

# ON SCENE



August 2016



**America's First**  
**Hazmat Team**

# DEAR FELLOW FIREFIGHTERS



Our Hazardous Materials Team seems like it's always been here.

The team is just 39 years and counting, but its formation is historical. JFRD was the first to launch a municipal-based hazardous materials response team in the United States.

Please let that sink in.

Forty years ago, there were hundreds and hundreds of fire departments from coast to coast, and Jacksonville was first in hazmat.

If we could backtrack to the summer of 1976 in our department, we would find Engine 18's Capt. Ron Gore on the verge of achieving something he never imagined. Gore was the man tasked with creating the team, and he was at a disadvantage. There were no classes to guide him, no response procedures either, and the relevant federal regulations were not enacted. Gore became the perfect student, and he had 14 members join him in the pursuit of the unknown.

This month's cover story, which begins on page 4, describes Gore's journey in building JFRD's Hazmat Team. Many of us have declared Gore as the "Father of Hazmat," but he resists the title because he says the concept came from Fire Chief Russell Yarbrough who led JFRD from 1974 to 1981. Gore faced a huge challenge, and he and his team excelled. In fact, Jacksonville's Hazmat Team served as a model for many other departments to follow.

After retiring from JFRD in 1989, Gore focused on his consulting business of teaching hazardous materials response to private industry and government across the country. He hasn't stopped either. Gore is 75 and says he'll work as long as he can. Talk about motivation!

When I read the story about the team's formation, there was a quote from another original Hazmat Team member that stuck with me: "We had the attitude that when we were working together, there was no event we couldn't handle."

Please let that sink in, too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kurt Wilson".

Kurt Wilson  
Chief of Department

## On the Cover

JFRD's Hazmat Team in its early days. *Standing (L-R)* Chief M. Hendricks; R.P. Morpew; R.L. Masculine; J.P. Croft, Jr.; D.J. Love; T.L. Dennis; W.B. McCarthy; B.T. Pickett; Capt. R. Gore (team leader); Chief R. Emory; Fire Chief R. Yarbrough; *kneeling:* T.J. Yost; P.D. Eddins and D.N. McCormack. *Original team members not pictured:* M.S. Chambers; R.E. Hunt; D.D. Jarrett; and S.E. Boudreau. *Cover photo by Retired District Chief Steve Gerbert.*





**Eng. James Costner, Jr. (third from left) with Ladder 44's past and present crew members (L-R) Dist. Chief Frank Gillis, Capt. Ralph Hernandez, Eng. Lee Coughlin, Eng. Brian Kernohan and Eng. David Marti.**

## Engineer James Costner, Jr. Lived Life Large

The portrait displayed next to Eng. James Costner, Jr.'s casket during his July 19 funeral was perfect.

Costner's celebrity-caliber smile, good looks and obvious enthusiasm not only filled the frame, they backed up the comments and memories from friends and family about his fun-loving personality.

"Jamie never walked by a mirror without saying 'Man, I look good!'" said cousin Joseph Florence during Costner's memorial service last month. "He wanted to look good, and he wanted his heart and his actions to be good. If Jamie wasn't smiling, he was about to."

District Chief Frank Gillis, who previously was Costner's officer on Ladder 44 for about four years, agreed.

"He had a huge personality," Gillis said. "He was such a happy guy. If someone was in a bad mood, he'd try to cheer them up."

Costner was the life of the dinner table, Gillis added, and often the fire station.

"He loved Frank Sinatra and singing rock ballads," Gillis said. "He'd eat all the creamy peanut butter ... six to 10 times a day he would have a spoonful and always leave the spoon in the sink. He loved quizzing rookies on territory and other aspects of the job. And he was always the first one on the truck."

Then there was the cologne.

"It was quality stuff, but you could smell him coming," Gillis said. "He would reapply throughout the day."

Costner worked well with Gillis' crew, which included Engineers Lee Coughlin and David Marti and Firefighter Brian McMahon. Gillis has trained and groomed plenty of new firefighters and said Costner was among the best.

