

VDFP DISPATCH

THIS MONTH AT VDFP

PUBLISHED FOR AND ABOUT VDFP's EMPLOYEES

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 6 | JUNE 2025



Keeping Virginia Safe This 4th of July:

SFMO on illegal fireworks, inspections, enforcement, and public outreach ramp up ahead of the holiday weekend. Turn the page to learn some tips from the SFMO on how to have a safe 4th of July.

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28th Annual Virginia Fallen Firefighter & EMS Memorial Service

On Saturday, June 7, 2025, more than a dozen VDFP staff members, along with local fire marshals, honor guards, and families, gathered at Richmond Raceway Complex to remember and pay tribute to 12 Virginia heroes ...

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Enhancing public safety throughout the Commonwealth

Community Risk Reduction

Training

Virginia Fire Marshal Academy

State Fire Marshal's Office

SFMO Gears Up for Fireworks Ahead of 4th of July Weekend

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As we approach the 4th of July holiday, the Virginia Department of Fire Programs' State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) is once again taking proactive steps to ensure public safety by cracking down on illegal fireworks across the Commonwealth.

Staff are reminded that in Virginia, any firework that explodes, launches a projectile, or travels on the ground or in the air is illegal unless specifically classified as "permissible" under the Code of Virginia. A full list of permissible fireworks is available on the VDFP website.

Many localities throughout the Commonwealth go even further, prohibiting the sale, possession, or use of all fireworks. SFMO encourages all team members to direct the public to consult local ordinances and the Statewide Fire Prevention Code when questions arise.

This year, SFMO inspectors—alongside local fire marshals and law enforcement—will once again be out inspecting retail locations to ensure compliance. This annual effort is a key component of our mission to prevent fire-related injuries and protect Virginia communities.

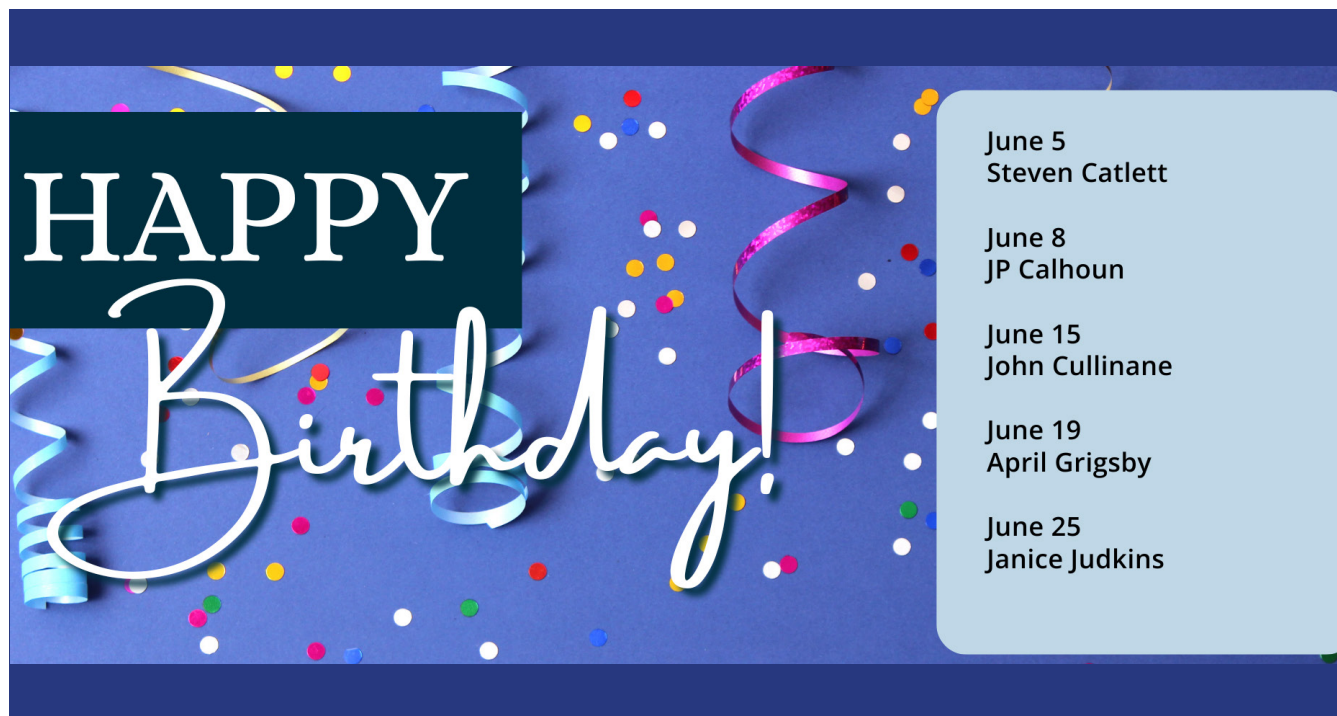
It is important to note: the sale, possession, or use of any fireworks not classified as permissible is a Class I Misdemeanor, carrying penalties of up to one year in jail, a \$2,500 fine, or both. All illegal fireworks are subject to seizure, and violators may be cited by SFMO or local law enforcement.

