



NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
December 21, 2017**

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ORANGE COUNTY'S FIRE AND EMS CHIEF JOHN HARKNESS ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

ORANGE COUNTY, VA – Fire and EMS Chief John Harkness announced his retirement from Orange County effective December 31, 2017, bringing to a close 10 years of service with the County and a total of almost 39 years of public service.

Orange County Administrator, R. Bryan David, stated, “John has consistently demonstrated during his tenure with Orange County and for his entire career a high standard of professionalism coupled with effective leadership. Our first responder community and the citizens he has served have truly benefited from John’s work here. “

Chief Harkness started his fire career as a volunteer firefighter in Orange County in 1979. In 1980, Chief Harkness was hired by the City of Richmond where he served over 32 years in the fire service retiring as a Battalion Chief. In July 2007, Harkness was hired as the Hazardous Materials/Emergency Management Coordinator for Orange County and was appointed as Orange County Fire and EMS Chief in 2012. Chief Harkness is a life member of the Lake of the Woods Rescue Station and was a volunteer for the Mine Run Fire Company for approximately 20 years.

During his tenure with the County, Chief Harkness has helped develop a sustainable capital equipment acquisition and replacement plan for the Fire and EMS Department. He was instrumental in leading the development and implementation of a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), placing Orange County as one of the first counties in Virginia to prepare such a plan. Chief Harkness has also been an advocate for cancer awareness within the Fire and EMS Department. “As a cancer survivor, I’ve pushed for cancer awareness in the fire service as it’s a huge concern for firefighters.”

“Chief Harkness has provided professional and excellent leadership for all Orange County fire and rescue. He has helped further the emergency services for the citizens and businesses of Orange County. I wish him the best of luck in the next chapter of his life and all future endeavors,” stated District 4 Supervisor Jim Crozier.

“I’m a volunteer at heart. The experience I gained through being a volunteer helped me to excel in the City of Richmond, and ultimately allowed me to return to Orange County and serve as the Fire and EMS Chief,” Harkness shared.

For more information, contact the County Administrator’s Office at (540) 672-3313.

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