

VDFP DISPATCH

THIS MONTH AT VDFP

PUBLISHED FOR AND ABOUT VDFP's EMPLOYEES

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Division 1 Rescue Week

A student participating in Confined Space Technician at 2025 Spring Rescue week held April 21-25.

175 Students attended this week long event offering specialized training. Special thanks to all our dedicated staff and instructors for making the week happen.

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DSFM Joseph Bona Participates in Multi-Agency Incident Management Training Exercise

The week of March 31, Deputy State Fire Marshal (DSFM) Joseph Bona represented the Southwest Virginia Incident Management Team (SWVA IMT) in a large-scale training exercise focused on managing a simulated pyro-terrorism event.

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Enhancing public safety throughout the Commonwealth

Community Risk Reduction

Training

Virginia Fire Marshal Academy

State Fire Marshal's Office

DSFM Joseph Bona Participates in Multi-Agency Incident Management Training Exercise

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The exercise was held at the 4-H Skelton Training Center in Franklin County on Smith Mountain Lake and brought together multiple Incident Management Teams (IMTs) from across the region, including SWVA IMT, Central Virginia IMT, Hampton Roads IMT, and the FDNY IMT. This collaborative training marked a significant step in improving coordination between Virginia's regional IMTs and the FDNY IMT. Teams worked side by side, building off of each other's strengths and sharing real-time solutions to challenges such as mass evacuations and power outages, simulating what would happen during an actual emergency.



DSFM Bona served as a Public Information Officer (PIO) during the exercise, a role for which he is currently credentialed through the All-Hazards Incident Management Team program. The exercise provided him with valuable opportunities to complete several items in his PIO task book and continue progressing toward full credentialing.

"It was a great experience," Bona shared. "Training like this lets us see firsthand how other teams operate, especially FDNY. We get to learn from each other, form relationships, and build a stronger, more unified response system for when real incidents occur."

One of the key takeaways for Bona was the opportunity to form lasting relationships with fellow PIOs and trainees from other IMTs. "We're still in touch," he said. "Even if we're not deployed together, we can bounce questions off each other. That's an invaluable resource."

In addition to networking and skill-building, the training highlighted the importance of cross-training between teams with different areas of expertise. "Central Virginia's team doesn't often deal with wildland fires, so being able to share our experiences and knowledge helped them—and in turn, I brought back new strategies to assist our own localities."

This multi-agency training effort not only reinforced the importance of coordination across teams but also ensured that Virginia's emergency response infrastructure continues to grow stronger and more capable of handling large-scale incidents.

VFMA Spotlight: Tom Berry

Can you tell us a bit about what you do and your position?

I serve as the Assistant Chief of the Fire Marshal Academy within the State Fire Marshal's Office, a position I have held since November of 2024, although I have worked for the agency since 2003. I oversee the management of the VFMA Office, Fire Investigator, Fire Inspector, Basic Law Enforcement, and Environmental Investigations training programs and the cadre that delivers them and in-services. Each of these programs and the VFMA itself are designed to support local and state fire marshals.



What do you love most about your job?

If I had to choose the most loved component of my position it is the variety of things I get to do. Every day is different so there is no getting bored or tired of something. I get to meet with individuals and groups to meet organizational needs, I get to be involved in the design of training programs, and I get to assist others and organizations in whatever manner they may need.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

Well, I am married with two daughters and two springer spaniels to keep me busy outside of work. It is interesting to note that my wife and I met here at VDFP. She was what evolved into the director of administration, and she did my employee orientation when I was hired. Please note that we did not date until after she moved on to another state agency. I've got to say, most of my outside time is spent doing things similar to my VDFP work. I am a local Assistant Fire Marshal for Powhatan that also serves as an Operations Battalion Chief when serving as the staff officer on duty. In addition, I am an avid (although only marginally successful) saltwater fisherman for a good chunk of the summer. When not doing these things, I spend time working on my antique vehicles (to include fire engine) and working around my house and property.

Where do you think you can have the biggest impact in your role?

I believe the biggest impact I can have in my role is to bring consistency and to develop a clear plan for the academy for those that will come after those of here now. I am a product of Chesterfield Fire Department and believe in plans, planning and documentation while still remaining flexible to the scenario being encountered at the moment.

What's the best trip you've ever been on and why?

The best trip I ever took was in the summer of 1989. My parents took me, my sister (Ali), and grandfather (Poppy) on what we called the cross-country trip. We flew to Anaheim, California, rented a RV, and traveled in the western third of the country for 30 days visiting and staying in national parks. To this day I have vivid images and memories of the natural wonders within this great country and spending time with my family.

An interesting note is that in 1989 one of the largest CA wildfires was in Big Sur, we were there when it ignited and blew up. I remember the ashes and embers falling from the sky as we hurriedly packed up and left.



If you could visit any place in the world, where would it be?

I don't really want to visit anywhere in the world, the location I am going to visit is Alaska. I will be departing in 3,143 days. It is an open-ended trip, my wife and I will be driving and towing a travel trailer there. We intend to drive zigzagging across the top part of the country then take the Alaskan Marine Highway. After spending what time we want in Alaska we will again take the Alaska Marine Highway south and then zigzag along the bottom of the country before arriving back home in Powhatan.



HAPPY Birthday!

