

# Chief's Message

Some of the people that know me the best and work with me the most will say that I am conservative. I agree. I like to think that I manage risks well. Do I worry some time? Yes. Am I a worry-wart? No. In any case, that doesn't mean that I shy away from challenges. In fact, I relish them. Not only is it my job to challenge you to always be safe, professional, and to deliver quality customer service, but I must answer and solve the political challenges that we face.

It certainly seems like we have been challenged a lot, lately. We are stepping up to the plate "big time" on the emergency side of things. And, I repeat, I am very proud of that. Our latest and greatest challenges come politically. For example, yesterday's headline on the front page of the *Echo* reads, "Tilton residents ask for better fire service." Furthermore, at last night's Commission meeting, we were informed by the budget committee chair that they will be looking to cut the budget next

year; specifically looking to reduce the health insurance line.

These are not only the challenges of the times, they are the challenges of a growing department. We are now seen as a "big-ticket" item. Even though we cost the taxpayers approximately \$1.50 per thousand, some find our budget excessive.

What occurs to me as I try to resolve some of these issues in my own mind is that the policy makers (the board members and the attendees at our District Meeting) very rarely use our services. This fact is amplified in communities such as ours. I believe, as I hope all of you do, that we are delivering quality services that have improved tremendously over the past 4 years. Our struggle as we try to answer our critics and budget cutters is to prove the value of our services to them.

The best way I know how to do that is to continue to do the best job you can day in and day out. Remember, the new Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS is just that: NEW. Time will prove that we have our stuff together. We can't let nay-sayers

or doubter affect how we approach the job and, most of all, the people that need us the most.

And, be nice (to borrow a line from retired Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini). Respect everyone that we come in contact with. Answer their questions truthfully. Take care of their problems, professionally. Do the little things that people will remember. Listen a little longer, help them with one more thing, take the time to explain; those things are remembered.

Believe me, there are no rose colored glasses in my top drawer. I am a realist. I realize that we are a target—it is our turn in the barrel, etc.

I love the fire service. I know each of you do, too. I will continue to strive to improve it and try to acquire the resources we need to properly protect our communities. This is a great place to work and I need all of you to help me make sure that it stays that way. Keep up the good work!!

*Chief*

## Engine 3's In Service!!

Don't let the small story fool you: this is big news. Engine 3 went in service last night. Drivers should make every effort to get in and familiarize yourself with the truck and drive it. Nobody should be driving the truck to a call without being properly trained and getting some time on it. Thank you to everyone that assisted in outfitting the truck and getting it put in service. A special thanks to Lt Hall's shift for their work and leadership on the project.

**UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

April 9, 2007	0900 hrs	Strategy and Exposures Chief Carrier Center Street
April 9, 2007	1730 hrs	Training Committee Meeting Chief Carrier Center Street
April 9, 2007	1800 hrs	Officer's Meeting Chief Carrier Center Street
April 10, 2007	0900 hrs	Strategy and Exposures Chief Carrier Center Street
April 11, 2007	0900 hrs	Strategy and Exposures Chief Carrier Center Street
April 16, 2007	0900 hrs	1 <sup>st</sup> Due Co Assignments - IC Chief Carrier Center Street
April 16, 2007	1800 hrs	Meth Lab Training Detective Farrington Center Street
April 17, 2007	0900 hrs	1 <sup>st</sup> Due Co Assignments - IC Chief Carrier Center Street
April 18, 2007	0900 hrs	1 <sup>st</sup> Due Co Assignments - IC Chief Carrier Center Street

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generator in the basement. That night, of course, the generator had been running for some time. What the officers of the department did not know, was that even though the exhaust was piped to the outside, there was an exhaust leak inside. Once the atmosphere was metered, it was determined that there was 670 ppm of CO in the basement. (See CO article excerpt below) None of our personnel should have been exposed to this dangerously high level of CO. We need to be more aware of our surroundings in order to better protect ourselves. Although both police officers that were in the building denied any symptoms, there was a

potential for seriously high blood levels. Each refused treatment and transport.

Back to the original problem: another dry system filled due to the compressor being off during the outage. An easy fix this time of year for a sprinkler company.

On Wednesday, the duty shift and a few other brave souls that spared their precious sleep basically got their butts kicked with calls throughout the 24 hour period. Calls began before the snow did with 2 significant motor vehicle accidents; one on Laconia Road in which the tool was needed and the other on 93 north of 20 where a single vehicle left the road and caught fire (minor injuries).

Once the snow started the Interstate became the place to be with our units responding to accidents from Canterbury to Sanbornton.

Early in the morning the ambulance responded to Canterbury to transport a patient from a building fire with some significant burns. Of course, by that time, branches were burning on wires all over the place.

Sometimes it is easy to get lulled into a false sense of security laced with some negativity about low call volume. And, sometimes you just never know. Thanks to all of you who kept you pagers on and helped us out! And, thanks, Josh, for the nozzle!!

