

# The Palmer



## Charlotte FireFighter Association Local 660

July/August 2024

[www.cffa660.org](http://www.cffa660.org)

704-331-9515

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Tom is passing off the torch!

## Stepping Aside: A Farewell from the Local 660 President

After 18 years of service to the executive board of Local 660, I have made the decision not to seek re-election as your president. Serving the men and women of Charlotte Firefighters Local 660 has been the greatest honor of my life, and I am immensely proud of what we have accomplished together.

Throughout my tenure, we have faced numerous challenges, and each time, no matter how popular or unpopular the issue, we always held true to our values. Giving voice to firefighters and tirelessly advocating for our rights and safety has been my unwavering commitment. It is with a full heart that I now step aside to allow the next generation of union leaders to step up and continue this necessary work.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to each and every member of Local 660 past and present. Your trust and faith in me have been the driving force behind my efforts. I hope that my actions have always reflected my dedication to our shared cause, even during the times when I may have fallen short. Any shortcomings were never intentional but part of the journey to make our union better and stronger.

As I transition out of this role, I am confident that our future leaders will continue to champion the values and mission that define Local 660. The strength of our union lies in our unity and our collective commitment to the safety and well-being of every firefighter.

I would also like to remind everyone that nominations for president and treasurer will take place this October at our union meetings. If you or someone you know is interested in running, this is the time to step forward. Elections will be held in November, and I encourage all members to participate in this vital process.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your president. I will always remain a steadfast supporter of our union and its mission. Stay safe, stay strong, and stay union!

Tom Brewer

President

Local 660 wants to know what both members and nonmembers care about! Please take this less than 3 minute survey to help us prioritize better, communicate better and create useful resources. We want all your feedback – good and bad!





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### Vice President Update

Your union continues to work on important issues that affect you. The two issues, **off duty training and modified duty**, will be highlighted in this article.

If you watched any of the 2025 budget process or the video we sent then you would have seen the city of Charlotte budget director refer to FFII as a promotion and why the 25 days of off-duty training is required for FFI to be eligible to take the test. This union is not against the actual test. In fact, we believe that the member should be able to demonstrate their proficiency in their skills. **Our concern is that no other city department is requires 25 days of unpaid training.** In the Public Safety pay plan, your position has a value or price, and you are hired at **only 60%** of market value. The pay plan steps each year are there to get you closer to your job position's market value. After years of hard work, The Public Safety PayPlan Committee, has moved all steps to 5%. Part of the market value of FF is FFII. FFI is required to go to 25 days of unpaid off-duty training for the ability to test to make it to their market value. Oftentimes, we are told to stop complaining because we are receiving a 7.5% raise, however, it is important to understand that you are really not receiving that amount. Instead, what you are receiving is a 5% step increase (again this gets you closer to market value) and a 2.5% market adjustment sometimes referred to as a cola. Most members receive a step increase each year unless they are topped out at their rank or on probation. Get involved, and ask to be on the Public Safety Pay Plan committee. Let's get paid for our worth especially when we risk our lives daily for the citizens of Charlotte.

A very high concern for your union is that if you were to be severely injured or die while attending one of these off-duty trainings, your family would not receive Federal line-of-duty death benefits. This is a benefit paid to the surviving beneficiary along with educational benefits. It would also pay for disability benefits to you if you were severely disabled from an injury. The feds have made it clear that you are not covered under this if you are not paid. This is a huge concern for this union! We

would like to see that we either return the 25 days of training to the recruit school expectation or members are paid to attend the training. Each of these options have pros and cons, but what each does is it covers the members attending.

**Modified duty** is given to a member who is removed from the truck due to not being able to pass the NFPA 1582 physical. Local 660 led the charge on physicals and we still believe in them! These physicals have saved CFD members' lives! The concern is the 5-year limit that is put on the modified duty. As many of you are aware, one of the disqualifiers is seizures. Currently, NFPA 1582 requires 10 years off the truck. We would like to see this changed and allow a member that is placed on modified duty for a long duration due to NFPA 1582 (seizures, cancer, or certain medications) the ability to transfer to a non-emergency division such as inspections, education, alarm, or logistics for the duration of their modified duty. This is beneficial because the member can keep contributing to their pension. For example, if you were off the truck for 10 years due to seizures you could go to inspections (if a spot is available) and work for your 10 years. You would continue to contribute, and the city would contribute to your pension. If after 10 years you are seizure-free and attend a short refresher school, you can come back to the truck. **No one asked to have any of the disqualifiers happen to us! No one asked to have a seizure or cancer or any of these (especially when job exposures lead to higher risk of cancer!)** I believe that by collaborating with CFD command staff and city staff we will be able to develop a plan where we take care of our brothers and sisters that fall under this. We will continue to work hard on this and will update you when any developments occur.

If you have any questions or concerns please reach out.