"He was good at tearing stuff up," said Gillis, referring to the physical strength that effective truck work requires. Costner was also a skilled medic and good with patients, Gillis added. Costner had worked at the ER in Shands Hospital, now UF Health, and in private ambulance before he joined JFRD.

"James' life was lived large," said Evangel Temple's Pastor Gary Wiggins during Costner's memorial service on July 19.

For example, Costner took the lead on planning his 2013 wedding, and he and wife Nicole eloped to Paris. From the time he could drive, Costner drove a Cadillac, Wiggins shared. And as a child, Costner would, after returning home from church, step in front of the fireplace and summarize the pastor's sermon for his parents and brothers, complete with a similar passion and intonation as the preacher's. Costner also really loved baseball.

Costner joined JFRD in 2009 with Recruit Class 309. His first assignment was Engine 42. But most of his career, he worked at Ladder 44. He promoted to Engineer last September and worked temporary assignments at Engine 22, Rescue 50, and Rescue 27 before his assignment to Rescue 7. Then he was reassigned to Station 44 in early July, this time on the engine. A few days later, on July 7, Costner passed away at age 32.



## A Team with Chemistry

**L-R: Two thirds of the original Hazmat Team members, JFRD retirees Jim Croft, Richard Hunt, Stephen Boudreau, Bob Masculine, Ron Gore, Terry Dennis, Phill Eddins, Neil McCormack, Brett Pickett and Bernie McCarthy. Not pictured: Mark Chambers, Tim Yost, and D.D. Jarrett; Davis Love and Dick Morphew have passed away. Photo by Retired District Chief Steve Gerbert.**

# The Origin of Hazmat

This came directly from the man so many of us credit as the “Father of Hazmat.”

“It wasn’t my idea,” said retired Capt. Ron Gore during a recent visit to Fire Station 7.

In town for a reunion of JFRD’s original Hazmat Team members in late June, Gore shared how the specialty team’s concept originated with Fire Chief Russell Yarbrough in the 1970s. Tanker car derailments, shipments of nuclear weapons to local military installations, dangerous and volatile cargo passing through our city’s main thoroughfares and Jacksonville’s growing chemical industry got the chief’s attention. If something

went awry, Yarbrough wanted JFRD to be as prepared as possible.

Engine 18’s Gore was about to become Hazmat’s Number One Son.

As a new lieutenant in the early 1970s, Gore was assigned to the Training Academy for a year. This was common practice back then, but Gore’s experience would be far from common after he met Training Chief Sion Joseph King, Jr. Gore was still getting used to pinning bugles on his collar when King assigned him the task of teaching hazardous materials as part of a fire science course at Florida Junior College, now Florida State College at Jacksonville. There was just one problem.

“I didn’t know the subject matter,” said Gore.

Neither did anyone else on the job.

Initially, Gore and his students, many of them firefighters, spent time with chemistry teachers. But lectures on molecular structures and chemical reactions didn’t translate well to emergency response. A frustrated Gore soon found relief in practicality. He convinced FJC’s administration to allow him to train his students in the field.

“We trained at the rail yard, ship yard, the tank farm,” he said, adding that private industry was very cooperative in providing access and institutional knowledge.

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Gore's class became an on-site assessment of industrial hazards, the chemicals, production methods, and the containers. Through that familiarity, Gore and his students began to understand the risks, and they devised response strategies.

Fast forward to 1976. JFRD's 800 or so members received a bulletin asking for volunteers to join the department's first Hazardous Materials Team. Approximately 50 firefighters responded, and 15 made the team based on unique qualifications. Bob Masculine, now 86, was one of them. His background included military and industrial experience, but Masculine also knew what he didn't know.

"We were specialists before we were qualified to be specialists," said Masculine. "But we were willing to learn. We had to

find out what worked, and we tooled up to make it work."

Surrounded by enthusiastic peers and armed with six-plus years of studying and teaching hazardous materials, Gore was no longer a reluctant pioneer. Together, the members focused on making America's first hazmat team as capable as it could be, often at their own expense and while off duty.

