



FIRE DEPARTMENT CONNECTION

For and About the Employees of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department

Engine 1, Ladder 1 Suddenly Immersed in Mass Shooting

Fire Station 1 usually trains on Sundays.

On August 26, Engine 1 and Ladder 1 decided to take a look at the elevators in the Bank of America Tower and then continue elevator training at a nearby parking garage on Hogan Street. Around 1:30 p.m., their training session came to an abrupt end when the crew noticed some commotion and heard numerous screams a block away.

Dozens of people were running out of The Jacksonville Landing and some were GSW victims. Amidst the confusion, Ladder 1 Firefighter Eddie Wallace spotted a JSO vehicle and got the officer's attention. That officer called for help, and then Ladder 1 Eng. Bobby Dopson alerted Fire Communications about an unknown incident at The Landing.

After receiving multiple reports of people shot, Dopson requested an MCI response.

Ultimately, there were 14 patients, three of whom were DOS and seven who were trauma alerts. The event is the first local mass shooting of this magnitude since JFRD implemented active assailant training.

Ladder 1 Capt. Jeremy Cooke and Dopson have each been on the job 15 years, so MCIs and calls involving multiple GSWs are nothing new. But between the ladder and engine that day, three members had a year or less on the job. No matter the experience level, this call was unique for them because of their immediate proximity and the fact that JSO had yet to take command.

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Medical Leadership – Dr. Brad Elias

Mid-morning, Dec. 1, 2016, Edgewood Avenue. JFRD and JSO are on scene at a hostage situation unfolding at a bank. There are 13 people inside plus the gunman.

More than a dozen JFRD apparatus and crews are staged at a safe distance. Nearby, a team of SWAT members and SWAT Medics prepare to approach the building. Despite attempts to negotiate, the situation has become a standoff, and uncertainty builds with each passing minute.

Clad in the olive green SWAT uniform, the body armor, tactical helmet and JSO-issued Glock handgun, it is not easy to distinguish the man who is the SWAT team's physician and JFRD's medical director unless you know him. But Dr. Brad Elias is in his ele-



JFRD Medical Director Dr. Brad Elias (right) discusses the evolution of an airport MCI drill with Division Chief of Rescue David Castleman (left), Capt. Jay Barnhill (facing Elias) and Lt. Jim Dyal.

ment, standing prepared to render lifesaving aid under extraordinary circumstances.

"I've always been attracted to lights and sirens," Elias said.

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Chief's Corner

It's hard to believe we're already in the last month of the fiscal year. As JFRD reaches the home stretch of City Council's public hearings, our proposed FY 2019 budget is intact and includes new rescues, staffing for Fire Station 61 in the Argyle/Oakleaf area, and funding for land for Station 65 near Atlantic Boulevard and Arlington Road South.

As taxpayer dollars are invested in JFRD, the return on investment is visible with our responses, training, and exemplary actions, like our response to the MCI at The Jacksonville Landing on Aug. 26. In this month's *Fire Department Connection*, we highlight the actions of Engine 1 and Ladder 1 whose crews were in the midst of company training downtown and then suddenly thrust into the middle of a mass shooting. They were in the right place at the right time, but what a perilous time it was. Everyone involved, including our personnel who have organized active assailant training, can take pride in how JFRD reacted and managed the chaos. Responding companies and units included: Rescues 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 15, 18, 73, R104, R105, R106, Fire 1, Fire 4, SQ4, L1, L4, HR4, E1, E13, E21, TR10, and, of course, the staff in Fire Communications that Sunday afternoon.

This month we also highlight Dr. Brad Elias. None of our EMS would exist without our medical director, and we're fortunate to have a doctor who works in the front lines with us every day. As a leader in emergency medicine at the state and local level, Dr. Elias is always striving to keep JFRD on the leading edge of technology and treatment in today's prehospital environment.