Your union brother.  
Mike Feneis

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### Secretary Report

Brothers and Sisters,

We want to assure you that you remain our top priority. Our commitment to your safety, well-being, and professional interests is unwavering.

Our new division representatives have been instrumental in steering the union in the right direction. Their dedication and hard work are paving the way for positive changes and better support for all members.

Exciting developments are on the horizon, especially with the upcoming convention next month. Expect important updates and new initiatives that will benefit us all.

We also need to discuss a potential dues increase. This has become necessary due to multiple increases in international dues since our last adjustment, and our interest in rejoining the Professional Firefighter and Paramedics of North Carolina (PFFPNC). We understand the impact this may have and are committed to ensuring it's in the best interest of our membership.

Look forward to many great things coming in the next few months!

Stay safe and united.

In solidarity,

Travis Cash  
Secretary  
Local 660



Join Charlotte  
Firefighter  
Association  
Local 660!



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What does the Charlotte Firefighter Association as a Local 660 of the IAFF serve to benefit me as a member? Hopefully this newsletter helps to educate (and will continue in future articles) members on all the resources available. Let's start with **advocacy**. The dictionary defines "advocacy" as the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal. The fire department is set up to support the ideas from the top of the organization directed at its workers. Uniquely, the Local 660 and IAFF can organically support whatever is important to members in each organization. Collectively as these causes grow this power leads to the union leaders advocating on all levels of government to change the regulations, policies and laws.

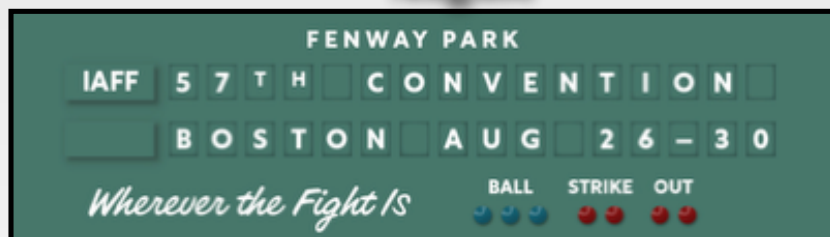
**But I hate politics.** Unfortunately, the politicians hold the power to make changes for the greater good of worker. IAFF support politicians and policies – regardless of party affiliation – that protect and empower the work of firefighters in the United States and Canada. Important issues include safety & protection (PPE, fire ground survival, Hazmat training, wildfire training, etc.), pay and benefits (like the paid off-duty training Local 660 is fighting for), cancer and presumptive health. Collective bargaining is illegal in North Carolina, but the combined power of several city departments are advancing a **Worker's Bill of Rights** to protect us as employees. Here are some recent wins for the IAFF. In March 2024, the EPA took its first step in protecting firefighters and their community by banning chrysotile asbestos. In June 2024, IAFF's Government Affairs Team worked tirelessly and the Senate passed the Fire Grants and And Safety Act by bipartisan vote of 88-2. A month later, it was signed by President Biden and reauthorizes the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and millions in grants for recruitment, retention, and new equipment until 2028.

Yes, this entire system can feel overwhelming and make one feel helpless. What can you as a member do and how can IAFF and its website help you? The simplest answer is to **register and vote**. Visit **IAFF.org** and under the Advocacy tab, explore a bit. IAFF helps with legislative action at all levels and lobbying. You can voice your support here. The advocacy center has premade messages to send Congress (like what Local 660 did with City Council). IAFF helps with political change whether it through

educating on how to run for office or to run a campaign. IAFF manages FIREPAC, which is a political action fund made up of voluntary contributions by firefighters to advocate for firefighters and their families. Be educated and use the website as a resource to view what issues affect firefighters as a whole. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to your division representative or if there is a topic you want more articles about email [communicationsdirector@cffa660.org](mailto:communicationsdirector@cffa660.org)



### Upcoming IAFF Events August



### September 2024 International Motorcycle Rally





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## History: MEDIC and CFD Medicals Calls

By: Chief Shane Nantz

### How did we get here?

Originally this installment of Charlotte Fire Department History was going to be on Station 11, but with the delays of tearing it down several people asked about how did the CFD start answering medical calls and what has that process looked like.

In the mid 1960's, then Chief Walter Black had a group headed by Operations Chief Otis Dowdy, to look into the CFD starting an Ambulance Service. Pre-hospital care in the city and Mecklenburg County was in its infancy. Many of you will remember Brandies and MEMS prior to Medic.

The CFD recommendations basically went no where. Once again in the mid 1970's then Fire Chief John Lee looked at the issue and under the direction of Operations Chief Richard Blackwelder, Training Officer Captain C.L. Abernathy III took the Chief Dowdy's report and made associated changes and presented it. There was some discussion about requesting the ambulance service again but as always this was political.