They looked to military surplus outlets for protective gear; they collaborated with private industry and JFRD's machine shop to design the most effective tools, and they traveled the country to understand the volatility of new chemical products. Back then, the City of Jacksonville provided very limited funding to the team, Gore said. That didn't stop them;

**"We had the attitude that when we were working together, there was no event we couldn't handle."**

**Phill Eddins, JFRD Retiree and Original Hazmat Team Member**

they willingly bore the costs of travel, training and even some specialized equipment purchases. Theirs was an extensive and unrelenting discovery process. And there were no precise OSHA standards for hazardous materials to guide them, Gore said. Although they lacked technical knowledge and defined procedures,

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January in Jacksonville can be cold, but it wasn't snowing in 1993. JFRD's Hazmat Team was using large quantities of aqueous film forming foam to try to extinguish a tank fire at Steuart Petroleum. The tank contained more than 2 million gallons of gasoline, according to OSHA. It took six days to extinguish the fire.



**When the Hazmat Team wasn't on a call or training, they would PT at Andrew Jackson High School's football field at Main and 48th streets. This early 1980s photo shows how distinct Engine 9 Able, the early designation for JFRD's hazmat unit, was from Engine 9. Both ran out of old Station 9 until the team moved to Station 7 in the early 1990s for more space and to eventually expand the team.**

the team had confidence.

"When we formed that team, it was the best group of people you could have hoped for," said JFRD retiree Phill Eddins, an original Hazmat Team member. "We had the attitude that when we were working together, there was no event we couldn't handle."

And handle they did: propane tank fires, derailed train cars leaking hydrogen chloride or muriatic acid, petroleum tank farm fires. There were exposures, but no serious injuries. Each incident was a response as well as a lesson for the team.

There were skeptics of the team early on, and some who poked fun by labeling the hazmat members as the "Clorox Team" or "bleach drinkers." Eddins said he eventually took the monikers as a compliment, and JFRD retiree Jim Croft embraced the identity as well. On occasion, when he got transferred to another station, Croft would show up with his gear in one hand and a genuine bottle of Clorox in the other.

"I'd come inside the station and set it down on the table," he said.

As the team continued to prove itself, the nicknames subsided, and the interest from departments across the country increased. Gore's travel included trips with Chief Yarbrough, who was president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. This gave Gore numerous opportunities to present to large audiences that were hungry for information that only he and JFRD's team could offer. Gore said he doesn't recall any other fire department challenging Jacksonville's position as the first to forge a municipal hazardous materials response team.

"It makes me proud," he said.

**"We'd show up decked out in air packs. People began to understand if we had our stuff on, they better have theirs on."**

**Andy Graham, JFRD Retiree and Original Hazmat Team Member**

JFRD Retiree Andy Graham joined the team in 1980 and remained a member until retiring in 2004, longer than anyone else. During that time, he interacted with a lot of visiting fire departments.

"We had people from Canada, the Virgin Islands, New York," Graham said. "They wanted to ride with us. A lot of times, we didn't have anything noteworthy, but they'd ask questions. We would just talk about hazmat. They knew that Jacksonville was the leader in this, and they wanted to pick our brains."

Graham said he joined the Hazmat Team to try something different.

"After a couple of weeks, I thought 'Why didn't I do this sooner?'" he recalled.

"They were so eager to learn. That's what impressed me."

Graham also recalled how JFRD members initially had their doubts about the team, but after a few years, the field took notice of their effectiveness and cautious work habits. "We'd show up decked out in air packs," Graham said. "People began to understand if we had our stuff on, they better have theirs on."

Although the team faced plenty of unknowns, Graham said that Gore trained him and everybody so well that he "can't ever remember fearing" for his life.

"Capt. Gore loved the job, and he taught me how to love it," Graham said. "He gave me the push to love what I did, and I did love it. When I retired, it took me about a year to get over leaving."

