



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
FIRE
DEPARTMENT

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Harrisonburg Fire Department earns international recognition for EMS service

HARRISONBURG, Va. – The International Association of Fire Chiefs has awarded the Harrisonburg Fire Department with the *Heart Safe Community Award* for small/mid-sized communities.

The award, conveyed during the 2021 Fire-EMS Med Conference held virtually in June, recognizes fire-based EMS systems that have made significant and measurable improvements in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rates in the community, coupled with a systems approach to enhancing the level of comprehensive pre-hospital care provided to patients experiencing heart-related emergencies.

“This award reflects the commitment of the women and men of this Department in striving for perfection in the delivery of a major component of our mission,” HFD Fire Chief Matthew Tobia said. “Nearly 60 percent of all calls for service are EMS-related and our fire-based EMS system is delivering an internationally recognized standard of care that makes our city safer and measurably improves the quality of life for our citizens. We are deeply honored to receive this award.”

The award review committee unanimously voted to award HFD for, among other reasons, its achievement of an amazing 90 percent rate of return of spontaneous circulation in witnessed cardiac arrests.

When a person’s heart stops beating, responders have an extremely narrow window to return the heart to functioning. In Harrisonburg, this has been accomplished through a systems approach including the use of Pulsepoint®, an APP designed to alert citizens trained in CPR of the need to respond to an emergency near them; early access to Automatic External Defibrillators; early access to 9-1-1 with pre-arrival instructions given by telecommunicators; and trained firefighter/EMTs and firefighter/paramedics who are able to respond quickly when dispatched and provide cutting-edge care in a coordinated manner.



Two cases in the last year highlight this commitment: In September 2020, a nursing student at the Massanutten Technical Center collapsed while in class and was saved by the entire system of care. Earlier this year, a previously healthy young man working at a local grocery store similarly collapsed. He was saved by a team of responders including an HPD officer who was in the area and the quick response of bystanders and firefighters. He survived. His story is even more compelling in that he is the son of a city employee who works for the Department of Public Transportation.

More about the IAFC, and the EMS awards, can be found online at: <https://www.iafc.org/press-releases/press-release/heart-safe-communities-honored-at-fire-rescue-med-2021>

The Harrisonburg Fire Department is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire or on Facebook®, Twitter® and Instagram®.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to 55,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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