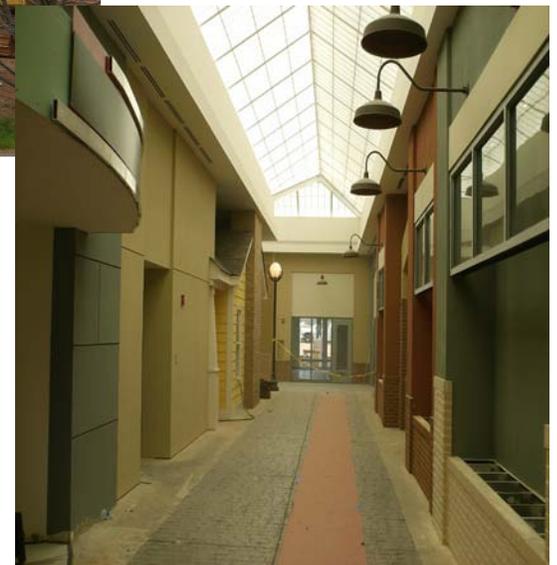


This tree is called, “The Meeting Place”. Located just outside “Sparky’s Place” (the state of the art simulated smoke room), this location is used to teach children about going to predetermined spots to meet up with family during a fire evacuation.

The Fire & Life Safety Education Division will be relocating their offices to the Village, with Capt. Scott Dodson presently continuing as the Interim Coordinator.



The exterior and interior reflect a village-style motif. The auditorium at the end of the citywalk main hallway is an art deco style theater, seats and has a seating capacity of 127.



# “CULTURAL COMMITMENTS”

by Chief Sam Heaton



I have had some questions about our cultural commitments and I thought I would take this opportunity to explain. Cultural commitments are commitments that we encourage all personnel to envelop to make a cultural change to our department. Cultural changes do not happen overnight – they will likely take years to fully develop, but once developed the department and its personnel will be better through increased productivity, safety, and personal achievement. The department’s cultural commitments of FUSE are explained below:

**Fitness** - The number one killer of firefighters is related to coronary artery disease and our own lack of fitness. Each one of us is responsible for really doing something about it. We want people that are committed to fitness so that they are there when others need them and that they are there for their families in the end. It is more than “working out” at the station - it is a cultural change or life commitment to staying fit throughout your career and your life.

**Unity Through Diversity** - Almost everyone thinks of race and gender when the word diversity is used. We are talking about more than race and gender – we are talking about all of our differences. We have people from all backgrounds, with different life experiences, different upbringings, from different places on the earth, fat, skinny, white, black, men, women, short, tall, fast, slow, etc. The list goes on and on, but with all of our differences we should join together as one team in unity to be the best fire department in the country. One person’s weakness may be another’s strength and we should use that to be one strong team. We have to be accepting of each other’s differences if we are to live together, work together, and be expected to protect others and ourselves.

**Safety** - one of the best ways to protect ourselves and each other is to make everyone a “safety officer”. Everyone should feel free to stop unsafe actions regardless of rank. “Everyone goes home” is exactly what we want everyday! Whether it is safety at an emergency incident, at the firehouse, going to and from work, or even at home, safety should be in our minds. We teach ICS, RIT, size-up, driver safety, certified safety officers, rescue drills, etc, but they are all worthless if we do not act, perform, and think safety.

**Education** - This is the key to success in today’s fire service. As technologies change so must the firefighter. As our workforce becomes more diverse with different challenges in the workplace, so must the firefighter be better prepared to manage and lead. To be the best department the members must remain attentive and proactive. To do all of this we must educate ourselves and continue to educate ourselves so that we create a continuous learning environment. The continuous learning will lead to critical thinking where we learn more about ourselves as individuals, more about our careers, and become more accepting of other people and our surroundings.

I hope this explanation helps everyone better understand our cultural commitments. Our culture will not change without your commitment.



