

FMAM Interview with Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal Jim Smith:

A little over 2 years ago the State Fire Marshals Division hired Jim Smith as the Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal. While Chief Smith is not new to the fire service, he is new to fire prevention. He graciously accepted an invitation to be interviewed for the Post Indicator.

Angie Wiese: Tell us a little about your background.

Jim Smith:

I started in the fire service in August, 1980 with the New Hope Fire Department.

Joined Maple Grove FD in the latter part of the 1980's.

1987, I became a NAREMT-Paramedic and worked for North Ambulance.

April, 1988, I was hired by the Edina Fire Department as a Firefighter/Paramedic.

In March of 1992, I transferred over to the St. Paul Fire Department.

Over the next 22 years, I held the positions of Firefighter/Paramedic, Training Officer, Fire Captain, and District Chief

Early 2008, I was appointed to the position of Chief of Operations for the Republican National Convention.

October, 2008, I was promoted to Assistant Chief of Operations. I remained in that position until my retirement in 2014.

In December of 2014, I was hired by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety/State Fire Marshal Division to assume the position of Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal.



AW: What do you enjoy most about your job?

JS: The most satisfying part of my job is working with a team of people whose enthusiastic and passionate work ethic is second to none. From the support staff to the inspectors to the fire investigators, code specialists, and public educators, they all work in a wonderfully professional and dedicated manner that continues to move the division forward. The 6 Supervisors who oversee their team's day-to-day operations do a tremendous job at implementing sound, fair and appropriate resolutions to the myriad of issues that arise on a continual basis. This, in turn, allows Fire Marshal West and me to "fly at the 30,000-foot level" in order to build and expand the division, and foster an environment whereby the entire SFMD staff strives to excel in enhancing the exceptional customer service our clients so rightly deserve.

AW: Where do you find value in your membership in FMAM?

JS: I find the value in being a member of FMAM in that the association has the predominate mission of making the citizens of Minnesota safer. The mission is simply stated: "Dedicated to providing leadership and resources for fire prevention and life safety." In essence, educating the people of Minnesota to make fire and life safety a priority in the homes they reside in, the buildings where they work and shop, and in the schools where we send our children. FMAM has no "backdoor agenda". There's no self-serving intentions, and no "awards banquet" at the end of the year. FMAM exists because of the dedicated people who know that 1 fire in Minnesota is 1 fire too many.

For the past 36 ½ years, I have been on the "other" side of the fence – responding to emergencies. And the majority of these emergencies were clearly avoidable. It's now comforting to be on the side of the fence that is committed to preventing the number of fires across the State of Minnesota.