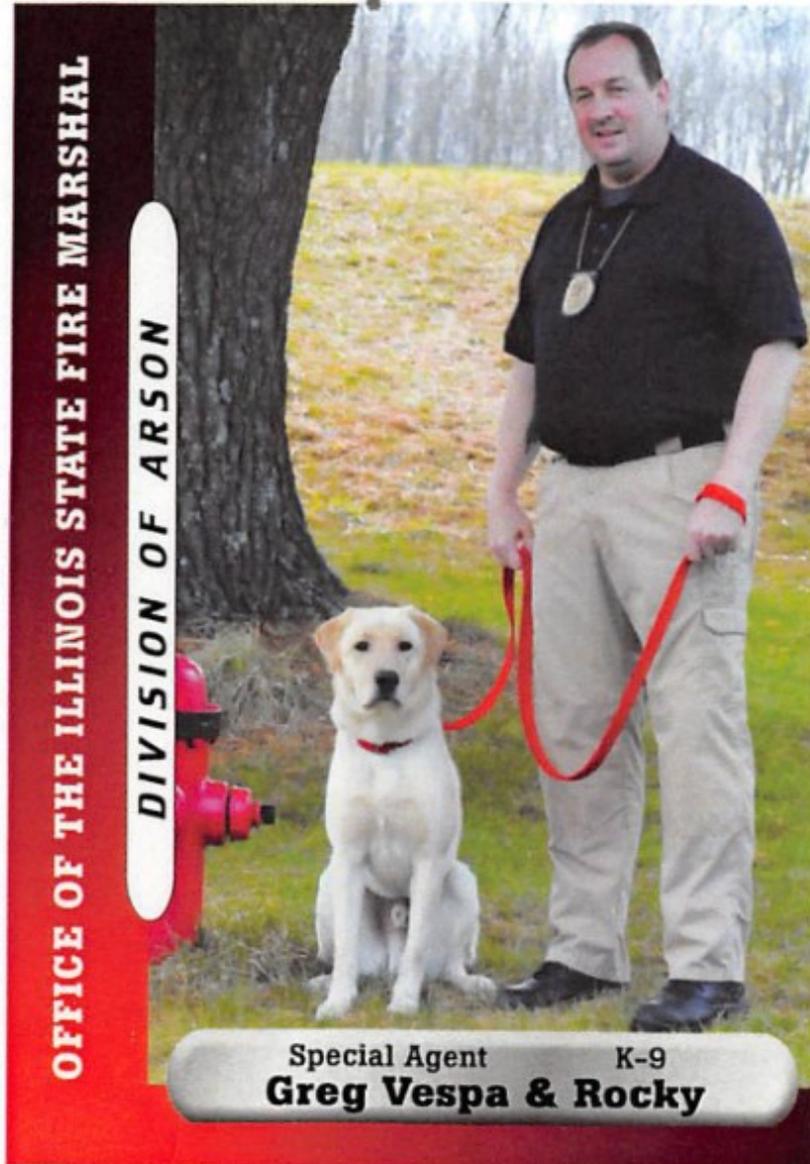




# OSFM Monthly Newsletter

## March 2019



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On the Cover: Arson Investigator Greg Vespa and K9 Rocky-story on page 5

## From the Director-State Fire Marshal Matt Perez



In large part, the mindset of the fire service is that we exist to give help, not take it. You do not complain, cry or show weakness and most importantly, you do not give up. Seeking help for yourself has long been a foreign concept which results in firefighters finding other ways to cope with the repressed stress of the job. Many suffer unnecessarily from addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression. According to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, a firefighter is more likely to die by suicide than they are to die in the line of duty. That is a frightening statistic and historically there has been little recognition of this issue and limited help available to those who did realize they had a problem.

Thankfully, there has been an awakening in the fire service.

Organizations have formed, such as the Illinois Firefighter Peer Support group, whose goal is to make sure no fire service or emergency responder will have to go through their pain or suffering alone. Their message to first responders is that we, as a community, are stronger when we acknowledge our burdens and face them head on together.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, I attended the first Illinois Fire Fighter Peer Support symposium in Oak Brook which featured many speakers with varied backgrounds. Some were firefighters who had co-workers who committed suicide, some were firefighters who shared their struggles with PTSD and addictions, and some were mental health professionals and physical trainers who have taken a special interest in helping firefighters. The common theme of the symposium was that it is normal to have adverse reactions to the kind of stress firefighters face on a day to day basis and it is also normal to recognize that you need help and OK to reach out to someone.

The Illinois Fire Service Institute has also established the “Resiliency Development for First Responders” class which provides the necessary tools to remain resilient to the stressors that come with the job. Focusing on cutting-edge science, students see how stress can damage the brain, and also how the brain can recover from this damage. Students also increase their understanding of how stress and mental health impact not just the brain, but the entire body. Behaviors and mindsets are presented that will help students to care for themselves as well as support their families at home and at work.

With these types of initiatives, the fire service is surely headed in the right direction to address a long-standing problem.

