



*Joint venture*

# Fire emergency services embraces consolidation

By Mike Joseph  
JBSA-Lackland Public Affairs

There was a time when a fire or emergency services call might be answered "Lackland Fire Department" or "Fort Sam Houston Fire Department" or "Randolph Fire Department," depending on the San Antonio military installation.

A call for those same services will now generate one response no matter the location: "Joint Base San Antonio Fire Emergency Services."

In fact, the transition into JBSA Fire Emergency Services from three separate units has been transparent. It was recently honored as the 2014 best large-base fire department in Air Education and Training Command.

"The entire fire department has put a tremendous amount of energy into consolidating, transforming and sharing best practices this past year," said Michael Grizer, 502nd Civil Engineer Squadron and JBSA fire marshal, via email to senior JBSA leaders. "It is great to see all that hard work recognized."

Brig. Gen. Bob LaBrutta, 502nd Air Base Wing and JBSA commander, echoed Grizer's comments in an email response.

"I firmly believe that our fire pros are the true testament of how to make our joint basing construct work to its fullest extent," LaBrutta said.

The 208 fire personnel in fire emergency services not only embraced the concept of joint basing, they used it to

enhance operations at all JBSA locations.

"We were three individual fire departments doing things differently and speaking different languages when Gen. Carter came here in 2011," said JBSA Fire Emergency Services Chief Curtis Williams about Maj. Gen. Theresa Carter, former 502nd ABW and JBSA commander.

"Gen. Carter put us on a timeline to move forward (with the concept of joint basing), and by the time she left in 2013, we were one fire department and one squadron in the making," Williams said. "We're all speaking the same language now. Any fire department can be operating within JBSA and we know exactly where it is based on radio call signs and station number."

Williams said in order for the three locations to operate and think as one, the eight fire stations at JBSA-Lackland, JBSA-Randolph and JBSA-Fort Sam Houston were renumbered, along with vehicles and district designations.

To symbolize being united on a combined front, former operating location uniform patches were incorporated into a new department shield.

A firefighter uniform committee was established to standardize uniforms and ensure Air Force and National Fire Protection Association compliance.

The conversion process has been more than just visual. It also carries over to the firefighters.

"We didn't try to take away the identity of each location, but we needed to pull away from the old way of doing things," said Williams, a former fire chief at JBSA-Fort Sam Houston. "All firefighters now identify themselves as

Joint Base San Antonio; -Fort Sam Houston, -Lackland or -Randolph is where you happen to work as a firefighter."

To insure firefighters understand the objectives and mission of joint base, Williams instituted a weekly road show.

"My objective is for every single firefighter in JBSA to receive this briefing and understand the impact that they make, who they touch throughout JBSA, who each and every mission partner is," Williams said. "The road show lets our firefighters know that they touch the lives of every single person on JBSA each and every day: 24/7, 365 days a year."

"The briefing is a tool: it's informative and motivational," he said. "It's given by supervisory firefighters and gives me an opportunity to get feedback right on the spot, not so much about the briefing but how a firefighter feels about what he's doing."

Williams, a retired Air Force chief master sergeant who served 23 years and has 46 years experience in fire safety, also has an additional mission when it comes to JBSA firefighters.

"It drives me to pass on all that I know no matter what level the firefighter, particularly to motivate and mentor," the chief said. "There are people all over this joint base waiting for someone to provide mentorship, and that's the only way I know that we're going to maintain a level of leadership and efficiency in the future."

"Every place I've been - every installation - I've tried to leave it significantly better than when I found it," Williams said. "That's what I'm trying to do here."



Fire Station 1 Building 2325 1910 Kenly Ave JBSA-Lackland 671-2921 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 2 Building 1027 JBSA-Lackland 671-2921 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 3 Building 200 1125 Medina Base Road 671-2921 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 4 Building 3830 3201 Schofield Road JBSA-Fort Sam Houston 221-3465 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 5 Building 1704 3935 Winans Road JBSA-Fort Sam Houston 221-3465 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 7 Building 5020 4716 Wikerson Road JBSA-Camp Bullis 295-7600 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 8 Building 700 2080 Fifth Street East JBSA-Randolph 652-6915 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fire Station 9 Building 415 JBSA-Randolph 652-6915 • 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Fire Station 6 • Under construction • JBSA-Fort Sam Houston