We say good bye to Morrison "Mo" Braren who has been a staple in EPD for the last 24 years, but look for him in local fishing circles. We also spotlight Station 12 and show off EPD's new vehicle barriers.

Continue to train, continue to study your craft, and we'll continue to support you in keeping JFRD the Best Fire Rescue Department in the Country.

Kurt Wilson, Chief of Department

Photo by Lt. Eric Prosswimmer

Elias is Honored to Provide Medical Direction to JFRD

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Early in his medical training, Elias discovered his passion for trauma and emergency medicine. He's pursued it for 20-plus years. Educated and employed in New Jersey, Illinois and Ohio, he eventually was drawn to Florida's weather.

Jacksonville's sky was blue and temperatures comfortable that early December morning on Edgewood Avenue. It was time to end the standoff. SWAT moves in, the gunman becomes distracted, and SWAT takes him into custody. There are no fatalities or serious injuries. Most of the freed hostages run across the street to JFRD personnel for a wellness check and to begin decompressing. Elias immerses himself in the moment, finding time to rejoice in the peaceful outcome with SWAT colleagues and JFRD personnel.

If you believe that demonstrating passion for the profession of emergency medicine and strengthening an organization's capacity to treat patients is a worthy example of leadership, then Elias sets a high bar. He is an ER physician for Baptist Medical Center Downtown, Medical Director for Life Flight at Baptist, and Medical Director for FSCJ South's EMT program. At the state level, he is Medical Director for the Bureau of Preparedness and Response.

"I have many jobs," Elias said, "but I am most passionate and proud of being associated with JFRD. This role provides me the most satisfaction. Having the responsibility of providing the medical direction and guid-

ance for one of the largest fire rescue departments in the state and country is an amazing honor and privilege that I cherish and respect."

Elias is the successor to Dr. Bob Kiely who served as JFRD's widely-respected medical director for 32 years. Kiely retired in 2014, earlier than intended, because he was battling ALS, but he trained Elias to become JFRD's medical director. Though the neurodegenerative disease robbed Kiely of his full career and cut his life short at age 64, Kiely and Elias got to know each other well. Kiely would be proud of Elias' leadership and advancements in JFRD. Elias recently worked with JFRD's Training Academy to develop and introduce a stroke and airway training course. About half of the Rescue Division has completed the class. To improve intubation, Elias has integrated a video laryngoscope into our equipment cache. He has added the sedative Ketamine to rescue units which can help manage issues with overactive patients. As part of JFRD's emphasis on active assailant training, Elias has provided riding chiefs with a variety of trauma supplies. His future plans include an EKG course and more active assailant training.

Speaking of riding, Elias hits the streets and visits stations often to engage rescue person-

nel. "I want them to see that I'm here to help, that I'm a resource," he said.

Part of Elias' focus is mentoring new rescue officers. He regularly reviews their patient care reports and provides feedback. He also uses his ride time to teach and mentor the young officers as well as the more experienced. Overall, Elias believes that mastering the fundamentals of SOG 430 should be every rescue officer's duty. He also believes those protocols and the personnel who apply

them properly are what make our department successful. He encourages a sense of compassion and caring, too. That goes a long way toward positive interactions with those requesting our service. And he

praises JFRD's administration for adding more rescue units and reducing individual unit call volumes. As a doctor overseeing the department's patient care, he gives JFRD a pretty good checkup.

"We transport thousands of people, but serious issues are minimal," Elias said. "I think our protocols are sound, and I think the field does a great job. They're the true clinicians. I get a lot of pride seeing them do things appropriately. I may provide the medical license and the protocols, but the field personnel are the real heroes, making critical clinical decisions and interventions that positively impact the lives of our citizens."

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— JFRD Medical Director Brad Elias

Veterans, Rookies Excel as MCI Unfolds Around Them

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"The scene unfolded around us," Cooke said. "We couldn't fall back."

