



NEWS RELEASE

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Beaufort Fire Department realigns fire prevention, public education efforts

Continuing Beaufort's efforts to do more with less, Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson and Fire Chief Sammy Negrón showcased a new approach to prevent fires and to educate the public about fire safety.

Similar to the "Every Marine a rifleman" creed, Negrón's approach is that every firefighter should be involved in helping prevent fires and fire damage. "This is how we are doing business now," Negrón said. "We are using efficient and effective management practices to expand our services without expanding our department or our budget."

For instance, during recent neighborhood cleanups throughout downtown Beaufort that cleared out more than 312 tons of debris, much of it flammable, firefighters helped remove the debris. They also visited in homes and talked to residents about fire safety. They also checked smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in homes as part of their efforts to help prevent future fires.

"Every Beaufort City firefighter is trained to fight fires and to save lives and property, but they are also trained in how to prevent fires," Negrón said. "We expand our capabilities to inform and educate the public, and to prevent fires, when each firefighter assumes some responsibility for fire safety and public education."

The department shift in how it delivers fire safety education follows a year-long study of the city police and fire departments by the International City/County Management Association. Their review helped guide restructuring of those departments, Dadson said.

As part of that restructuring, Negron will serve as the fire marshal, succeeding Lt. Dan Byrne who resigned Friday. Rather than have one or more employees dedicated specifically to fire prevention and fire education, all firefighters will share that responsibility, Negron and Dadson said.

An important aspect of this realignment of duties and responsibilities within the fire department will include the redefining of duties in the fire and life safety education portion of the Fire Marshal's office with a training education officer responsible for presenting high quality fire and life safety education programs to both the public and firefighters alike, Negron said.

"It's all about effectively deploying our resources," Dadson said. "We are watching our dollars while at the same time we are trying to provide improved and even expanded services to Beaufort city residents. This approach to fire prevention and public information is the best way to do that."

Pro-active, prevention-based efforts by the Beaufort Fire Department and Beaufort Police Department earned "best practice" kudos from a recent comprehensive study conducted in 2009-2010 by the International City/County Management Association for Beaufort.

Those effort help save lives and reduce loss of property, ICMA experts said. The reports addressed strengths of both departments as well as areas where improvement is needed.

"We brought ICMA and their experts in to take a close look at the services we provide in public safety, and to help us identify how we can make an already good thing better," Dadson said. "The reports indicate we've made good progress but still have room to improve, and we now have a new roadmap for that improvement."

Through strong financial management and City Council leadership, Beaufort found creative ways to provide exceptional services in 2009-2010 without extra money, Dadson told City Council last month.

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