2017 Annual Report

Photo by Firefighter Jeremiah Johnson.
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Solemn moment. At the funeral of Arvada Firefighter Jim Schaefer on Sept. 14, Adams County Fire Rescue Firefighter Michael Trunkendolz prepares to perform the Last Alarm ceremony. Photo by Charles Broshous.
Since we last published an Annual Report, Adams County Fire Rescue has gone through some exciting changes. In 2017, we reached many mile-stones as a department, to say the least. Calls increased, yet response times improved overall. As a result, ACFR has earned several prestigious distinctions in the fire service industry. You’ll be able to read more about those distinctions within the pages of this publication.

ACFR has now grown to 108 employees, at four fire stations, one administration building and one Training Center. These employees now serve 65,130 residents and 2,900 businesses in our district. Because you are the customer we serve, we want you to know exactly how we are utilizing your tax dollars. In the following pages, you will read a letter from our Fire Chief Pat Laurienti, as well as summaries from our operations, prevention and planning divisions.

Some of the photos in this report, including the one of this spread, are from the funeral services of one of our fallen brothers, Brett Anderson. Anderson’s passing was a terrible loss for ACFR and it had a significant impact on the department. We will greatly miss him, and his family will forever be a part of our family. We also invite you to check out our re-designed website. You can find it at www.acfpd.org. There’s also a digital version of this Annual Report there, in case you misplace this one and need to refer to it later.

We are also active on Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor. If you haven’t already, go and like and follow us on all these platforms. We share information regarding upcoming events, real-time information when emergency events are occurring, videos, safety tips and much, much more. Feel free to share all of those with your friends and family. You can find us @adamscountyfire on Twitter and @AdamsCountyFireRescue on Facebook. To find us on Nextdoor, you’ll need to register with your neighborhood first.

Speaking of Nextdoor, we’ve invited members of that social network to take a customer survey. ACFR is conducting this survey as part of our Community Risk Assessment (read more about this on page 10). This process includes reaching out to our customers in order to evaluate our performance. Ultimately, we will be identifying ways we can better serve the community.

As one of our valued customers, your input is invaluable. If you haven’t already done so, please fill out one survey per household. If you aren’t a member of the Nextdoor network, we encourage you to join so you can participate in the survey.

Lastly, below are some graphics that illustrate a simplified breakdown of our financials. If you would like to see our more-detailed financial report, just log on to our website.
Our family here at Adams County Fire Rescue takes pride in providing what we consider to be five-star service to your family. Our highly-trained and motivated employees are committed to protecting the lives and property of the citizens of the district. We continuously strive to reduce the risks our community faces, while being prepared for those that still exist. Our goal each day is to safely respond to and mitigate any emergencies that arise. We are a customer service-driven organization with standards rooted in safety, professionalism, teamwork, respect and personal/personnel development.

Since we last published an annual report, ACFR has transformed into a newly-formed fire district that includes the former North Washington Fire Protection District and Southwest Adams County Fire Protection District. This consolidation took three full years to accomplish and has strengthened your fire district in numbers, as well as financially. The consolidation made it possible for ACFR to purchase new fire apparatus, as well as remodel Station 12 and the administrative offices, using monies saved by pooling our resources and eliminating duplications. The aforementioned purchases and projects, that amounted to $3.5 million dollars, were all funded without bond issues or tax increases.

The men and women that proudly serve you responded to 8,080 emergency calls in 2017, ranging from structure fires and water rescues, to delivering babies. There were several lives saved by the emergency crews and a vast amount of care given by our firefighters. ACFR is committed to serving you in many ways outside of 9-1-1 calls by offering programs such as Trick-or-Treat Town, Breakfast with Santa (see page 12), as well as smoke alarm and child car seat safety programs, just to name a few.

