



HARRISONBURG VA
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Long-time public safety professional Paul Helmuth selected as HRECC Director

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A long-time proponent of public safety and emergency management preparedness in the Shenandoah Valley will soon step in to lead the community's 9-1-1 call and response center.

Paul Helmuth, a 35-year emergency services veteran who currently serves as fire administrative officer and deputy emergency coordinator with the Harrisonburg Fire Department (HFD), has been appointed director of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center (HRECC) and will assume his new role on March 2.

The appointment brings decades of hands-on experience and deep community roots to the vital public safety role.

"I'm excited to start this new chapter, providing service not only to the community I grew up in but also to all the dedicated career and volunteer emergency agencies throughout our region," Helmuth said. "I look forward to helping grow our emergency communications center and building on the foundation that's already in place."

Helmuth's emergency services career began as a ham radio operator providing communications support during local search and rescue operations – an origin that comes full circle with his new leadership role. Since then, Helmuth has served in multiple capacities across the emergency services spectrum. He began as a volunteer with the Harrisonburg Rescue Squad and has worked as a paramedic, firefighter and dispatcher in Kansas City; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Washington, D.C.; and Charlottesville. He has spent the past 16 years with HFD, preceded by four years with the Rockingham County Department of Fire & Rescue.

"We are very lucky to be able to fill this key position, which serves so many people across our community and even regionally, with someone who is so well respected in the Shenandoah Valley and knowledgeable about the needs of these organizations and community members," Harrisonburg City Manager Ande Banks said. "There are few people who have shown such a commitment to community safety, especially in crisis situations when it matters most, like Paul has here in Harrisonburg."

"Paul is a trusted and valued resource in our community with over 20 years in emergency response for both the City and County," Rockingham County Administrator Casey Armstrong added. HRECC is a shared service between the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, and the selection of Helmuth was a joint decision between Banks and Armstrong following a national search that saw more than 60 qualified applicants. "I look forward to supporting and working with Paul as the next director of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center."



(Above) New HRECC Director Paul Helmuth

For Helmuth, the position is the continuation of a life dedicated to keeping communities safe.

"I bring an understanding of the local emergency services system to this position," Helmuth said. "Having worked with most agencies in our community and developed decades of relationships, I hope to foster continued collaboration in this new role."

Learn more about HRECC at www.hrecc.org.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.

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