### **At what level does carbon monoxide become toxic?**

For healthy adults, CO becomes toxic when it reaches a level higher than 50 ppm (parts per million) with continuous exposure over an eight hour period.. When the level of CO becomes higher than that, a person will suffer from symptoms of exposure. Mild exposure over a few hours (a CO level between 70 ppm and 100 ppm) include flu-like symptoms such as headaches, sore eyes and a runny nose. Medium exposure (a CO level between 150 ppm to 300 ppm) will produce dizziness, drowsiness and vomiting. Extreme exposure (a CO level of 400 ppm and higher) will result in unconsciousness, brain damage and death.

**About the Author:** Alexandria Haber is a freelance writer and is the head researcher and content manager for <http://www.carbon-monoxide-poisoning.com/>.

# Customer Service- Where am I?

## Segment 3 of 3

Kevin LaChapelle

*This is a three part article that should meld together and have a common theme at the end of the third article.*

*I have received some positive feedback about the last two articles. As always, I appreciate any feedback.*

*Again this week, on the coat tails of the **TNFD Vision**, I ask **where am I?** Last but not least we evaluate our **Customer Service**.*

“Customer Service” sounds like a cushy term that we have always seen at the front counter at Wally World or some mall store. In today's fire service it becomes more prevalent that fire chiefs and fire departments write strong vision and mission statements that preach good customer service. There must be a reason. And I don't think it has anything to do with return items or putting a rockin' downtown fire on layaway.

In the last two decades larger fire departments such as Phoenix, Atlanta, and Kansas City started to crusade this vision of fire department customer service. We may not be a large full time department like the three previously mentioned; however, we do provide the same services on a

much smaller scale. If you do further research on the history of any fire department that has preached customer service, you will find that they have built a solid foundation for community trust and they have members who are dedicated and believe in the service that they provide.

Let us dissect customer service a bit. Who is the customer? First and foremost, it is the taxpayer who pays for our existence; it is also those people who live, work and play in the community. In a nut shell, the customer is anyone you come in contact with while providing service. Service could be broken down into many categories. But what are we paid to do? We are paid to mitigate emergencies in the following areas; Fire suppression, EMS, Hazardous Materials, and Technical Rescue. We also perform many non emergency functions such as Fire Prevention, forest fire permits and regulation enforcement; and the car seat safety program.

Certainly, we must not forget the groups that are affiliated with our department, The TNFD Firefighters Association and the R.E.D. Company; they also advocate for the fire department and for the customer.

Last week I talked about conduct. How do we conduct our selves when providing the services that we do? When I

first started in this business a wise captain told me, “Treat everyone you come in contact with as you would treat your grandmother.” There are six basic rules of thumb when talking about the expectations in fire department *customer service*.

1. **Quick-** Our customers want immediate results. This does not only pertain to quick response times. It could be the case of checking a brush pile or information about codes.
2. **Skillful-** We must stay sharp. Have your “A” game on at every incident. The public thinks that when they call 911, we will arrive in a Black Hawk with three paramedics. Or even shut the valve off and the fire will go out. What I am trying to say is that our customers have high expectations for us, let's try not to disappoint them.
3. **Caring-** Treat most everyone as you would treat your grandmother. The reason I say “most” is; it is very difficult for us to be caring to the drunk that spit in your face just before they were tazed by the police. We should try to stay neutral at these incidents. There may be underlying circumstances. Maybe they just suffered a major loss.

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4. **Standard**- We have SOP's and SOG's for a reason. Our customers expect the same answer no matter who they talk to on the department. When we issue fire permits there really is no grey area. The regulations are clearly stated. But what about the customer who comes in and says; "Well the guy who wrote me the permit last week said I could burn plywood." If we play by the rules where there are rules then we usually don't run into this problem.
5. **Professional**- How do you conduct yourself in the public? Do you have a big wad of chew in, spitting onto Route 3 at the MVA? Does your fire department ball cap double as a grease rag? Our adult customers do not

want to be spoken to like they are in the second grade. Use clear terminology and have the facts straight the first time. If they find out later on that you were slinging a line of bull, you and the department will lose credibility.

6. **Resourceful**- Always be thinking. You do not need to know everything, but it's handy to know someone who does know. There is a lot of history behind this fire department, don't be afraid to call upon someone who is a part of that history. Know your resources.

The customer may not always be right, but if things get nasty, they will usually have the final say! The customer does not care whether you are call or full-time, they expect nothing but respect!

I leave you with a challenge. Take a step back and do a quick evaluation of yourself using the Vision of the TNFD and ask, **Where am I?**

Stay SAFE and Make it SAFE!

Kevin LaChapelle

*Thanks, Kevin. The three articles were very well stated. Most importantly, they drove home the "safety, professionalism, and customer service" message that is so important to the organization. I'm sure we'll be seeing more from you in future issues.*

*Chief Carrier*

## **21Boat1**

The boat is back in service. Thurston's worked on it and found that the impeller was gone and the lower unit oil needed to be changed. They assume that the damage was due to the motor being run dry. Please be careful to only run the motor in water or with the "muffs" on. We were lucky that it was noticed early and taken out of service.

***Anyone Wishing to Supply Pictures or Write Articles for Future Newsletters Please forward your materials to Chief Carrier by Wednesday of each week!***

***Thanks.***