



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Heather Dawson
Hailey City Administrator
788-4221, ext. 18
heather.dawson@haileycityhall.org

Hailey Fire Chief Craig Aberbach Announces Departure Hailey's Recruitment for New Fire Chief Underway

The City of Hailey will regretfully bid farewell to Hailey Fire Chief Craig Aberbach on September 30, 2019. Aberbach, who was recruited through a nationwide search, used his six years in the Wood River Valley community to create strong bonds between firefighters and fire agencies. He announced his resignation recently, citing the need to live closer to his aging parents. "I've always instructed personnel to put family first," said Aberbach. "It's time for me to follow my own advice."

Aberbach immediately began building up the Hailey fire department when he arrived from Florida in November, 2013. Hose testing in freezing weather and the annual firefighter holiday/appreciation dinner were some of his first undertakings. In 2014 he initiated the Blaine County Fire Chief's monthly meetings, and has served as chair for the past 5 years. In 2015 he encouraged Hailey to enter into a contract with Wood River Fire District, through which he was assigned the duties of WRFD Assistant Chief, adding them effortlessly to his duties as Hailey Fire Chief. He worked to standardize training and equipment in both departments, and the recruitment efforts were joined through a combined annual firefighters basic essentials training academy. He was assigned to train and implement Hailey's Emergency Operations Plan, leading the city successfully through several fire and flood events. Upon giving that assignment, Mayor Haemmerle dubbed Aberbach "a force of nature in his own right".

In 2017 Hailey and Wood River Fire District adopted a Joint Powers Agreement in an effort to functionally consolidate services under separate legal entities. Chief Aberbach worked tirelessly toward that end, establishing procedures and methods by which firefighters could serve both departments with efficiency, professionalism and pride. Response times were reduced and the enhanced cooperation has benefitted citizens of both jurisdictions.

Aberbach was successful in augmenting the fire department budgets with over \$1.4 million in grants and capital funding. Grants were obtained to purchase an EMS response service vehicle and to enhance recruitment, training and benefits for paid on call firefighters. Currently, the employees are nearing completion of their training as paramedics and one just beginning. Aberbach was successful in getting resources from the City's capital fund to replace breathing apparatus, turnout gear, hose and a new engine. A grant project is underway to upgrade and improve the Hailey Fire Station.



Aberbach continued to teach at the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) each year, and brought high level training to our community through his national contacts. He served on the board of the Senior Connection, worked with the Chamber to launch new events, such as the Father's Day Bash and Wicked Wednesday fundraisers which benefit the Hailey & Wood River fire departments.

Aberbach and his wife Vicki have been true assets to our community. We wish them well in their next endeavors.

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