## Employee Spotlight Roger Branson Jr.



Roger Branson Jr. came to the OSFM at the beginning of this year from Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). He works in the Special Projects Division and serves as the coordinator of the Small Equipment Grant, Revolving Loan Programs and Fire Safe Cigarette Program. Roger does the research, preparation for program evaluations, presentations, reporting, and plans for the utilization of the programs offered by the OSFM. He also serves as a liaison with the general public and other State agencies, responding to inquiries and requests. Special Projects Division Manager Jodi Schrage says, “Roger came to the OSFM ready to work and has hit the ground running! He had quickly adapted to the fast-paced environment and accepted every assignment and challenge with a positive attitude. The OSFM is lucky to have Roger on our team.”

Roger started his career with the State of Illinois in 2001. He worked for Central Management Services as a Human Resources Representative and a Career Counselor. In 2014 he moved to the Department of Human Services agency and worked as a Human Resource Representative and Human Resource Specialist. From 2016 until 2018, Roger was the Disabilities, Veterans, General Recruiter for IDHS. His primary responsibility was assisting in the development of a statewide career employment workshops in conjunction Illinois Department of Employment Securities (IDES).

Roger grew up in central Illinois and graduated from Williamsville High School. He attended Lincoln Land Community College and received his associates in History and then attended Sangamon State University (which is now known as the University of Illinois at Springfield-UIS) where he received a Bachelors in Political Science. In Roger’s younger days and before becoming a State of Illinois employee, he travelled extensively racing Midgets and Winged Sprint cars across the United States. He worked for the Midwest Auto Racing Association as the Marketing and Director of Competition, owned a successful laminate countertop business, worked as a farm assistant and was a registered lobbyist.

Roger is married to Stefanie and has two daughters, Gabrielle and Isabelle. He loves spending time with his family and most of his free time is spent as an Assistant Coach on Gabrielle’s travelling softball team. State Fire Marshal Perez says, “Roger’s knowledge, experience and personality have made him a great addition to the Special Projects Division.”

**Line of Duty Death (L.O.D.D.) Captain Jake Ringering****END OF WATCH-March 5, 2019**

Captain Jake Ringering, 37, passed away in the line of duty on Tuesday, March 5, 2019. He was born in Alton on December 14, 1981. He was the son of Robin (Ballard) Disney and her husband Reverend Stephen Disney of Wood River, and Larry Ringering and his wife Jan of Worden, IL. Jake graduated from East Alton Wood River High School in 2000 and from Lewis & Clark Community College in 2004 with an Associates Degree in Fire Science. He also earned his Emergency Medical Technician License. He began his career as a paid on-call firefighter in East Alton in 2001. He was hired as a career firefighter at Godfrey Fire Protection District where he attained the rank of lieutenant in 2013 and Captain in 2014. He was also the technical rescue officer, respiratory protection officer and lead instructor for the department. He earned Office of the State Fire Marshal Certification in: Firefighter II & III, Basic Operation Firefighter, Advance Technician, Fire Officer I, Hazardous Material Awareness, Technical Rescue Awareness, Fire Service Vehicle Operator, Fire Apparatus Engineer, Vehicle and Machinery Operations, Rescue Specialist-Confined Space, Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations, Rope Operations, Fire Service Instructor I & II, Fire Investigator, and Rescue Specialist-Vertical II /High Angle. Jake served as President of the Godfrey Firefighters Local 1692 and taught Fire Science at Lewis & Clark Community College. He was also a trainer/instructor through Max Fire Training. He was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Alton. He married Allison Budde in 2009. She survives, along with his three children, Nora Marie, Elaina Lynn and Logan Jacob Ringering. Also surviving is a brother Chris Stratton (Rachel) Godfrey, one sister, Julie Downs (Jedediah) of East Alton, grandmother, Thelma Ballard of East Alton, Allison's parents, Robert and Susan Budde of Godfrey, sister-in-law, Andrea Budde of Godfrey, brother-in law, Andrew Budde of Cottage Hills, nieces and nephews, and numerous aunts and uncles. Jake was loved by many people and everyone he met he called a friend. Memorials made be made to: Benefitting *The Jake Ringering Family* through Carrollton Bank, 120 Homer Adams Parkway, Alton, IL 62002.

<https://www.gentfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Jake-Ringering/#!/Obituary>

## OSFM News

**Welcome to the OSFM**

Tony Nichols, Fire Prevention Inspector  
Derrich Cooper, Boiler Inspector  
Macklin Patterson, Boiler Inspector  
Joseph Reinders, Accountant

**Happy OSFM Anniversary**

Charles Southern  
Petroleum & Chemical Safety  
**20 YEARS**

**In Memory**

**Charles “Chuck” Hickman-1927-2019**, Elgin, IL. Former Addison Police Commissioner. He was on the OSFM Boiler and Pressure Vessel Rules Board for many years. <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/chicagotribune/obituary.aspx?pid=191745781>

**K9 Rocky** – Arson Canine Rocky served the OSFM for 4 years before his untimely passing in March. Arson Investigator Greg Vespa was his handler. *(On cover of this Newsletter)*



*Congratulation to the **Minooka Fire Protection District** and Chief Al Yancey on their ISO Class 1 Certification and recognition.*

## NFPA Safety Tips



# Hoarding and Fire: Reducing the Risk

Do you have a person in your life who may be a hoarder? Hoarding is a condition where a person has persistent difficulty discarding personal possessions. The large amount of possessions fill the home and prevent the normal use of the space. Living space becomes cluttered. It may be unusable. Hoarding brings distress and emotional health concerns.

