



State Fire Marshal Matt Perez Announces Retirement

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SPRINGFIELD —Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez has announced plans to retire at the end of June, 2022. Perez has served over 7 years as Illinois State Fire Marshal and over 37 years in the public safety field. Before beginning his career in the fire service, Perez worked for two years as a patrol officer in the Kane County Sheriff's Department. He then joined the Aurora Fire Department where he served 27 years and became certified as a paramedic, an arson investigator, and rose to the rank of Assistant Chief.



“Matt Perez has been an outstanding Fire Marshal for all of Illinois, serving through administrations on both sides of the aisle and championing districts urban and rural alike,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “His decades in service offer an example in excellence for public servants across government, and while I’m sad to see him leave, his mark on the Fire Marshal’s office will long outlast his time in office thanks to his leadership and mentorship. I wish Matt Perez all the best in retirement – he has earned it well.”

While serving as State Fire Marshal, Perez worked with the Governor's office and legislators to increase funding for training, education, equipment, and vehicles for Illinois Firefighters. Several innovative programs were established to help volunteer firefighters, who provide coverage to over 70% of the State, including the Blended Basic Operations Firefighter Academy conducted by the Illinois Fire Service Institute. This program is free to volunteer firefighters and offers online, hands-on training at regional training sites in order to achieve certification.

Under Perez's leadership, the agency developed programs which addressed hazards faced by firefighters including carcinogen exposure reduction and firefighter mental health. The agency also helped firefighters navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. They tracked quarantined and COVID positive firefighters throughout the State in order to identify hotspots and helped ensure mutual aid to fire departments that quickly became short on personnel, especially in rural areas where fire stations are farther apart. The agency helped secure PPE and testing resources for fire service members and created a one-time COVID Relief Grant for small rural departments. This grant provided funds to help make up for lost fundraising revenues which helped keep the lights on at the station and fuel in trucks.

"Serving as State Fire Marshal has been a true honor. Working together with the 14-fire service organizations to make our firefighters safer and more efficient has been very rewarding," said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. "Although the COVID pandemic has been challenging, it has united us as a fire service community and reaffirmed that Illinois is home to the best fire service in the nation. I wish you all the best and I know you will all continue to accomplish amazing things! The State Fire Marshal's Office is filled with caring, amazing people who go about their jobs with pride. I am lucky to have worked with so many great people that have made Illinois safer for our residents and visitors."

Perez currently serves as an executive board member of the National Association of State Fire Marshal's and has received numerous leadership awards from Illinois fire service organizations. Norman Perez, OSFM's unofficial mascot, will also be retiring at the end of the month.

Dale Simpson will assume the role of Acting Fire Marshal until a permanent replacement for Perez is named. Simpson was hired into the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal in July 2013 as a Fire Prevention Inspector, became Fire Prevention Division Manager in 2016, and has been the Bureau Chief of Operations since 2019. He retired from the Springfield Fire Department after 26 years, where he served as a Fire Fighter, and then Division Chief of Fire Safety, and finally, as the City of Springfield

Fire Marshal. He also previously served as a fire and arson investigator, juvenile fire setter intervention specialist, Explorer Post Coordinator, CERT Coordinator, and a senior member of Fire Department staff.