For the public who may still choose to use permissible fireworks, SFMO continues to urge caution and responsible use. Safety guidelines include:

- Confirming fireworks are listed on the 2025 Virginia Permissible Fireworks List
- Using fireworks only on private property with the owner's permission
- Never using fireworks indoors or under the influence
- Maintaining a safe distance from structures, people, and combustibles
- Having a water source ready in case of fire
- Never pointing fireworks at people or holding them while igniting

Staff who receive inquiries about fireworks use or violations can direct individuals to report their concerns to their local fire marshal, fire officials, or law enforcement.

As always, thank you for your continued commitment to community safety and code enforcement throughout the Commonwealth. You can read more at vafire.com.



28th Annual Virginia Fallen Firefighter & EMS Memorial Service

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... who lost their lives in the line of duty in the line of duty under the Virginia Line of Duty Act.

Event Highlights:

- Keynote Address by Governor Glenn Youngkin, expressing the Commonwealth's gratitude and solemn recognition
- A moving honor guard procession, solemn roll call, and musical tributes underscored the gravity of the service
- Departments across Virginia displayed apparatus in support, and families were presented with state flags in memory of their loved ones.

For those who couldn't attend in person, the service was livestreamed on [VDFP's YouTube channel](#)

Behind the Scenes:

- VDFP's Public Safety Memorial Committee helped coordinate logistics, including Honor Guard arrangements and apparatus displays.

Why This Matters to VDFP Staff:

- The event reinforces VDFP's commitment to honor, remembrance, and community cohesion within the fire and EMS workforce.

Thank you to everyone who contributed—through planning, attendance, streaming support, and communications — to making this year's Service a moving tribute that honored our fallen first responders.



FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS & EMS
VDFF
MEMORIAL SERVICE
VDFF
SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 2025



VDFP Spotlight: Jacob Taraschke - Lead Accounts Payable Accountant

Tell us a little about your position:

As the payable accountant, I'm responsible for almost all of the invoices that come in. Whether that's buying new trucks or travel, it comes to my inbox and I sort it. In general, any invoice over \$5,000 is paid by Accounts Payable and anything under that amount goes to the Purchasing Department. So if its its more than a certain amount I handle it, if not, I'll pass it along.



How did you get involved with VDFP?

I went to Virginia Tech and majored in Natural Resource Conservation. One of my friends, John Wise, used to work here. And when VDFP had a fiscal tech position open, I applied. Then this position opened up!

What's the most rewarding part of job?

The most rewarding part of my job is being a part of the team and being able to help out and take things off of my manager's plate.

Tell us about your family

I have three siblings... an older sister, an older brother, and a younger brother. My dad was in the Marine Corps, so we moved a lot as a kid. I landed here (in Virginia) at 6 and I've been here ever since.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

I've always wanted to visit Czechia. My last name is Taraschke, so it feels right. I've also never left the country.

Bizarre food

The most bizarre food I've ever had is "Tripe." It's like cow stomach. It was pretty good, kind of like pork belly.