In 2017, ACFR was able to purchase property for the new Station 11 to be built in 2018/2019. This new station will be located at 69th Avenue and Pecos Street and is one of the last adjustments from the consolidation, to better locate stations for our Standards of Coverage. It will be a state-of-the-art fire station with firefighter safety zones to guard against the exhaust of apparatus and toxic waster that we bring back from fires. There will also be a small museum with department history, as well as a community room for special events. This station will be funded with your current tax dollars; we will not be requesting additional tax dollars to build Station 11.

I am proud to serve as your Fire Chief and to have an administrative staff, firefighters and chief staff leading the charge to serve you with compassion and the best care possible.

Message from the Fire Chief

Our family here at Adams County Fire Rescue takes pride in providing what we consider to be five-star service to your family. Our highly-trained and motivated employees are committed to protecting the lives and property of the citizens of the district. We continuously strive to reduce the risks our community faces, while being prepared for those that still exist. Our goal each day is to safely respond to and mitigate any emergencies that arise. We are a customer service-driven organization with standards rooted in safety, professionalism, teamwork, respect and personal/personnel development.

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Refurbished HQ. With the merge of two fire protection districts, Station 12 and the administration offices at 8055 Washington St. were re-modeled. The dedication ceremony was held May 31. Photo by Christina Marchese.

Last respects. At the funeral of Adams County Fire Rescue Firefighter Brett Anderson on April 26, Fire Chief Pat Laurienti speaks of Anderson’s great legacy. Photo by Rick Luebke.
In 2017, Adams County Fire Rescue responded to 8,080 calls for service, with the largest portion being Emergency Medical Service. This was a 10% increase in total calls from 2016. Our emergency crews are made up of 87 full-time Paramedics and EMT Firefighters of various ranks. They respond to all types of hazards from our four stations. Our front-line apparatus includes four Engines, one Ladder Truck, one Heavy Rescue, two Brush trucks, one Command vehicle, and four fire department-based Medic (ambulance) units.

In addition, some of our members belong to regional specialized teams. They provide subject-matter expertise for high-risk, low-frequency incidents in the areas of Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue and Wildland Fire Suppression. The regional teams primarily respond to these specialized incidents within the North Metro area but will assist anywhere in the front range when called.

The Operations Division has three support branches: Training, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Administration. They play an important role in supporting and providing resources, hands-on training, education, certifications, licensing, EMS billing and organizational guidance for the crews on the street. In 2017, we hired an administrative assistant to provide some much-needed expertise and support in the areas of records and project management, statistical analysis and software utilization.

In 2017, committees were formed to develop and establish ACFR’s mission, vision, values and goals. This information now resides on the department website for all to view. We continue to fine tune our business model and service delivery by gathering information and feedback to support our efforts to become a nationally-accredited agency. This data-driven, decision-making model enables us to strategically deploy our current resources and plan for the future.

ACFR is a member of the North Metro Area Fire Department's Association. This group is made up of three separate committees representing the Fire Chiefs, Operations Chiefs and Training Chiefs from the eight suburban fire departments just north of Denver. The eight departments that provide automatic aid to each other include ACFR, Arvada, Brighton, Federal Heights, North Metro, Thornton, South Adams County and Westminster.

Over the last several years, the committees of this association have worked hard to identify opportunities for mutual aid and to provide better service and safety for our collective citizens and employees. These opportunities have come in many forms.

In emergency operations, through the use of statistical data with plot maps to identify call loads and response times, we have identified “service areas” where the present location of fire stations and their resources can be better utilized by thinking “outside the box.” Instead of only using resources from a home agency, many times there are closer and more appropriate units available from a neighboring department. We have also established strong and up-to-date Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) outlining our commitments with our neighboring departments for automatic-aid responses. Two of these were finalized with Westminster and Arvada Fire Departments in 2017. “North Area” Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have also been drafted to set expectations for how we operate with all eight departments on auto-aid emergency scenes.

National standards and new technologies continue to play a major role in enhancing dispatching practices, Computer-Aided Dispatching (CAD) and information sharing from our dispatch centers to our first responders. National norms for state certifications while continuing to accrue over 20 hours of training per month in EMS, fire and special hazards.