It has always been said that the front porch of a city is its fire department and the front porch of a county is its ambulance service. In a strong mayor government this may not be a problem; but in a city manager form of government combining the two would make the Fire Chief more powerful than the City Manager. Rumors stirred that then Manager David Burkhalter did not want the combination so the CFD Staff presented a hybrid. First responders on the fire trucks and Mecklenburg County revamped the ambulance service into Medic. So in November 1978, the CFD started running medicals in the city. Throughout the early 1980's to mid 1990's calls increased to as much as 76 percent of the CFD call volume being "First Responder Calls." Once again in the early 1990's the ambulance service had reached a breaking point and the CFD made a push for a combination of the two services. Although it was shown there would be a cost savings to combine the CFD and Medic, the County approached then Carolinas Medical Center and Presbyterian Hospital and they entered into a medical conglomerate with the County restructuring Medic.

This change also brought new skills to the CFD -- Defibrillators on the trucks, medic units assigned in the fire stations and combined training. Some stations had shared quarters with Medic for a while, like Station 27 and Station 21, but later expanded this program to 14 fire stations.

As with any governmental entities, it is really "relationships that rule the day." It was Chief Fincher that always said "you must be able to leave your ego at the door". This is the case as 2024 is upon us and some of the same problems exist that do in the 1960's, 1970's and again in the 1990's. It will be **Relationships** that will move the ball forward -- political relationships, department directors, city and county management, but most of all the people riding the trucks. They will be integral in fixing any issues. Most of the issues between The CFD and Medic in the 1990's were fixed at a fire station kitchen table then transmitted up. "The decisions should be made at the lowest possible level." ~Another Chief Fincher quote.



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# Training - Street Smart Victim Management

By Captain Thomas Anderson, Tower 3 A-Div

For my entire career our drags and carries, and even the ones still mentioned in fire service manuals, are all based on what makes it easier for the rescuer --less friction on the ground, less strain on your back, etc. But it's time we take a look at what's **best for our victims. After all, WE are protected, THEY, are NOT!**

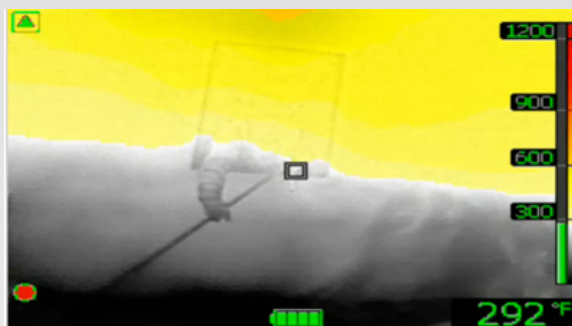
Victim management is something, we as a fire service, have neglected for far too long. The vast majority of our search training, has focused on ways to keep the rescuer safe, to stay on that wall, to hold that leg, and to sweep with that tool. To a degree, we have lost a bit of our identity, a bit of our why, and we've forgotten that we are here to serve and rescue citizens from fire. **That's it! It's the one job we do that nobody else is coming to do.** We could spend pages discussing search tactics, split search, officer's responsibility during search, hallway control, door control, TIC operations, VES and many, many more. But for now, we are going to focus on **victim management**. The idea is simple. We get to them fast, get them low to the ground, isolate the victim from the fire, and remove as quickly as possible. But the most important of these is keeping the victim as low to the ground as possible.

First let's discuss what kills people in fires. We know that smoke and toxic gases kill victims far sooner than people burn to death. A victim's airway is the most important tool they have to survive a fire. Here comes the EMS analogy: ABC's. Airway is the first thing we assess on every patient. Clearly, there's a reason for that. If the airway is compromised, then game over; the same is true on the fire ground. There are countless articles, research documents, and medical research papers that support this, but simply put, in zero visibility environments on the fire ground, the toxic gas levels would incapacitate the vast majority of the population. Plus the longer they are in that environment than the less likely they are to survive. For every 60 seconds a fire victim is in cardiac arrest, their survivability probability drops by 10%. The best defense for this is the most recent search study by UL. I'll include a link to the summary of the study at the end of this article. They conducted several full-size experiments in real buildings with real contents and measured toxicity levels throughout the structure, thermal exposure to occupants and rescuers, and rescue times vs exposure rates. There are several tactical considerations to take away from the study, but I want to focus on one particular tactic. This method is contradictory to the way we have been trained to rescue victims. "Removal of an occupant lower in the space (1 ft above the floor) was shown to result in a lower accumulated exposure compared to higher elevations (3 ft above the floor) even if the higher elevation

egress occurred at a rate that was 3 times as fast." (UL, Part 3 page 83, 2022)



Caption: Heat levels in this room are well over 300 degrees 2-3 feet off the floor, these are fatal in seconds to a victim's airway. Maintaining the airway low to the ground is essential for successful rescues.