Gore retired from JFRD in 1989, but he continues to teach the subject through his hazardous materials company, Safety Systems, which he founded in the late 1970s. Gore offers training and emergency response services. His clients include the military, private industry and other fire and rescue departments. Gore estimates that he and his team of instruc-

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**JFRD Hazmat Team pioneers (L-R) Neil McCormack, Ron Gore and Bob Masculine recently gathered at Fire Station 7 for a reunion that included 10 of the original members. Gore (center) still teaches hazmat to public and private industry.**

tors have trained “hundreds of thousands of people” nationwide.



**The JFRD Hazmat Team’s original home was old Station 9 at 24th and Perry streets. The team eventually moved to Station 7 and decades later expanded to include Station 21 in 2001 after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11.**

Gore is now the hazmat subject matter expert that he was desperately seeking in the early 1970s, when he was tasked with arguably one of the most challenging assignments ever entrusted to a firefighter in Jacksonville or elsewhere. He may not accept the “Father of Hazmat” label, but just Google “Ron Gore” and you’ll learn how his place in the hazardous materials circle is renowned.

At 75, Gore is still eager to teach what he’s learned over the last 40 years, and what he’s learned from the intrepid firefighters who formed America’s first Hazmat Team. He has no plans to retire either. After being forced to leave his comfort zone that first year he became a JFRD lieutenant, Gore believes his career path was forged by Chiefs Yarbrough and King and, most importantly, God.

“I was created to do this,” he said.



**According to Phill Eddins, an original Hazmat Team member, part of the inspiration for the team’s red helmets was Paul “Red” Adair, an American oil well firefighter who became prominent in the 1960s for his success in controlling large oil fires and blowouts. The 1968 film “Hellfighters” starring John Wayne was based upon Adair’s renowned reputation and career.**

# Firehouse Magazine Contributing Editor: 'Jacksonville is the Mecca of Hazmat'

As a contributing editor to Firehouse Magazine for three decades, Robert Burke has covered hazardous materials in depth.

During his fire service career and into retirement, Burke has traveled the country to either research, train or write articles about more than 100 fire departments' hazardous materials teams, including JFRD's.

"Jacksonville is the mecca of hazmat. That's where it started," Burke said.

As an adjunct instructor with the National Fire Academy since 1988, he's taught hazmat classes to thousands of firefighters. Burke has also studied and chronicled a variety of historical hazardous materials incidents in Firehouse, Fire Engineering and other publications.

In 2009, Burke published "HazMat Teams Across America" – a 192-page book which describes the inception and capacity of 30 domestic hazmat teams. Burke considers the book as a resource for other fire departments to learn about each other's hazmat operations. In the chapter about JFRD, Burke is quick to point out Jacksonville's place in history and JFRD retired Capt. Ron Gore's role.

"What is Jacksonville's contribution to hazmat? I don't even know what word to use," Burke said during a recent telephone interview with On Scene. "It's irreplaceable ... they started it. And what they went through, there was so much trial and error because there was no precedent to go by. They did things so well under Ron Gore's guidance. What he did is immeasurable. The contribution Jacksonville's team made to the fire service is immeasurable, and we wouldn't be where we are today nationally without them. Ron Gore reached a lot of people."

Despite all his travel, Burke didn't visit Jacksonville until 2007, when the Hazmat team invited him to its 30th anniversary celebration. Burke said he met Gore in 1980 when Gore was teaching a hazmat class in Arlington, Texas. Back then, Burke was an assistant chief at a mostly volunteer department in Verdigris, Oklahoma.

"That's when I first heard of Ron Gore and the Jacksonville Hazmat Team," Burke said. "We were just totally impressed by his level of knowledge." Burke invited Gore to come to Oklahoma to train his volunteer firefighters.



Robert Burke

During Burke's visit to Jacksonville nearly a decade ago, he said he noticed the spirit of hazmat innovation was still alive. He observed tools he hadn't seen before, such as specialized clamps. He also noticed the tremendous variety of tools on JFRD's hazmat units. "It looked like a hardware store," he said.

Through all his contact with hazmat teams nationwide, Burke said that Gore is the foremost expert.

"I don't think anyone could teach Ron Gore anything about hazmat," Burke said. "That man has an amazing mind for teaching hazmat."

