



LAKELAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fire Chief Gary Ballard Retires December 15 After 40 years of Service

Lakeland, FL - The Lakeland Fire Department's (LFD) Fire Chief, Gary W. Ballard, will retire after a 40-year career in the fire service, on Friday, December 15, 2017. His retirement will be marked on the 15th with a ceremony held at Lakeland's Fire Station 1 at 4:00 PM.

Fire Chief Ballard has served the Lakeland community since 1977; climbing through the ranks as a Firefighter, Lieutenant, Training Officer, Assistant Chief of Operation, Assistant Chief of Administration, and most recently Fire Chief, which he has served as since 2010.

Under his administration the department has grown to seven stations, 171 personnel and received an ISO Public Protection Class Rating of Class 1, the highest achievable rating. Of the 568 rated communities in Florida only 30 are a Class 1; and of 44,672 rated communities nationwide only 270 are Class 1.

In regards to his retirement, Fire Chief Ballard shares "My decision to retire has come after a tremendous amount of thought and consideration... with such a long and rewarding career, I believe it is a good time to say farewell to the department, which I am very proud of. The new year will bring an opportunity for new beginnings and changes that will allow me to become more active with my church, reacquaint myself with hobbies that have grown dormant over the years and spend more time with my wife, children, and grandchildren."

An internal candidate review is currently underway by City of Lakeland management and the candidates are Assistant Chiefs Doug Riley and Rick Hartzog, respectively. The announcement of who the new Fire Chief will be is anticipated to be made in early December.

In regards to the future of the Lakeland Fire Department, Ballard says "We [LFD] are poised and well prepared to face the needs of a growing and changing community. We have many experienced staff members doing an outstanding job. They lead the way in the Florida fire service and are well-qualified to step into new leadership roles to lead this fire department to even more achievements and accomplishments. Considering they were responsible for getting the Lakeland Fire Department to where it is today."

A full biography of Fire Chief Gary Ballard is available at www.lakelandgov.net/LFD.

To establish media coverage of the event and for more information please contact department media contact, Janel Vasallo.

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Gary Ballard, Fire Chief

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