On April 18, several Cobb firefighters participated in the annual Climb Atlanta Firefighter Challenge. This incredible feat involves racing up 50 floors (1,150 steps) while wearing over 40 pounds of gear at 191 Peachtree Tower in downtown Atlanta. Here are the overall results:

Jeff Moss	(40th)	13:51
Sean Doran	(41st)	14:02
Aaron Lasenyik	(65th)	17:04
Kimberly Bowie	(71st)	18:37
Jim Crawford	(78th)	22:04
Robert Hiller	(81st)	22:46
Michael Schutz	(88th)	25:35

Congratulations to all participants!

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

by Lt. Jeff Moss & Chief Sam Heaton

*Q: I have noticed the instances where I key up the mike and am “beeped” out have increased tenfold to what they used to be. On one occasion, it happened 5 times in a row. This has been a documented problem on the fireground with firefighters calling maydays and not being able to get their transmission out. What is the issue with this?*

A: Command Staff and other personnel who deal with these type issues only know of the problems when they are reported. If a problem is encountered, please take time to report it up your chain of command. The problems that have been reported to this point have resulted in some resolutions in area specific situations. Some small areas have been found to have a difficult time with transmissions due to unauthorized radio equipment and antennas that may interfere with radio traffic on our channels. We report these cases to Tracy Roberts at 800 MHz and she investigates each case.

*Q: With the increased radio traffic and MDCs in every apparatus; why aren't more officers choosing to use the responding key on the computer. And why aren't the dispatchers picking up that response (via the MDC), sometimes?*

A: The current CAD does not respond well with the MDC response button and the 911 Operator cannot always notice responses without verbiage being exchanged. There is a current upgrade process ongoing on the CAD system that should be complete by the end of the year. This update will hopefully improve the efficiency of the MDC's ability to transmit status by pushing buttons. We have also had problems with CAD relaying too many “times” to Firehouse FRMS when using the MDCs and we are hoping the upgrades will address this issue.

*Q: With MDCs in every apparatus why are dispatchers still announcing the address and the comments of the calls sometimes three or more times on calls? It seems as though there was less radio traffic when we didn't have the MDCs at all. This is a complete waste of airtime, which we have problems with already.*

A: The dispatchers are following policy on the dispatch procedures. Hopefully with the CAD upgrade we can look into modifying the verbal dispatch procedures to cut back on traffic.

*Q: When will it be a priority to classify legitimate ALS calls in the proper way? The CCFES percentage of dispatched ALS calls does not match the national percentage.*

A: With the inception of Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) the dispatchers are dispatching calls as ALS and BLS based on protocols that have been approved by our Medical Director. If a unit is dispatched inappropriately, please send an email to Lt. Bryant with the details of the call and he will investigate it with 911.

*Q: We were told that our retirement benefit was calculated without specialty pay included. Is the retirement deferral amount taken from this money and how do we know if it is not?*

A: When changes to our pension plan were discussed last year there was discussion of basing retirement on base pay only, but that did not occur and the retirement pay does include specialty pay at this time.

*Q: What is Command Staff's view on the Union? I know that we are a right to work state so does the Union have any legitimate pull or power as recognized by management?*

A: Command Staff recognizes the union as a group of employees with concerns and suggestions. We are willing to listen to any group of employees or any individual for that matter, who present a concern which they would like to see addressed. The current County Policy regarding Union Activity states: “Cobb County will not recognize any labor organization as the collective bargaining agent for any Cobb County employees or group of Cobb County employees, nor will the County bargain with any labor organization in regard to grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work.” (QUESTIONS & ANSWERS CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (continued)**

*Q: What is the department's policy on taking a fire apparatus to a restaurant to sit down and eat? Is there a written policy regarding such?*

A: There is not a written policy about sitting and eating in a restaurant, but it is our standard of practice to avoid sitting down to eat in restaurants. Companies are welcome to get take out food while commuting to or from training, calls, etc., and may sit and eat while attending training sessions at the Training Center, but to leave the station to "go out" to eat is not acceptable.

