



WESTLAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Travis County Emergency Service District #9
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Travis County ESD No. 9 Promotes Firefighters

June 1, 2017 – Travis County ESD No. 9, also known as the Westlake Fire Department promoted four firefighters effective June 1, 2017.

Fire Chief Mike Elliott announced those members of the Department who were promoted to serve and exceed the expectations of the community.

David Wilson was promoted to Assistant Fire Chief. Chief Wilson grew up in the Westlake area and volunteered for the Department while attending Westlake High School. He has an Associate's Degree in Fire Protection Technology from Austin Community College and a Bachelor of Science Degree with an emphasis in Fire Service Management and Training from Colorado State University. He is certified as a Master Firefighter by the Texas Commission of Fire Protection. Chief Wilson has been with the Department for 22 years and has been awarded a Phoenix Award for saving a life, two Member Commendation Awards, a Fire Achievement Award, Firefighter of the Year and an Exemplary Service Award during his career.

Heath Nobles was promoted to District Chief. Chief Nobles has been with the Department for 19 years and began his fire service career as a volunteer with the Oak Hill Fire Department. Chief Nobles has been awarded the Phoenix Award for saving a life five times during his career and also has received two Firefighter Achievement Awards, two Chief's Awards, a Member Commendation and a Special Service Award.

Jason Kepler was promoted to Lieutenant. LT. Kepler has been with the Department for 14 years and has worked as a driver for the last 7 years. He was honored as the Firefighter of the Year and given the Fire Fitness Award in 2013.

Curtis Vacek was promoted to Engineer (Driver) and has been with the Department for 14 years. He has been awarded four Phoenix Awards for saving a life, a Unit Citation Award for actions performed during the Echelon Plane Crash, an Exemplary Service Award and a Member Commendation Award during his career.

Chief Elliott commented "Our best and most important asset is our personnel. Without the excellent professional staff and firefighters we have we could not continue to provide the exceptional service our community expects and deserves".

"All of the candidates were excellent. I hated to make the choices – it's like trying to choose which brother you like best".

History of the Westlake Fire Department

About 9 a.m. on Friday, April 14, 1961, a motorist traveling along St. Stephen's School Road on the western boundary of the Roy Ranch carelessly tossed a lighted cigarette out the window and ignited a grass fire. A strong wind out of the west quickly spread the flames east across the Roy Ranch and onto Davenport Ranch, where the owner had large piles of brush from clearing land for cattle. There the fire leaped from one old brush pile to another and fed on dried vegetation in canyons and ravines leading southward. More than two hundred students from The University of Texas and St. Edward's University volunteered to fight the fire. An intensive two-day community effort stopped the fire short of Bee Creek.

After that fire, residents who fought the fire (Col. EV Robnett, Emmett Shelton Jr, Charlie Schlemmer, Joe Basher and Matt Van Winkle) started looking for a way to form a Rural Fire District. Travis County Rural Fire District No. 1 was the second fire district in the state to form under a new law. They collected money from residents, bought a new International Fire Truck and kept it at what is now known as St. 901.

In 1995, the District asked the residents to vote on forming an Emergency Services District. The vote passed and that was the beginning of Travis County ESD No. 9.

In 2017, WFD is now a professional organization with two fire stations and over 30 highly trained firefighters. We are proud to uphold our continuing mission to preserve life and property.

The Westlake Fire Department protects a community of approximately 15,000 citizens and covers a district of approximately 15 square miles and serves the areas of Rollingwood, West Lake Hills, Rolling Hills West, Westwood, Camelot, Rob Roy, St. Stephens, Rivercrest and Riverhills.

For more information, please contact the on-duty PIO at 512-539-3444.