

Rowlett

News Release

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FIRE CHIEF GEORGE HARRIS RETIRES AFTER 27 YEARS OF SERVICE

ROWLETT, TX – It is with great appreciation for his service that the City of Rowlett announces the retirement of Fire Chief George Harris after 27 years of



public service in Rowlett dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of our citizens. The past three and a half of those years he has served as Chief. Chief Harris's retirement is effective October 31, 2012, and a permanent replacement has not been selected.

"It has been a privilege to be a part of Rowlett Fire Rescue and work with the finest in our profession," says Chief George Harris. "Retiring will be bittersweet because of my long association with the City of Rowlett but we are looking forward to a new chapter in our life with more time for family and travel."

Chief Harris has spent his entire career in public service, first with 19 years at Bell Systems serving customers across the southern United States and establishing a strong foundation for quality customer care, and then segueing into law enforcement as a Deputy Sheriff with the Rockwall County Sheriff's Department beginning in 1978.

In an unusual career trajectory, Chief Harris made the switch from law enforcement to the fire service in 1985 when he was hired as a Firefighter/EMT by the City of Rowlett. At that time the City had only 14 firefighters, having just switched from a volunteer organization to an official City department in 1979! George saw a need and filled it, obtaining his Arson Investigator license in 1987 and becoming the City's first fire investigator. In 1990 he was promoted to Fire Marshal, the City's first and a role he held for 13 years. During this time, Chief Harris developed Fire Codes and implemented fire inspections, construction plan reviews and brought Animal Control into the Fire Marshal's Office.

Seeking to enhance the difference he was making in the community he served, George accepted the position of Assistant City Manager in 2003 and then filled in as Interim City Manager for six months in 2005 when that position was vacant. He sought and was awarded the position of Fire Chief / Emergency Management Coordinator in 2008, but later that year he was once again called upon to serve as Interim City Manager. He returned to the Fire Department, and the position of Fire Chief / Emergency Management Coordinator, which he feels was the most rewarding of his long career in public service, in 2009 where he has remained.

"While a community is entrusted in our care, we have a responsibility and duty as public servants to leave it better than we found it", said City Manager Lynda Humble. "There is absolutely no doubt that George Harris is leaving the City of Rowlett and all of us who are a part of this organization better than he found us! George has had an unyielding passion for this city, our organization, and our citizens during his 27 years of service. We will miss George and his institutional knowledge of the community, but wish him the very best in retirement!"

During Chief Harris' tenure he has seen the department grow from 14

firefighters to a department of 77 employees. He saw the construction of three additional Fire Stations, bringing the total to four and ensuring citizens were quickly accessible to Fire Rescue personnel in all four quadrants of the City. He took special interest in the design of Fire Station 1 on Miller Road, which houses the City's state of the art Emergency Operations Center. He has received many awards and accolades including:

City of Rowlett Employee of the Year-1988

Rowlett Fire Department Chief's Award -1999

Rowlett Chamber of Commerce Biff Bettencourt Community Service Award-2007

Rowlett Chamber of Commerce Big R Pacesetter Award-2012

To better serve the public, he is a member of several professional and community organizations including:

International Association of Fire Chiefs

Dallas County Fire Chiefs Association

North Texas Fire Chiefs Association

Society of Executive Fire Officers

Texas Fire Marshal's Association

North Texas Fire Investigators Association (past president)

Fire Marshal's Association of North America

International Association of Arson Investigators

National Fire Protection Association

Metroplex Fire Safety Educators Association

Rowlett Historical Society, charter member

"With an amazing career dedicated to the safety and wellbeing of the Rowlett community, Chief Harris is an inspiration to us all," said Mayor Todd Gottel. "His leadership, energy, and passion will be greatly missed."

The Rowlett Fire Department is providing award-winning service today because of the dedication and commitment of retiring Fire Chief George Harris.

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