Caption: When entering from, or considering window removal of victims, heat exposure and duration must be considered. In this photo we see temperatures well above 300 degrees to the bottom of the window, should you decide to remove a victim from the window, door control and isolation of the room is essential to lift the heat off the victim.

We know from basic fire behavior that heat rises. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that victims have a higher survival rate when we maintain their airway as low to the ground as possible. As the fire grows so does the amount of smoke and toxic gases in the environment. The thing we don't spend much time studying is pressure. The increase of temperature in the environment also increases the pressure in the space. This increase in pressure correlates to fire growth. As the temperature rises in the overhead, the increase in pressure drives survivable fresh air down to the floor; hence air intakes are low and exhausts are high. Research has shown deadly levels of heat, CO, H<sub>2</sub>S and many other deadly fire gases as low as 1 foot off the floor. Research has also shown that the lower you are to the ground than the lower the levels of heat and deadly fire gasses. All of which are proportional to the intensity of the fire and the distance you are from the seat of the fire. (Continue on next page).

SCAN ME



Link to UL Search  
Study Analysis

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So, let's evaluate. Our searches should start based on two factors: victims in the most danger and where they are located. For example, bedrooms are typically upstairs in our bread and butter two story single family dwelling. Since heat rises, the highest risk people are typically on the upper floors above the fire. Bedrooms are occupied 24/7/365 in today's world, therefore, our priority is usually going to be the bedrooms. In this environment, with heat rising proportionally to fire growth, these areas are imperative for us to bring the victims as close to the floor as possible for removal. The overhead (above 1 foot) is almost guaranteed to be fatal for our victims, especially for extended removals.

The point is simple. Get victims on the ground as fast and low as possible to the ground (at or below 1 foot off the floor) to give them the best chances of survival. **Enter the Dirty Drag.** See QR code for video.

**SCAN QR TO VIEW TRAINING VIDEO WITH DIRTY DRAG!**



Dirty drags are named because they are just that dirty! They're not pretty and the victim will not come out of it unscathed. They'll be bruised, scrapped, and banged up. However, they'll have the best chance possible of being alive because you protected their airway. These drags are designed to get the victim out of the "dirty" air, and into cleaner air. Again, research tells us that the fastest drag, may not always be the best, so instead start thinking about the best way to move the victim. The research tells us the toxicity levels we are putting victims in by picking them up into the overhead space is potentially fatal. Remember the

higher the airway is in the space than the more severe toxic exposure to the victim experiences. The same is true of thermal exposure. This should be self-explanatory as we are taught that heat rises and follows the path of least resistance. It's easy for us to get caught up in the just scoop them up and walk out mentality. We may not feel because we are protected. Last I checked victims don't wear Nomex pajamas with an air pack on. They usually naked (or close to it) and sweaty.

The point of this article is simply to start a conversation. What's your plan for victim removal? Do you have one? These things should be discussed long before you search a room or find a victim on the fire ground. Always think about what's best for your victim! It may not be the way we were taught in recruit school. Remember that we are protected, our victims are not. Every decision we make should revolve around what's best for them. Where's the coolest, cleanest air in the space? What's the most direct route of removal? How can I separate this victim from the fire (door control)? Think of it this way. We crawl because the heat is high and visibility is typically better closer to the ground. So then why do we immediately revert to lifting unprotected victims into the same space, we, as protected firefighters, are trying to avoid? Get victims' airways low to the ground, isolate them when possible, and remove them via the fastest means of egress. And as always training is key! Don't let the first time be on the fire ground. Get out and drill. Read the research and be a student of the craft!

### WELCOME TO THE TRAINING CORNER:

UNION VIDEO SHORTS -  
PART 1 What's in Your Pocket?



We would love your ideas for training shorts or challenges (Example: Which is faster: flat load v. minute man?) Email: [communicationsdirector@cffa660.org](mailto:communicationsdirector@cffa660.org)

### 4 WAYS TO PREVENT LITHIUM-ION BATTERY FIRES

WHEN YOU'RE BUYING A DEVICE, MAKE SURE IT'S CERTIFIED.

MAKE SURE TO KEEP YOUR BATTERIES SEPARATE FROM EACH OTHER.

BE CAREFUL WHEN CHARGING LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES.

WHEN YOU'RE STORING YOUR DEVICES, CHOOSE A SAFE LOCATION.





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Questions for the Local 660?

Ask your division representative.

Emails:

North: [northsiderep660@gmail.com](mailto:northsiderep660@gmail.com) (Captain Matt Harrington)

South: [southsiderep660@gmail.com](mailto:southsiderep660@gmail.com) (Captain Francis Matera)

East: [eastsiderep660@gmail.com](mailto:eastsiderep660@gmail.com) (DJ Shipp)

West: [westsiderep660@gmail.com](mailto:westsiderep660@gmail.com) (Jordan Hood)

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