



City of Yakima

NEWS RELEASE

Subject: Fire Chief Retirement

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Yakima Fire Chief Dave Willson to Retire

For most of his adult life, Dave Willson has been at home in a fire house. Just after the first of the year, Willson will move on to another stage of his life when he brings to an end a nearly 40-year career in the fire service.

Willson, who has been Yakima's fire chief for the last two-and-a-half years, has decided to retire in the first week of January.

"It's time," said Willson. "Our kids are grown and my health is good. I have the opportunity to begin another chapter and I'm ready to take advantage of it."

Willson, who started his firefighting career in 1975, joined the Yakima Fire Department ("YFD") in January of 1984. He had previously worked in the fire service in both Pierce County and Bellevue.

Willson has served in several capacities for the YFD, including as a frontline firefighter, technical training assistant, lieutenant, shift captain, and training captain. In 2007, Willson was promoted to a deputy fire chief position. That same year, he was also a finalist for the Yakima fire chief job, which eventually went to Charlie Hines. When Hines accepted a chief's job in San Luis Obispo, California in November 2010, Willson became the interim YFD chief. In September 2011, the interim tag was removed from Willson's title and he took on the task of leading a department with a staff of about 90 and a budget exceeding \$10 million.

"The Yakima Fire Department has gone through a lot of positive changes over the last few years," said Willson. "Key investments have been made to modernize the department and to make it as effective as possible. I'm proud of how far the department has come and I leave it feeling confident that the Yakima Fire Department has a very bright future," said Willson.

"Dave has provided tremendous guidance during a time of transition for the City in general and the fire department in specific," said City Manager Tony O'Rourke. "Yakima has been fortunate to have benefitted from the outstanding dedication and commitment that Dave has demonstrated throughout his career. He has been an invaluable leader," said O'Rourke.

Given what he describes as a "deep talent pool" within the YFD, O'Rourke is currently focusing on identifying an internal candidate to fill the fire chief position once Willson retires.

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