Immediately after the first two police officers entered The Landing, the firefighters followed. Dopson said it was the most unsecure scene that he's ever worked because the assailant wasn't confirmed dead for an extended period. That obviously concerned Cooke because his crews were immersed in an unstable situation. But that uncertainty didn't affect their performance. "I felt like everybody was focused on their job," Cooke said.

Dopson agreed that JFRD and JSO performed well, but he believes that is simply meeting expectations. "They [JSO] did what they were trained to do. We did what we were trained to do," he said.

Sometime around 5 p.m., Engine 1 and Ladder 1 returned to the station. Dopson remembers one call per apparatus after midnight. As their shift was ending, Cooke said everyone just wanted to decompress, but their assignment that morning was appearing on live local television and then interviews with national media, including NBC Nightly News. Details of the incident quickly spanned from coast to coast, reaching the White House and drawing praise from fire departments as distant as Los Angeles.

That Sunday, Ladder 1 and Engine 1 included members whose tenure ranges from 15 years to 7 months on the job, including Cooke, Dopson, Eng. Austin Mays, Firefighter Robert Haddock, Firefighter Steven Smith, Firefighter Patrick Walden, and Wallace.

Not Your Grandmother's House



Squad 12's Capt. Colin Aguilar (at head of table) enjoys 'Taco Tuesday' on Aug. 21 with his crew and members of Station 13 and Fire 4's Chief Mike Allen. Station 20 also joined dinner but caught a run.

Visit Station 12 and you might understand why some refer to it as "Grandma's House."

Located in one of Jacksonville's most established suburbs, its architecture blends well. Indoors, it is cozy. From the kitchen, you can see the day room, locker room, watch room, Atlantic Boulevard and Linden Avenue. A bookshelf displays photos that prove some JFRD engines were once yellow.

Those shelves also contain logbooks that almost reach back to the station's inception in 1955, and there are numerous community service awards from decades past. Inside the watch room, taped to the wall, you'll find a March 8, 1993 bulletin from then-Operations Chief J. H. Lindsey. The bulletin details all the different station colors, like those stripes painted on axes and other tools. And if you like the classic look of terrazzo tile floors, 12 does not disappoint.

Station 12 Capt. Colin Aguilar values those relics and the 63-year-old, single-bay station so much that he prefers to keep the existing facility instead of building a new one. The idea of a new 12 has been around for years, but it's on hold for now, and that's welcome by Aguilar.

"I don't like tearing down our history," he said. "There's 60 years of people working here. I'd hate to see it go away."

So nostalgia runs high at 12, but a modern concept is also thriving in this historical sta-



tion. Squad 12 is one of five specially outfitted and staffed units in JFRD. Aguilar and his officers and crew are ensuring their squad's massive territory – most of Duval County east of the St. Johns – receives the rapid and complete technical rescue capability that is central to the squad concept. That involves dispatching a concentrated dose of USAR where needed. A USAR technician for 15 years, Aguilar trains plenty with the

members assigned to 12 on technical rescue's disciplines. His officers include Lt. Clint Bridier and Lt. Brandon Shindler. If Squad 12 is

not responding to calls, they're at the academy or elsewhere honing their skills. "We usually get back to the station around 8 [p.m.]," Aguilar said.

When Aguilar promoted to Captain in 2014, Fire Station 12 would not have been his first choice because the spot was a bit slow for him. He had just spent 10 years at Station 4 and liked that pace. But the Squad concept soon emerged under Chief of Department Kurt Wilson who was Chief of Operations in 2014. Chief Les McCormick, now retired, offered the spot to Aguilar. The expanded territory offers Aguilar and all assigned to Squad 12 a larger call volume and variety of incidents to use and improve their USAR skills.

"We're just trying to make things better," Aguilar said. "Otherwise, you're stagnating."

After 24 Years, Mo Goes Home

He loved selling sporting goods, but Mo Braren decided to make emergency management his second career.

"The only thing I couldn't do was string a tennis racket," said Braren who recently retired from JFRD's Emergency Preparedness Division (EPD) after 24 years.

