



Keith Paffrath, Daisy Mountain Fire Department Engineer, Fire Investigator, Fire Inspector

COMMUNITY NEWS

COURAGE UNDER FIRE

Getting To Know The Men And Women Of Daisy Mountain Fire Department

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Keith Paffrath, Daisy Mountain Fire Department Engineer, Fire Investigator, Fire Inspector

Keith Paffrath was hired as a firefighter by Daisy Mountain Fire Department in January of 2003. Paffrath's current assignment is Engineer on Ladder and Ladder Tender 142. He is captain qualified and can assume that role when necessary. As part of his job, he also speaks to elementary school children about fire safety, and at various public forums.

Paffrath is capable of investigating or assisting on any incident investigation in Arizona and has been the lead Investigator on numerous fires in our district. Paffrath has worked with several other agencies (including the ATF) within the county, and has been asked by the State Fire Marshal's office to assist in a fatal fire investigation for them as well. He is a member of the education committee for our state arson investigator chapter and also serves as the Secretary for the Maricopa County Arson Task Force.

Paffrath lives in our fire district with his wife, two daughters, two dogs, a cat, and two horses. He is very active in the community and has assisted with the charity golf tournaments of both the Rotary Club and We Care of Anthem, and is an active member of the Chamber of Commerce. He is currently working on finishing dual AAs in Fire Science and Fire Investigation. Concurrently with that, he is working on his Bachelor of Arts in Public Safety Administration. In his spare time he enjoys spending time with his family and friends camping, hunting, boating shooting, riding horses and being outdoors.

What does a Fire Investigator/ Inspector do?

"A fire investigator is responsible for overseeing the entire process of a fire scene from the time the fire is controlled until its cause is determined to be accidental, natural, incendiary, or

undetermined. The types of data collected on a scene can include: pre-fire conditions, weather, time of day, access, response time, combustibles in the area, fire damage, fire spread, fire intensity, duration of fire, fire department actions, overhaul of the scene, use of foam on the fire, evidence collected and processed at the scene, samples taken and sent to the lab for analysis, witness statements, scientific data that can be verified through expert sources, and my own opinions based on my knowledge and experience. Once this information is obtained and processed, if the fire is considered incendiary, then an investigator must follow the course of action dictated to prosecute the person or persons guilty of committing the felony act of arson.”

What special equipment and/or skills do you use in your position?

“ In addition to proper personal protective equipment, some of the most common tools an investigator utilizes are a good digital camera; tools needed for scene processing such as shovels, rakes, brushes, etc., and collection containers for evidence including cans, jars, baggies, sealable Mylar bags for collection of liquids.”

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

“One of the most challenging aspects of my job as a fire investigator is to determine where a fire occurred and what caused the fire. How did the fire spread from the point of ignition and where did the fire travel, what did it consume in its travels, and what damage was done during the fire versus pre-fire? These are the challenging aspects of being a fire investigator. Additionally, when speaking to potential witnesses or suspects, it is always a challenge to differentiate what the truth is from one person to the next. Each person ultimately believes in what they saw and will tell you that; although, each person’s interpretation of the events can be completely different. This can be very challenging when working on a fire scene.”

What do you like best about your job?

“The thing I like most about my job is that I am constantly around people in an ever-changing environment. One minute we can be doing a school talk on fire safety and the next be on a medical call or fire. The constant change and being able to apply the common knowledge I have acquired to mitigate any emergency is very fascinating to me. Each fire I go to is just a burned up pile of trash to the untrained eye. However, it is also the challenge of determining from that pile of rubble, where the fire started and how. What consequences happened to cause a flame to start and subsequently damage the building to varying degrees? These are the types of things that keep me interested in the job and what I like the most. “