<p>May 2 Jill Germroth</p> <p>May 8 Paul Kohler</p> <p>May 16 Jamey Brads</p> <p>May 20 Brad Creasy</p>	<p>May 26 Robert Steele</p> <p>May 29 Tom Berry Paige Roberts</p>
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VFMA Adjunct Spotlight: Robert “Bull” Rollston

Can you tell us a bit about what you do and your areas of teaching expertise?

I am a retired investigator/detection canine handler from Chesterfield County Fire Marshal's Office. I am currently the Basic Law Enforcement School Program Manager and previously was one of the lead instructors for the NFPA 1033 Fire and Explosion Investigator programs delivered at the Fire Marshal Academy. I also taught in the Environmental Crimes Investigation Course.



What do you love most about your job?

It is very important to me to provide the Law Enforcement Fire Marshal students with the knowledge and skills to successfully investigate and prosecute criminal offenses involving fire, explosives, and environmental crimes.

How would you describe your teaching/coaching style?

Short answer would be “hands-on”. I prefer to be in the “field” with the students conducting practical skills training as opposed to classroom days, or even some weeks in the Law Enforcement program, for example criminal law week.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

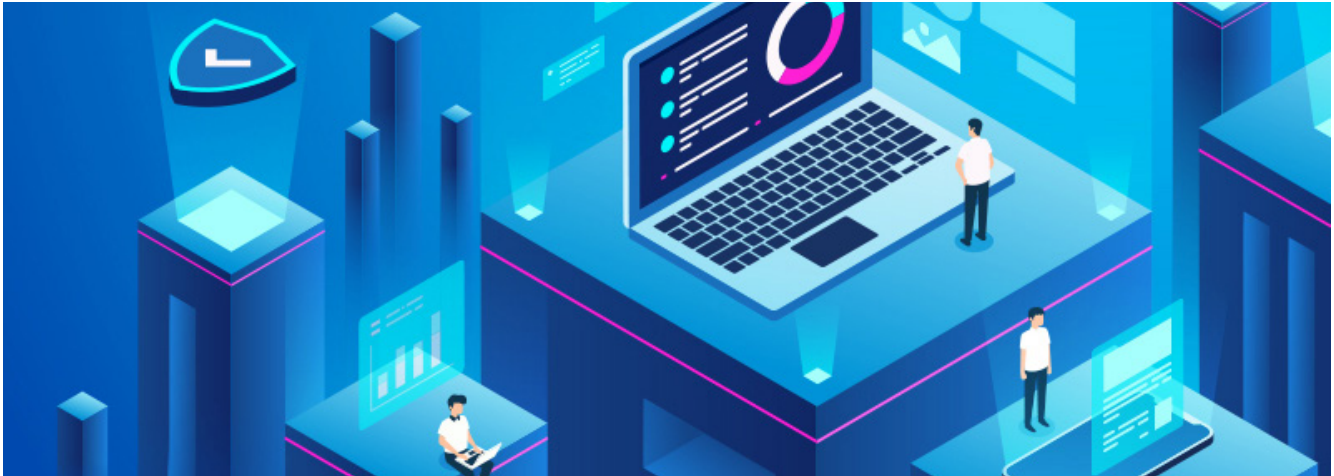
I live on a 43-acre horse farm in South Carolina. We have horses and donkeys as well as our dogs and cats. There is always something to do on a farm and it sure keeps me in pretty good shape!

What is the most rewarding aspect of your work?

In the 20+ years that I have taught at the Basic Law Enforcement School, it has been almost every year that I receive phone calls from students that graduated from the most recent Law Enforcement School. In those calls, the former students tell me of a law enforcement incident that they were just involved in (typically a high threat law enforcement engagement) and that while we were training on those types of incidents in the basic academy, they dismissed it as a waste of time. Their thought was “I will never have to do anything like this as a law enforcement fire marshal”. They consistently tell me that we trained them very well and they knew exactly how to deal with whatever type of incident they had been involved in and that they made it home safe and sound because of that training. Then they say, thank you. That is my reward!

What's the best trip you've ever been on and why?

That's an easy one. Australia! I was there for a while I was in the Marine Corps and would love to be able to take my wife there. It is an absolutely beautiful country and the people there were awesome!



IT Corner

Greetings VDFP,

IT Policies were recently updated to better align with the set required Agency policies based VITA/COV templates.

This alignment effort resulted in us adding an additional nine IT policies as noted below:

Information Security Program

- IT Configuration Management
- IT System and Communications Encryption
- IT System and Communications Protection
- IT System and Data Classification
- IT System and Services Acquisition
- IT Security Audit Monitoring and Logging
- Mobile Device Access Controls
- Remote and Wireless Access Controls

Please review the updated policy manual for awareness.

Robert Steele

VDFP IT Manager | Deputy ISO





Important 2025-26 Open Enrollment Updates

The State Health Benefits Open Enrollment has changed to May 16- May 30, 2025

The Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), Office of Health Benefits (OHB) would like to inform you that the 2025-2026 Open Enrollment for health benefits and flexible spending accounts (FSAs) has changed to May 16 – May 30, 2025. It was previously communicated on February 3, 2025, that Open Enrollment would be May 1 – May 15, 2025.



This years' annual Open Enrollment communication "Spotlight" will not be mailed to employees' address of record. The Spotlight will only be sent electronically to the employee's email address listed in Cardinal. The Spotlight will be placed on the DHRM 2025-26 Open Enrollment webpage when it becomes available.

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.