During his brief stint at Sports Unlimited on Southside

Boulevard, Braren, a United States Air Force veteran, enjoyed interacting with customers, handling new equipment and the art of selling. But after a couple of years,



Braren

he answered an ad in the newspaper for a trainer position with the city's Emergency Preparedness Division. His 21 years in the Air Force included training and supervision, and that experience likely gave him the edge over the dozen other job applicants.

Initially, Braren coordinated a variety of large-scale training exercises for EPD, and then his job grew to include the county-wide assessment of all the local sites and businesses that stored and used large quantities of hazardous materials. His oversight included reviewing each site's contingency plan for hazmat spills. Ultimately, Braren's responsibilities changed to managing EPD's operations and working special events. He maintained the infrastructure of the Emergency Operations Center – equipment, electronics, furniture, even dry erase boards. He was an integral part of the team which coordinated EPD functions at Super Bowl XXXIX, numerous Georgia-Florida games, Jaguars games, and EOC activations during tropical storms. He's worked MCIs involving 100 people who overheated at sports events, and he once persuaded law enforcement to not cancel the Monster Truck Jam due to ominous weather. Meteorology was

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Emergency Preparedness Director Steve Woodard (left) discusses anti-vehicle barriers with EPD Assistant Chief Todd Smith (right) and Brent Fine (center), the city's special events manager.

How to Halt Hostile Vehicles

These contraptions could pass for extra-large tombstones on wheels, but they actually are rapidly deployable anti-vehicle barriers. The Emergency Preparedness Division recently bought several of these devices, which can be set up by one person and quickly chained together to secure access points at large events and mass gatherings. If a hostile vehicle makes contact, the barrier wedges itself under the front end of the vehicle and pitches it upward. Depending on the size and velocity of the vehicle, the barrier can stop motion in about 8 to 15 feet. EPD recently deployed the barriers at a couple of events at Daily's Place.



As Tower Ladder 21 was paying for their staples at Sam's Club on Beach Boulevard, the crew noticed three women in the checkout line who had amassed five large carts that were full of groceries. The women were part of a booster club for St. Augustine High School's football team, and they were buying concession stand items to sell during home games. TL-21 didn't hesitate to help the women, first to their vehicle and then unloading those five carts of snacks and drinks into their trailer, all in 15 minutes. "We had a lot of heavy items, and there is no doubt without their assistance it would have taken us 45 minutes," said Jennifer Michaux. *Photo (L-R) Michaux, Firefighter Jonathan Taunton, Eng. Joe Gresser, Lt. James Baity, Jennifer Villalobos and Firefighter Jeff White. Photo by Shellie McCary.*

High Maintenance



Firefighter Justin Violett paints Station 7's flagpole with some assistance from Ladder 7 and (not pictured) Lt. Jeremy Pilcher, Eng. Jonathan McMullen, and Firefighter David Papworth-McGuire. Retiree Wayne Doolittle recalled installing the flagpole just prior to the HazMat Team's transition from old Fire Station 9 at 24th and Perry streets to Station 7 on Division Street in the early 1990s.

Photo submitted by Eng. Jonathan McMullen.

Mo Braren Retires

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among his Air Force-specific skills, and apparently his forecasting was spot on. In total, he worked for eight EPD directors. Among his most bizarre memories, Braren counts December 2007. In less than three weeks, JFRD responded to a six-story garage collapse downtown and a multiple-alarm explosion and raging chemical fire at a manufacturing plant on the Northside. The EOC activated for both events. A few days later, JFRD responded to a second alarm fire at a San Marco church just two days before Christmas.

Braren will remain in Jacksonville, but he plans to fish as much as possible. Soon, he will return to Japan, which is where the Air Force sent him and where he met his wife while recreational diving in Okinawa. Part of him also wants to keep working.

"I'll miss coming to work and not knowing what's going to happen," Braren said. "Un-scheduled incidents make this job interesting."