



## City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

### FIRE DEPARTMENT

101 North Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802  
(540) 432-7703 FAX (540) 432-7780

Ian J. Bennett  
Fire Chief

For Immediate Release  
February 1, 2017

Contact: Captain Paul Helmuth  
540-432-7703  
Paul.Helmuth@harrisonburgva.gov

## HFD Recognizes February as American Heart Month

Harrisonburg, VA. – The Harrisonburg Fire Department (HFD) joins many other agencies in recognizing February as American Heart Month and Friday as National Wear Red Day.

On Friday, February 3, members of the public are encouraged to participate in National Wear Red Day, which is held to raise awareness about heart disease being the number one killer of women.

According to the American Heart Association, about 2,200 Americans die of cardiovascular disease each day, but about 80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action. By wearing red on Friday, the community can show support for those with heart disease and stroke, but also bring awareness to the importance of *everyone* being heart healthy.

“Cardiovascular disease remains the most common cause of death in men and women in this country, killing 1 in 4 people,” explained Sentara RMH Medical Center Cardiologist Brad Rash, MD. This makes prevention of heart attack and stroke incredibly important for everyone. Prevention starts with regular physical activity and proper diet, avoiding smoking, and control of blood pressure and cholesterol. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs in a large percentage of folks, and death can be prevented with good knowledge of CPR and available AED devices.”

Members of the Harrisonburg Fire Department respond to more than 350 calls for service involving heart-related illnesses every year. This ranges from a heart attack to a heart-related death.

From the moment a 9-1-1 call is received, until the firefighters and rescue personnel arrive, it could be anywhere from four to seven minutes. Those four minutes are critical for someone in distress and in need of CPR or immediate medical attention.

**-MORE-**

**PRESS RELEASE: HFD RECOGNIZES FEBRUARY AS AMERICAN HEART MONTH**  
**PAGE 2**

“In addition to reminding the public to be heart healthy, we want to remind the community of the tools, training, and resources available to help others,” explained Captain Paul Helmuth, HFD’s safety, wellness, and EMS officer. “Being trained to perform CPR or use an AED could save someone’s life before the fire and rescue personnel even arrive. We also encourage businesses, gyms, or housing units with a common area to install an AED device and get trained on its use.”

The city of Harrisonburg has more than 40 AED devices in police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, and in public buildings. More than 400 city employees are trained to properly use the device should an emergency occur in a public space.

“Because so many of our facilities are open to the public and home to many employees, it is vital that we have these life-saving devices available for use,” Helmuth explained.

Sentara RMH Medical Center will hold a free event for members of the community on Thursday, March 2 from 6:30 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Matters of the Heart is a free seminar presented by Sentara RMH Medical Center’s Heart and Vascular Center. Cardiologists will present on heart-related topics, including heart disease and prevention and new services they are providing to the community.

In addition to the presentations, educational displays and free blood pressure screenings will be provided. To register or for more information, call 1-800-SENTARA.

For additional safety information, visit [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/fire](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov/fire). Be sure to post pictures of your participation in National Wear Red Day to social media by using #GoRedWearRed.

###