



Valley Regional Fire Authority – *Serving the communities of Algona, Auburn, Pacific & KC Fire District 31*

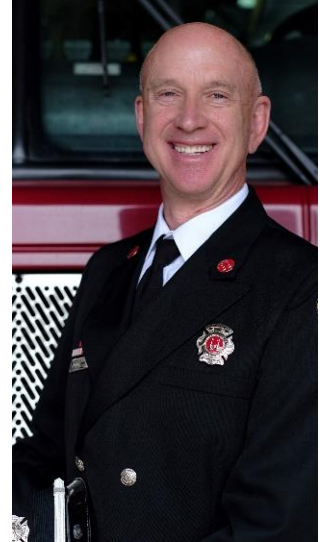
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VRFA Assistant Fire Marshal Larry Upton Retires After 37 Years in the Fire Service

“I couldn’t have imagined a better career for myself,” reflected Assistant Fire Marshal Larry Upton with 31 years at the Auburn Fire Department and VRFA, plus six prior years with Bonney Lake Fire Dept. and King County Fire District 10. Upton retires June 30, 2019 after serving in the positions of Firefighter, Public Information and Education Specialist, Fire Investigation Specialist, Deputy Fire Marshal and finally Assistant Fire Marshal.

Upton began his working career in 1979 within a mile of the location he is retiring from. His first job was working at the Boeing complex in Auburn and he now retires from the VRFA Fire Marshal’s Office, both located on C St. SW. While working for Boeing, Upton volunteered for the Bonney Lake Fire Department and was hired as their first paid firefighter in 1983. Two years later he transferred to King County Fire District 10 where he created an “Adopt a School” fire safety education program and received the Firefighter of the Year award. In May of 1988 Larry was hired by the Auburn Fire Department, which became the Valley Regional Fire Authority in 2007.



Larry attributes his passion and dedication to fire prevention and education programs throughout his career to the tragic loss of four cousins in a house fire the year before he was born. He taught school children fire safety while holding a position as a Firefighter/Public Information and Education Specialist and serving as a board member of the Washington State Public Fire Educators. He later served five years as the leader of the information and education team, teaching safety messages in creative ways. Through costume and makeup, he transformed into “Sparky the Fire Dog,” once working with JP Patches to reach children. He wrote and performed a safety “rap” song, developed short plays for fire prevention week school assemblies and helped write grade specific fire safety lesson plans for elementary school classrooms.

After 25 years as a firefighter, Upton decided to focus full time on fire prevention and joined the Fire Marshal’s Office as a Deputy Fire Marshal in 2008. He advanced to Assistant Fire Marshal in 2017. He also served as the President for the King County Fire Prevention Officers group from 2015-2017.

Throughout his career Larry has garnered awards and recognition including the Firefighter of the Year award in 1990, a Medal of Merit for the creation of the Youth Firesetting Intervention program in 1995 and a unit citation for his work on an apartment fire in 1994.

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Upton has a long list of memorable moments. Topping the list was watching his son, a Tukwila firefighter, graduate as the Valedictorian of his fire academy and presenting him with his badge in the pinning ceremony. Also on this list of proud moments are the many contributions he made to the well-being of his co-workers. He promoted and advanced health and wellness through his involvement in the International Association of Fire Fighters Association Peer Fitness and Peer Support programs, his encouragement of healthy eating and lifestyles in the station and at home, cancer screening, wellness programs and comprehensive physical exams. He also assisted with the creation of the first chaplaincy program for firefighters and police in the city of Auburn.

When asked what he will miss most upon retirement, Upton replied, "The comradery, team work and support I was so blessed to experience in my career and all of the wonderfully talented and giving people I have met and worked with - in the fire department, the community and across the country."

Larry plans to nurture his creative side after leaving the fire service. He is a talented photographer, and musician and hopes to pursue work in those areas. He also hopes to maintain 37 years of Emergency Medical training, possibly in a hospital setting. He is looking forward to opportunities to see more of the world and spend quality time with his family.

"Every day Larry came here looking to make things better for everyone around him. I've never seen anyone with a better work ethic. As his history attests, he is always willing to step up and take creative risks and go that extra mile. His quiet, informed, and friendly leadership style is a model for his successor. While we will greatly miss him, I know that he has lots of happiness and successes in his future," said Fire Chief/Administrator Brent Swearingen.

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