



Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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MARION FIRE CHIEF TO LEAD STATE ASSOCIATION

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (July 24, 2009) – Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) Fire Chief M. Stuart McElhaney, EFO, took the governing reins of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association (FFCA) on Tuesday, when he became the association's 54th president.

Chief McElhaney has served on the FFCA Board of Directors for the past nine years and will serve as president for a one-year term. The FFCA membership elected him to this leadership position, and Larry Cretul, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, swore him in at the organization's summer conference on July 21.

Speaker Cretul also addressed the FFCA as the keynote speaker for the ceremony. Cretul recalled his tenure as a Marion County Commissioner in 1994 when Chief McElhaney became Marion County Fire Rescue's fourth fire chief. "His enthusiasm and willingness to tackle tough issues with a vision and plan was impressive and a rarity at the time," Speaker Cretul said. "Having Marion County officials in high profile leadership positions says a lot about the caliber of resources we have locally."

Marion County Commissioner Charlie Stone, who attended the installation ceremony on behalf of the board, was inspired by the respect Chief McElhaney evoked from his peers and the honor this position brings to Marion County. "I am excited about the benefits Marion County citizens will derive by having our very own fire chief serving at this level in the state," he said.

As FFCA President, Chief McElhaney leads a five member executive committee which governs the association that has served career, combination and volunteer departments across the state since 1958. Today, the FFCA represents more than 2,200 members.

"I am very proud of Stuart," Marion County Administrator Dr. Lee A. Niblock said. "This is a great honor, and I'm confident the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association will greatly benefit from his experience and leadership. Stuart, with support from our commissioners, has significantly improved our emergency response capabilities, making Marion County Fire Rescue the professional department it is today."

Through Chief McElhaney's innovative leadership, MCFR has become a progressive, well-respected department whose initiatives are modeled throughout the state as best practices. Marion County is the second largest fire department north of Orlando and more than 600 employees strong.

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