

Partner Spotlight – David Halstead

With 47 years of experience as a first responder and many other duties in emergency services, David Halstead has seen a lot during his career. From the burning of the Fern Park Jai Alai Fronton in 1972 in Palm Beach, FL, the Seminole County (FL) Jail fire in 1975, the Sanford, FL Amtrak train station fire in 1991, and Hurricane Andrew in 1992, he remembers most of Florida's major fire and storm disasters during the last 50 years.

When Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, he was working in emergency services, and in 2010 he coordinated Florida's Deepwater Horizon project. Now, in 2017, after 18 consecutive years of faithful service on the FLASH Board of Directors, David is taking the next step in his long and fruitful career: retirement. In honor of his career and this special occasion, we invited David to share stories about his years of service in the field.

FLASH: David, thank you for your service to FLASH and the citizens you have served and protected as a first responder and administrator. Please tell us about your background and how you got interested in fire safety.

HALSTEAD: I was born in Minneapolis and moved to Florida when I was a boy. As a teenager, I got together with a group to form the Fern Park Volunteer Fire Department. Shortly thereafter, I became the fire department's first paid employee. From that point on, my life was all about fire and rescue, and I never looked back.

FLASH: How did you get involved with FLASH?

HALSTEAD: In 1998, I retired from the Altamonte Springs Fire Department after 28 years in the fire service. It was a big milestone for me. The Florida Fire Chiefs Association honored me with a special Service Recognition Award. At that point, I began working with the state division of emergency management, where I met FLASH President and CEO Leslie Chapman-Henderson. In 1999, she asked me to become a member of the FLASH family, and I said, "Yes!" Up until that time, wildfire mitigation had not been a major topic of consideration for FLASH. I guess my interest in wildfires spurred a higher-level of consideration, and fire safety became another pillar in the edifice of FLASH mitigation campaigns.

FLASH: Yes, your enthusiasm about the topic spread, well, like wildfire, didn't it?

HALSTEAD: We were pretty passionate about it. Our mitigation group in the 1970s was known as "Earth, Wind and FIRE!"

(more)

FLASH: What other memories would you like to share with our readers?

HALSTEAD: Receiving recognition as Florida's Emergency Management Professional of the Year in 2002 was a special moment for me. I served at the Division of Emergency Management as Chief Deputy Director of the State Emergency Response Team. When then-President Barack Obama appointed Craig Fugate as FEMA Administrator, then-Florida Governor Charlie Crist named me Director of the State Emergency Response Team. Serving my community and the state of Florida for all of my adult life has been an honor and a privilege.

FLASH: What about the future? What is on the horizon for you?

HALSTEAD: Leaving the FLASH Board of Directors is not an easy decision, but I know it is the right one. It will make room for another person to share his or her energies and enthusiasm to bolster the work of mitigation. As for me, I am looking forward to slowing down my work life while watching the sun rise over the ocean at Ormond Beach.

FLASH: David, we thank you for your years of service to FLASH and to the people you helped to keep safe. From our perspective, your contributions are unparalleled and set the standard of excellent for extraordinary service.

HALSTEAD: Glad to have been a part of it. Thanks for all you do. And to all your readers: don't miss the opportunity to get involved with FLASH. You'll be glad you did.

Editor's note: David's service includes: State Director of Emergency Management of Florida, Altamonte Springs Assistant Fire Chief and Paramedic, Seminole State College Instructor, Hurricane Andrew Responder and Emergency Services Branch Chief during the 2004 Hurricane Season, Operations Chief for Florida Response in Mississippi for Hurricane Katrina, Coordinator Department of Homeland Security funding for Florida, and State Coordinating Officer during Operation Haiti Relief and Deepwater Horizon.

FLASH looks forward to celebrating David's many years of service at the upcoming [National Disaster Resilience Conference](#) in October.