IT Corner

Summer Reminder from IT: Don't Let Power Outages Take Your Work!

As we settle into the dog days of summer, our region is once again experiencing the usual seasonal challenges—namely, heatwaves that put a strain on the electrical grid. Power outages and rolling brownouts aren't just inconvenient—they can result in unexpected shutdowns and lost work if you're not prepared.

That's why now is the perfect time to double-check that autosave is enabled on all your applications.

Whether you're drafting documents in Microsoft Word, building reports in Excel, or working in cloud-based platforms like SharePoint, autosave is your best defense against losing hours of productivity due to a sudden power loss.

Here's What You Can Do:

Check Autosave Settings:

In Microsoft Office, make sure the toggle at the top left (next to the file name) is switched on. If you don't see the toggle, you may need to save your file to OneDrive or SharePoint to activate autosave.

Use Cloud Storage:

Files saved to OneDrive (which should be the practice anyway) autosave frequently. Plus, they can be accessed from any device if you're temporarily displaced by an outage.

Save Early, Save Often:

Even with autosave, it's good practice to manually hit "Save" when you begin and end a task, especially when working locally.

Need Help?

Our IT team is happy to walk you through enabling autosave or discuss options for working more safely during power instability. Just reach out to VDFP's IT Staff at itsupport@vdfp.virginia.gov

Stay cool, stay productive—and don't let your hard work disappear with the lights!

Robert Steele
IT Manager

VDFP Instructor Spotlight: Carla Keesee - Interview and Interrogation

Explain your role and how you got involved in VDFP

I teach interview and interrogation. I've been to a lot of trainings. When it comes to a fire investigation, knowing about fire investigations and knowing what questions to ask and when, I think it's just a very a big benefit.

I've been working fires and working on fire scenes since 1999. I got started as a Virginia State Police trooper for 10 years. I then did 5 years 'Arson and bomb' as an agent and 21 years ago, I was hired with VA Farm Bureau as their fire investigator. Last year, I showed interest in teaching for VDFP, and I did a test run. December is when I started the classes.



Describe your coaching style

It isn't the easiest thing in the world. But I teach this in the first minute of my very first class: It takes a long time to listen and to hear what people are saying... they're two completely different things. It takes a long time to learn, but how you approach people is going to get you the information you need to potentially solve this fire. Watching and listening and body language.

Tell me about your family

I have two sons. My oldest is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He's a Second Lieutenant in the Army and doing very well and it was a great honor that he wanted to do that. I also have another son, he's 17. He's a rising senior at Jefferson Forest High school. He plays football. My husband is retired 30 years from state police.

What is the most Rewarding part of teaching for VDFP?

The most rewarding is the people. We look forward to it. We love teaching so much. This morning, I got a text from a fire marshal I taught two classes ago and it's like they listened, and they asked questions. The people are there because they want to be in the fire marshal classes. The people are there on their own dime because that's where they want to be. That's very impressive to me and just the relationships we have. I'm going to work with those people eventually.

You're teaching a subject matter that they want to be there for. IF there was a challenge, it would be teaching a class people don't want to be at, but that's not the case. It's just good to teach folks that want to be there.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Australia. My sister and I have always dreamed of going on a cruise or just going there. She's a flight attendant but she's never been there.

What's the strangest food you've ever tried?

Escargot. When I took French in high school, they wanted us to try that and it was awful.

The Washington Commanders Partner for State Employee Offer

The Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) is pleased to announce that the Washington Commanders has partnered with the Commonwealth to offer discounted tickets to state employees to select games this season! You can bring friends, family & colleagues to enjoy a fun filled day at the stadium. This includes discounted tickets for games against the Bears, Broncos, Eagles and Cowboys!

To recognize and thank you for your service to the Commonwealth, the Washington Commanders offer state employees available seats starting at \$89.

[You can find a very special offer here!](#)

[Purchase Tickets Here](#)

VDFP is on Social Media

Stay up to date with everything VDFP by following us on social media. Click on the buttons below to visit the official pages.

