

Good evening Commissioners and Chair.

Thank you for your time.

My name is Stephen Palmer and I am the president of the Flagler County Professional Firefighters association.

As some of you may or may not be aware, Flagler County Fire Rescue has been taking steps to add another rescue unit to our present rotation. Over the course of the past few weeks, the department has been preparing Station 31 in Korona to be manned by career firefighters, with the intent of going online on May 20th. While the growing number of medical calls would clearly support this addition, it is the belief of FCPFFA it is being facilitated in a dangerous manner.

Flagler County Fire Rescue administration has informed us it is their intent to reduce staffing on Engine 41 (in the Hammock) and Engine 16 (Near Halifax plantation) down to 2 man crews in order to facilitate the staffing of the new Rescue 31. Reducing the manpower on these two engines would allow Rescue 31 to be staffed with a minimal amount of overtime and would prevent an already understaffed agency from having to hire. However, staffing 31 in this manner is not only irresponsible, it is unsafe and places the citizens and the crews at greater risk. Numerous studies conducted by the NFPA, IFTSA, and the IAFF support the fact that reduced staffing on Engines reduces the effectiveness of firefighting, increases the amount of time it takes to complete the tasks necessary to save a family's home, reduces the effectiveness of rescue, depletes resources when multiple patients are present, and forces crews to do more work with less efficiency while waiting for backup to arrive. As a matter of fact, the only thing that does increase is on the job injuries, worker's comp claims, and line of duty deaths. The most recent study found that a 5 person crew is 100% effective when fighting fire, a 4 person crew is 65% effective, and a 3 person crew (our current level) is 38% effective. Statistically, we are already overmatched, and now it is being suggested we do even more work with fewer people.

We want to be very clear...we fully support the addition of a new rescue. However, we must not support placing lives at risk and decreasing the level of protection we can safely provide. We cannot support standing in front of a burning home waiting for the backup because we do not have the manpower present to initiate an attack. Decreasing staffing is a huge step backwards for this agency in efficiency, safety, and overall morale. The flagler county Professional firefighters association take pride in the level of service we have been able to provide the citizens. Continuing that level of service is of the utmost importance.