*Q: Is there any department or County policy or guideline in place regarding layoffs, pay cuts, etc. if the economy worsens and the County feels it necessary to trim the budget? Would other departments get cut before ours?*

A: There is a reduction in force policy that can be found at Cobb Web > Employee > Policies & Procedures > Reduction in Force Policy. The policy may be revised at some point in the future but it is the policy in place at this time. It is obviously top priority of the County to maintain adequate levels of public safety and at this point in time there is no discussion about layoffs, furloughs, or pay cuts in our department.

*Q: As a 10+ year veteran of this department and a paramedic engineer who is interested in furthering his career, I have noticed that many of the people "moving up the ladder" to the appointed positions above Lieutenant are actually those who have given up their paramedic patches. I was wondering if I should consider giving up my patch to increase my chances at the higher positions. How does the Command Staff feel about this? Is being a paramedic actually more of a hindrance when seeking to obtain Key Managerial positions?*

A: (From Chief Heaton): I personally feel that it is a very tough decision to give up something for which you have worked so hard. The County offers many training opportunities and whatever someone decides to take advantage of is a personal choice. I do feel that if the County has paid for the certification then there should be years of return through service to the County before it is given up. If someone has any special certification that they feel has become more of a hindrance than a benefit or they do not feel they are adequate at that certification then it would probably be best to let the certification lapse. As far as a hindrance to promotion – we look at all certifications and education and consider it to be a good thing.

*Q: Has Cobb applied for the SAFER grant to help improve staffing?*

A: No. The current plan provides no additional staffing at this time. The SAFER grant only pays the first year for the additional staffing and then the jurisdiction has to pick up the expense going forward. So to receive the grant we would have to be approved to increase our staffing and with the economy the way it is, this does not seem to be a prudent action.

*Q: If the economy worsens and furloughs are imminent, is it possible to eliminate some administrative positions rather than field positions?*

A: While there are no immediate discussions of staff reduction, should it occur management would look at all possibilities to avoid reducing the service we provide to the citizens and visitors to Cobb County.

(MORE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

## ***MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (CONTINUED)***

*As you can see, there are many questions published in this issue. We welcome this forum for communication!  
Please continue to send your questions for future issues to Lt. Jeff Moss at Station 23 A Shift.*

*Q: Why do we still maintain a paper log book? With the firehouse system now in use all of this information may be accessed for review by going to the journal icon and selecting the date you want to view. This would also save money of printing.*

A: Command Staff is looking into eliminating log books in an attempt to save money and reduce the amount of paper used. We are also looking at another way to document our training throughout the year which will reduce paper.

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## **STATION 30 UPDATE**

It's official- Station 30 will be rebuilt! The Cobb County Board of Commissioners has approved the construction of a new Fire Station 30, to be located behind Milford Elementary School off Austell Road. The new station property will be 150 feet off the fence line of the school. Soil coring samples have already been extracted for testing, and construction will begin shortly. The architect awarded the contract is Bill Howell, whose firm has built several other facilities for CCFES in the past. The contract for the construction will be advertised for bids very shortly.

As many of you may know, Station 30 was opened over 2 years ago in the facility which housed both old Station 10 and the Air Lab/Facilities Maintenance. With the widening of Austell Road and the construction of the Windy Hill Connector, the ramp at Station 30 has been significantly shortened. Additionally, the front door of existing Station 30 will be approximately 8 feet from the turn lane for the Windy Hill Road Connector.

At an estimated cost of just under \$2 million, new Station 30 will be nearly the same "footprint" as Station 11, but flipped to be a near mirror image of Station 9. The drive-through 2-bay facility will house a slightly larger bumped out kitchen. Where at Station 11, the community room occupies the rear corner, present plans call for the Air Lab to relocate into this space.

Members of the undefeated "Heavy Hittin' Headquarters" Team pose for a photo on the right following their 4 straight wins in the first annual CCFES Family Fun Day at Sweetwater Creek Park on Saturday, May 2.



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