



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
FIRE
DEPARTMENT

101 NORTH MAIN STREET
HARRISONBURG, VA 22802
OFFICE (540) 432-7703

For Immediate Release: Feb. 22, 2023

Contact: Michael Parks, Harrisonburg Director of Communications
540-476-3038
Michael.Parks@Harrisonburgva.gov

HFD's Chief Tobia named Virginia Fire Chief of the Year

HARRISONBURG, Va. – We already knew it here, but now all of Virginia knows: Harrisonburg has the top fire chief in all of the Commonwealth.

Harrisonburg Fire Department Chief Matthew Tobia was named the Virginia Fire Chief of the Year on Wednesday during the Governor's Fire Service Awards, facilitated by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and the Virginia Fire Services Board. The announcement came during the annual Virginia Fire Rescue Conference, with Tobia earning special recognition amongst the more than 700 fire and emergency service organizations in the Commonwealth.

If you know Tobia, you've likely heard him say working in the fire service is "the best job in the whole world." It's a job he has always put his heart into as someone with a stoat commitment to service above self and a belief in being a servant leader first and foremost.

"His greatest desire is to just help people, no matter how," Harrisonburg City Manager Ande Banks said. "He works tirelessly to accomplish this. I rest easier knowing Chief Tobia is at the helm of the Harrisonburg Fire Department. Not only because that means our community is safe, but because I know every member of our team is getting to grow through seeing his leadership and dedication every day as he works to leave The Friendly City better and stronger than he found it."

Tobia has spent the last 30 years leaving his mark on the fire service. He has served with agencies such as Anne Arundel County Fire Department in Maryland and Loudon County Fire and Rescue in Northern Virginia before settling in his home with HFD more than four years ago.

His work since arriving in Harrisonburg has helped not only the fire department as it has grown in the past few years – navigating challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Miller Circle explosion – but his contribution to all City departments through his position with the City's Executive Leadership Team has been paramount to the organization's success.



(Above) HFD Chief Matthew Tobia (second from left) was named the Virginia Fire Chief of the Year today at the Governor's Fire Service Awards. With him (from left) are HFD members Alec Thibodeaux, Ben Zimmerman and Joe Fierro.

“Chief Tobia is a leader in our community on a number of fronts, and I am grateful for his time and contributions toward making Harrisonburg a better place for all,” Banks said.

In addition to his work locally, Tobia has been instrumental in the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), a nonprofit foundation that honors our fallen fire heroes and assists their families and co-workers, for more than a decade. He is kind, empathetic, and dedicated to helping families navigate the loss of firefighters who have died in the line of duty.

In addition to participating in the NFFF, he is deeply passionate about the Mid-Atlantic Burn Camp (MABC) - an annual therapeutic residential summer camp. Tobia has volunteered with MABC for the past 20 years to assist young burn survivors in their adjustments to injuries. Because of his experience with MABC, he is very passionate about burn prevention and community risk reduction.

On behalf of Harrisonburg City staff and HFD, we congratulate Chief Matthew Tobia on his honor, and we thank him for all he does for our community.

*The **Harrisonburg Fire Department** is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire or on Facebook®, Twitter® and Instagram®.*

*The **City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 55,700 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.*

###