**"The contribution Jacksonville's team made to the fire service is immeasurable, and we wouldn't be where we are today nationally without them. Ron Gore reached a lot of people."**

**Robert Burke  
Contributing Editor  
Firehouse Magazine**



# Promotions



**District Chief Ryan Lundy**



**District Chief David Westberry**



**Captain Ashton Geoghagan**



**Captain James Schaudel**



**Lieutenant Kwasi Dingle**



**Lieutenant Adam Esslinger**



**Lieutenant Alan Kumm**



**Lieutenant Michael Reid**



# Promotions



**Lieutenant Pat Riley**



**Lieutenant Sheryl Rodgers**



**Lieutenant Ross Stockwell**



**Lieutenant Robert Stover**



**Engineer Matthew Anderson**



**Engineer Robert Archer**



**Engineer Gary Crosby**



**Engineer Warren Golden**



# Promotions



**Engineer Sha'Ron Gould**



**Engineer Eileen Haslam**



**Engineer Jamie Jordan**



**Engineer David Labelle**



**Engineer Darrold McArthur**



**Engineer Byron Mincey**



**Engineer Bobby Oakley**



**Engineer James Stone**

# Promotions



**Engineer Justin Summey**



**Engineer Kelly Taylor**



**Engineer David Thomas**



**Engineer Laurence Washington**



**Engineer A.J. Young**

## Sea of Blue

### Fallen Firefighter Memorial March

Jacksonville Landing • South Hogan Street  
City Hall • Ashley Street • Fire Station 1

**October 12**  
**10 a.m.**



# JULY 2016 CALL VOLUMES

## RESCUES

R1	.485
R2	.443
R81	.423
R19	.420
R22	.402
R18	.379
R30	.367
R13	.364
R20	.357
R28	.351
R31	.341
R21	.334
R70	.332
R25	.323
R5	.323
R15	.322
R24	.321
R27	.321
R34	.321
R32	.313
R36	.290
R52	.288
R51	.278
R7	.273
R50	.264
R26	.262
R35	.256
R58	.244
R71	.236
R55	.225
R42	.216
R54	.213
R57	.200
R59	.188
R23	.187
R33	.161
R49	.136
R62	.117
R53	.97
R46	.65

R43	.56
R86	.48
R45	.43
R40	.33

## ENGINES

E1	.485
E28	.466
E19	.432
E22	.423
E30	.405
E31	.384
E18	.354
E10	.343
E44	.341
E21	.339
E51	.338
E27	.333
E36	.325
E152	.320
E32	.320
E20	.317
E25	.316
E24	.315
E34	.304
E13	.296
E2	.295
E9	.269
E7	.251
E42	.250
E5	.248
E135	.243
E150	.239
E17	.222
E59	.209
E58	.203
E26	.190
E55	.189
E154	.184
E29	.161
E57	.160
E33	.156

E11	.140
E49	.129
E41	.125
E62	.113
E23	.108
E53	.83
E16	.78
E46	.64
E48	.59
E56	.54
E143	.34
HAZ21	.33
HAZ7	.29
HR4	.25
E40	.21
E45	.15

## SQUADS

S4	.318
S12	.231
S37	.202
S14	.193

## LADDERS

L28	.210
L30	.184
L1	.172
L31	.170
L134	.145
TL21	.141
L44	.138
L10	.107
L4	.104
L9	.101
L7	.94
L26	.72

## TANKERS

T28	.112
T52	.73
T31	.57
T42	.50
T33	.49
T29	.48

T49	.34
T54	.32
T57	.28
T35	.9
T40	.7
T45	.6

## BRUSH (Top 5)

BR35	.31
BR50	.28
BR31	.25
BR42	.6
BR53	.6

## MARINE

M38	.12
M39	.10
M40	.5

## FIELD CHIEFS

R107	.149
R104	.113
SF1	.100
R105	.95
R106	.92
SF2	.75
F3	.73
R103	.63
F9	.52
F1	.48
F4	.46
F6	.45
F5	.44
F7	.43
F8	.42
F2	.36

## JULY 2016

EMS	10,485
FIRE	1,390
NON EMR	.211
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,086</b>