

History of the CVVFA Presidents Council

In the spring of 1985 Steve Austin of the Aetna Hose, Hook and Ladder Company of Newark DE and Chief Lawrence Mergenthaler of the Mill Creek Fire Company of Marshalton DE attended a meeting of the Keystone State Fire Chiefs Association in Carlisle PA as guests of the late Earl Moser and the President Paul Lucas. At the meeting there was much discussion about the successes and problems experienced by the PA fire service. Both Mergenthaler and Austin found the meeting very interesting and on the way home to Delaware discussed how a wider group could benefit from the information exchange.

The subject of the Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association was raised by Lawrence who thought the due the five state participation in the Association, PA, DE, VA, WV, MD and DE it would be the perfect forum to have these type of discussions.

Steve Austin raised the idea to the CVVFA who agreed to host the inaugural meeting at the 84th CVVFA Convention held in McConnellsburg PA in August of 1985.

Invitations were sent to leaders in the 5 States that the Association represented to attend a meeting on the Friday morning of the Convention. Attending that meeting was among others: Allen Brennan and George Dove from VA, Steve Austin, Jim Cabbage and Bob Sweetman from Delaware, Harry Alt from West Virginia, Earl Moser from PA and a delegation from the State of Maryland.

It was agreed there would be no minutes or motions and that each State would have the opportunity to report and raise issues that concerned the firefighters in their jurisdiction.

The gathering was first referred to as the 5 States Meeting. Later the 5 States Presidents Meeting and finally the President's Council since at times there were as many as 7 different states in attendance.

In the 1990's the group requested the CVVFA to hold 2 meetings per year and the early spring meeting was added. Later due to the important nature of the meeting the schedule of the Convention Meeting was modified to allow all members of the CVVFA to attend the Presidents Council and learn from the discussions.

The value of the meeting is twofold. First, there is a tremendous exchange of information. Many ideas have been shared and programs established in the various states that had it not been for the President's Council would have been unknown to the others. Secondly as officers move through the chairs in the different state associations personal friendships develop allowing leaders to know one another. These relationships make doing business much easier and establishes a bond.

Good ideas spring from the President's Council. The Fire Service Reputation Management Project that has won kudos from across the county was an idea that arose from the Presidents Council specifically as a recommendation by President Michael Wutz of the Firemen's Association of the State of NY.

Now over 25 years have come and gone and the President's Council is part of the tradition of the CVVFA.