



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
**FIRE
DEPARTMENT**

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For Immediate Release - March 16, 2026

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HFD Chief Officer Earns Prestigious Governor's Award

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The Harrisonburg Fire Department is celebrating the recognition of one of its personnel who has contributed his vast expertise and knowledge to helping organizations across the state keep their communities safe.

Zebulon Lilly, a 22-year veteran of the HFD, received the Governor's Excellence in Fire Service Training award for his work on the development of a statewide water rescue training curriculum. He was honored during a ceremony at the recent Virginia Fire Chiefs Association Conference in Virginia Beach.

The award honors those who contribute to high-quality fire service training through lesson development, instruction or program delivery, according to the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, which oversee the award program. It highlights innovation, commitment and statewide impact in preparing Virginia's fire service community.

"We are extremely proud of Chief Lilly's accomplishments," HFD Fire Chief Matthew Tobia said. "Chief Lilly is one of the nation's foremost experts in technical rescue and has trained more than 1,000 fellow fire service rescuers in water rescue and other high-risk disciplines."

Lilly is currently serving as HFD's interim deputy chief of operations, and previously served as a battalion chief, company officer and firefighter/paramedic. He has more than 22 years of diverse experience including more than 10 years as a flight paramedic. He is a member of the CDEM Division II Heavy Technical Rescue Team and serves on a national cave rescue team through the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC), a division of the National Speleological Society. Lilly is currently serving as chair of the planning committee for Rescue Challenge, an intense four-day multi-disciplinary skills assessment for rescue teams throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. The event is hosted in Harrisonburg for 2025 and 2026.

The award nomination contained the following detailed information:



(Above) Harrisonburg Fire Department Interim Deputy Chief of Operations Zebulon Lilly (right) with HFD Chief Matthew Tobia at the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association Conference.

EXCELLENCE IN CAREER FIRE SERVICE TRAINING

Department of Fire Programs, Water Rescue Curriculum Development Group

The VDFP Water Rescue Curriculum Development Group is comprised of the Surface and Flood Water, Swift and Flood Water, and Watercraft work groups. It has exemplified exceptional dedication in building and sustaining the commonwealth's water rescue capability. Subject matter experts completed a comprehensive update of all Virginia water rescue programs, which encompassed all instructional levels, including awareness, operations and technician. These working groups successfully produced new administrative guides, course outlines, curriculum schedules, master rosters, instructor guides, student materials and fully updated practical skills components that now serve as the foundation for all water rescue training in the commonwealth.

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 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.

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