In Training, we have had great success in pooling our resources and instructors to facilitate “North Area” new hire academies, Company Officer Academy and automatic-aid trainings with all agencies. Organizationaly, we are compliant with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards for staffing, apparatus and incident management. Our employees meet or exceed the industry norms for state certifications while continuing to accrue over 20 hours of training per month in EMS, fire and special hazards.

Smoke showing. On May 18, Adams County Fire Rescue was dispatched to a structure fire at the 3100 block of W 67th Ave. when a passerby saw smoke coming out of the house and called 9-1-1. ACFR crews, with the assistance of Westminster Fire, worked an extended time checking the attic area. The fire was put under control with no injuries. Photo by John Hubel.
In 2017, Adams County Fire Rescue’s Prevention Bureau grew to four employees, which is the most that ACFR has ever had in prevention. The fire prevention bureau takes care of all new construction plan reviews and inspections as well as all annual business inspections. The team makes sure that the International Fire Code is being followed to ensure the safety of all persons who are conducting business in those business facilities. The prevention bureau also oversees the public education group, the fire investigators and the special events standby personnel for the district.

When it comes to plan reviews for the year 2017, there were 349 permits issued for construction, which brought in $193,711.04 in permit fees. This includes tenant finish remodels as well as new construction. Each project can consist of up to six separate inspections during the construction process. Annual business inspections require a Code-Certified Fire Inspector to walk through a business to look for hazards and safety violations that will need to be remediated according to the International Fire Code. In 2017, there were just under 2,000 inspections completed, including re-inspections.

ACFR Fire Investigators investigate all fire incidents that have a high value of loss. In 2017, there were 180 fires. Of those, 152 of them were investigated by the fire investigators, with one arrest and conviction. ACFR fire investigators also conducted three classes for the region. The classes were for Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator, a new Investigator Academy class and a FAA drone class. All of the ACFR Fire Investigators are Certified Fire and Explosion Investigators.

ACFR’s Public Education Group consists of off-duty fire personnel who make presentations at our schools and present either a puppet show or a skit performance. This group teaches the students about fire safety. In 2017, they completed nine puppet shows and 10 skit performances. Nineteen of the 23 schools in our district were able to see one of these safety presentations.

Special Event Standby Personnel is needed when there will be a large show at an assembly occupancy. Some of these events include the Grizzly Rose and the Denver Merchandise Mart. Fire personnel are used to make sure there are no safety issues and respond if an emergency arises during the show. If a situation does arise, they are available to assist with help until our crews arrive on the scene. In 2017, ACFR had 41 shows which required special event standby personnel to be on site.

The ACFR Prevention Bureau also conducts fire extinguisher trainings for the businesses within our district. This training is required for some of the businesses in our district to maintain some of their certifications. Last year, we conducted 10 classes for businesses in our district.
Adams County Fire Rescue received the distinction of being the fourth fire department in Colorado to receive a “Class 1” Public Protection Classification rating by the Insurance Services Office (ISO), the highest possible rating. The ISO currently evaluates over 50,000 fire departments nationwide with approximately 305 earning the Class 1 rating (less than one-half of 1% of all fire departments). This rating reflects the commitment of ACFR’s leadership, Board of Directors and employees to enhance the community by preventing fires and saving lives and property. The biggest portion of the ISO score comes from the fire department’s ability to prevent and mitigate fires. However, the water supply system, 9-1-1 dispatching system and other partnerships are vital. It is difficult to measure how much of an impact this achievement will have on individual insurance rates, since each insurance company utilizes the scores and sets their rates differently. But at minimum, ACFR has shown they are committed to providing the best service possible, and we understand that our performance may have a lasting effect on the community.