### WHY HOARDING INCREASES FIRE RISKS

- Cooking is unsafe if flammable items are close to the stove or oven.
- Heating units may be too close to things that can burn. They might also be placed on unstable surfaces. If a heater tips over into a pile, it can cause a fire.
- Electrical wiring may be old or worn from the weight of piles. Pests could chew on wires. Damaged wires can start fires.
- Open flames from smoking materials or candles in a home with excess clutter are very dangerous.
- Blocked pathways and exits may hinder escape from a fire.

### HOW HOARDING IMPACTS FIRST RESPONDERS

- Hoarding puts first responders in harm's way.
- Firefighters cannot move swiftly through a home filled with clutter.
- Responders can be trapped in a home when exits are blocked. They can be injured by objects falling from piles.
- The weight of the stored items, especially if water is added to put out a fire, can lead to building collapse.
- Fighting fires is very risky in a hoarding home. It is hard to enter the home to provide medical care. The clutter impedes the search and rescue of people and pets.

### How Can You Help Reduce the Risk of Fire Injury

- ✓ When talking to a person who hoards, focus on safety rather than the clutter. Be empathetic. Match the person's language. If they call it hoarding, then you can call it hoarding.
- ✓ Help the residents make a home safety and escape plan. Stress the importance of clear pathways and exits. Practice the plan often. Exit routes may change as new items are brought into the home.
- ✓ Install working smoke alarms in the home. Test them at least once a month.
- ✓ Reach out to community resources. Talk to members of the fire department to alert them of your concerns. They may be able to connect you with members of a hoarding task force for additional help.



Your Source for SAFETY Information

NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169

Office of the State Fire Marshal

Illinois

[www.nfpa.org/education](http://www.nfpa.org/education) ©NFPA 2016

**Kids' Corner: NFPA Sparky**

# Sparky's

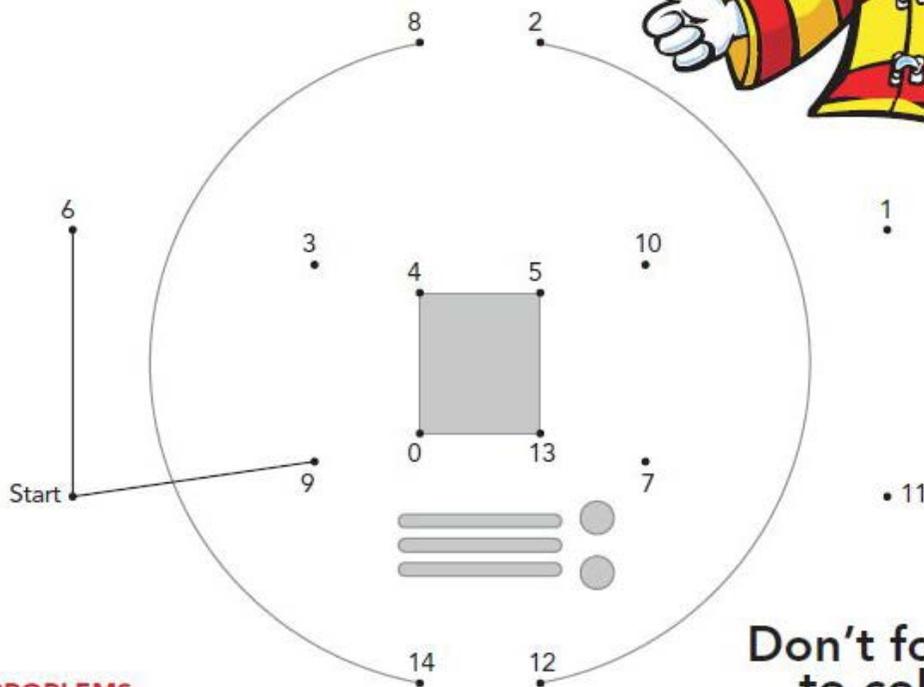
## CONNECT THE DOTS

### With Math!

Complete the math problems. The answers will tell you how to connect the dots. The first one is done for you!



THE NAME AND IMAGE OF SPARKY ARE TRADEMARKS OF THE NFPA.



**PROBLEMS**

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. $3 + 3 =$ | 9. $7 + 4 =$    |
| 2. $9 - 6 =$ | 10. $13 - 6 =$  |
| 3. $4 + 0 =$ | 11. $11 + 2 =$  |
| 4. $5 + 3 =$ | 12. $9 + 3 =$   |
| 5. $1 + 1 =$ | 13. $8 + 6 =$   |
| 6. $7 - 2 =$ | 14. $10 - 10 =$ |
| 7. $9 + 1 =$ | 15. $6 + 3 =$   |
| 8. $8 - 7 =$ |                 |

Don't forget to color in your picture.

