

History Behind the Badge CCFR Fire Marshal's Office



Capital City Fire Rescue started in Juneau nearly 130 years ago as the Juneau Fire Department. Many things have changed over this time period, and many people have come and gone along the way. One thing that has remained is the importance of protecting the community from fire or other disasters through education, engineering and, enforcement, when needed. This article is the first of a series that will be published that explains the Fire Marshal's Office, who they are, what they do, and how the members of the department are very much an integral piece of the office functions and effectiveness in protecting our community.

Currently, the office is staffed with two full time marshals after the addition of a Deputy Fire Marshal position in 2006. This has not always been the case. In fact, for several years there has only been a single person responsible for a myriad of duties, obligations, and "other duties as assigned". The title Fire Marshal is often thought of by the public as an individual who shuts down a local bar due to overcrowding or arrests someone for an arson crime. These are true, however a fire marshal has to be well versed and knowledgeable in all aspects of the fire department's responsibilities and be focused on fire prevention as it relates to engineering, education and enforcement. This is a very broad range of knowledge that encompasses everything from building construction to law enforcement to the methodology of teaching kids and adults of all ages. The fire marshal is the leader in all hazards prevention efforts and must maintain a constant focus for organizations in regard to preventing the loss of life and property in the community.

In 1901, the first City Marshal was hired in Juneau. This position was primarily an early law enforcement position that carried out many fire department related duties that are still done to this day. The city marshal not only enforced criminal laws when Alaska was a territory, but they also acted as the public safety point of contact. Their duties involved fire safety, watching for fires and general safety of the public during the hours of darkness. Some of these duties included ensuring the public sidewalks were free and clear of debris and in good repair since they were

constructed of wooden planks placed over mud and dirt. This is still a concern today as we conduct plan reviews for emergency apparatus and responder accessibility.

Another duty the city marshal had was to inspect the brick chimneys and ensure they were safely used and met local ordinance. As early as 1906, the city marshal was directed to notify all persons dumping ashes and garbage on public streets to discontinue the practice or they would be placed under arrest (History of Juneau Police Department, n.d.).

In 1912, the city marshal was responsible for notifying property owners and agents of dilapidated or unsanitary buildings to either tear them down or render them more sanitary and inspections of local hotels and rooming houses was conducted and there was a check to ensure that rope fire escapes were provided for guests (History of Juneau Police Department, n.d). This is still a responsibility today however we work in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Building Department.

The duties and responsibilities have continued to evolve over the decades. The workload is varied and there is rarely a shortage. One of the biggest changes that occurred happened when Alaska became the 49th state which brought with it, state statutes and regulations. This is what has given the fire marshals the legal authority to conduct their work along with local amended ordinances. The CCFR Fire Marshal's Office is one of the only jurisdictions in Alaska that has a very broad authority to enforce fire code with the ability to write citations up to \$310, apply for and serve administrative search warrants and criminal search warrants with Juneau Police Department assistance, and pursue criminal charges for violators of fire & life safety codes or arson related crimes.

The fire marshal is the one component of the fire service specifically designated to reduce the loss of life and property caused by fire through prevention and education. They serve on the front line to prevent deaths and injury due to fire by trying to prevent them from occurring and if they do occur, that life and property loss is kept to a minimal. While it is difficult to actually measure the successes of these efforts, it is still a very critical office to maintain in the city as they have far reaching connections with a varied audience in the community. They interact almost daily with other government agencies, schools, businesses, politicians and industry.

In the future installments of the department newsletter, we will take a closer look at the various functions of the Fire Marshal's Office. Below are a list of past and present fire marshals, deputy fire marshals and fire inspectors for the department and their approximate dates of service.

Juneau Fire Marshals, Deputy Fire Marshals & Fire Inspectors

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|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| • City Marshal | W.S. Staley | 1900 – 1902 |
| • City Marshal | Charles D. Price/William S. Holm | 1902 -1903 |
| • City Marshal | William Orenshaw | 1903 |
| • City Marshal | Roy Burnett | 1903 - 1905 |

- City Marshal J.C. Brown/John Lockhart 1906 - 1908
- City Marshal J.H. Mulcahy 1908 - 1910
- City Marshal Charles Biernoth 1910 - 1911
- City Marshal J.T. Martin 1911 - 1913

Position started transition to Police Chief role 1913 - 1959

- Assistant Chief (Fire Marshal) Douglas “Doug” Boddy 1960-1969
- Assistant Chief (Fire Marshal) Sevarin “Sev” Swanson 1969-1978
- Fire Inspector Leigh Gallagher 1977-1978
- Assistant Chief (Fire Marshal) Alan “Al” Judson 1978-1980
- Fire Inspector (FPO) Charles “Charlie” Mackey 1978-1986
- Fire Inspector (FPO) Calvin “Cal” Roberts 1986 -1991?

Fire Inspector position eliminated (1993)

Proposed consolidation of fire service districts and creation of Capital City Fire Rescue - 1993

- Fire Marshal Curtis Jones 1993-1999
- Fire Marshal Randy Waters 2000-2003
- Fire Prevention Officer Rich Etheridge 2003
- Fire Marshal Rich Etheridge 2003-2008
- Fire Prevention Officer Dan Jager 2004-2006
- Deputy Fire Marshal Dan Jager 2006-2008
- Fire Marshal Dan Jager 2008-present
- Deputy Fire Marshal Sven Pearson 2008-present

Reference

History of Juneau Police Department. (n.d.). As retrieved from

<http://www.juneaupolice.com/Historyofjpd.php>