ACFR is also committed to the process of continuous quality improvement and is actively working on becoming an internationally-accredited fire department. This is a long and tedious process, which initially takes two to three years to complete. This is then followed by an ongoing evaluation process of goal setting and performance measurement, with the intent of always working to improve upon the service provided to the community. ACFR spent all of 2017 compiling and evaluating historical data and has almost completed a major portion of the process, the “Community Risk Assessment” document. This document will be the foundation for how we will try to prevent, plan for and respond to emergencies in the future.

The Community Risk Assessment process revealed that 56% of our community is Hispanic, with a large portion of the population who speak only Spanish. So ACFR hired our first ever full-time Community Outreach Specialist who conducts public education and serves as the Public Information Officer. The fact that he speaks fluent Spanish is an important skill that should further assist us in connecting to our diverse community.

Also in 2017, ACFR hired a Human Resources Generalist, an important role for recruiting and retaining top-notch employees. It was estimated that in 2017 about 300 firefighters would be hired in the Denver Metro area. But if you consider that only 200 people took the previous CO-Fire test, from which 13 local fire departments hire from, hiring quality employees is a very competitive process.

ACFR also continues to meet the challenges of a funding model that is complicated by conflicting state statutes. A Colorado Amendment known as “Gallagher” lowered the residential tax assessment rate from 7.96% to 7.2%, which lowered the district’s revenues by almost $500,000. Fortunately, the amount of new construction and property value increases overcame this decrease, and the district budget remains solid for now. ACFR will continue to monitor any future impacts of Gallagher and other impacts to the budget.

ACFR also received 9% discounts on worker’s comp insurance and dividends of about $56,000 due to being cost-containment certified, an eligible member of the CESA safety group and because claims have remained low. These all reflect the importance ACFR has placed on workplace safety. Unfortunately, ACFR lost one of our Firefighters in 2017; Brett Anderson died after a long illness, which was deemed work related.

ACFR continues to explore opportunities to partner with neighboring fire departments to provide more efficient and cost-effective solutions for our citizens. One such partnership is our combined fleet maintenance facility with the South Adams County Fire District. Each agency provides equipment, supplies and mechanics who all work to keep both fleets of fire engines, ladder trucks, ambulances and support vehicles operating and ready to respond. This partnership has been in place since 2015, and has proven to be much more efficient than each agency operating their own facility. ACFR placed a new 105’ Pierce Ladder Truck and Pierce Fire Engine into service in 2017. These were purchased as part of a consortium with other north area fire departments in an effort to standardize and lower area apparatus and costs.
12 Highlights

Safety Santa. An annual tradition, members of the community gathered at the Perl Mack Recreation Center to enjoy a pancake breakfast prepared by firefighters and Santa Claus. Photo by Sandy Danne

Promotion joy. A total of eight employees were promoted in rank in 2017. Among those eight were Fire Medics Jordan Long and Jason Bierwirth. Photo by Sandy Danne

Candy-topia. An eight-year annual tradition, members of the community gathered at the Perl Mack Recreation Center to trick-or-treat at 19 booths. More than 1,000 children attended in 2017. Photo by Sandy Danne

Tremendous honor. At the annual Awards Banquet, Fire Medic Shannan Simpson presents Firefighter Mark Livingston the 2017 Member of the Year; 14 additional awards were given. Photo by Katie Torres

Fabulous five. In 2017, ACFR hired five new firefighters: Nick Gerson, Daniel Conroy, Zane Boren, Ben Ramos and Adam Haywood. Lt. Jason Smitz was assigned to their academy. Photo by Firefighter Nick Gerson

Fill that boot. At the King Soopers off 64th and Sheridan, Lt. Joe Anderson, Engineer Heath Sayers and Firefighter Levi Sandoval helped ACFR raise a total of $12,224. Photo courtesy of Firefighter Levi Sandoval

Fun fundraiser. Because no tax payer funds are ever used, ACFR conducted a spaghetti dinner and silent auction in 2017 to help raise funds for the annual Firefighter Awards Banquet. Photo by Katie Torres

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