

Virginia State Fireman's Association 115th Annual Convention

Article by Jim Alexander, Captain, Portsmouth Fire, Rescue, and EMS



*Firefighters making the connection.
This line is ready for business.*



That's right, we're going to put something on you!

August 18, 2001 - **The Virginia State Fireman's Association 115th Annual Convention** while not well publicized, was no small affair. It was a three day event that filled three Hampton hotels, brought in 40 vendors of fire, rescue and emergency medical equipment, and placed on display the latest in fire and rescue vehicles. There were seminars, activities, and a parade. It's organization is a credit to Captain Larry Gwaltney and members of the association who organized and officiated the event. If tourists visiting Virginia are searching for the heartland, it was in Hampton this weekend.

Again, you've got to hand it to the guys and gals that attended the Virginia State Fireman's Association Convention and participated in the competition, they've got a lot of spirit. The members attending the convention were from volunteer fire departments primarily from the western regions of Virginia. Fire organizations from Hampton, Gloucester, and Poquosin were the notable exceptions. The crowd that braved intermittent showers was not afraid of getting wet and it seemed to be an unwritten rule that the hose evolutions were not complete until the crowd in the splash zones had receive the rites of baptism. The crowd roared with laughter and thoroughly enjoyed the attention of their home town heroes as the water flew.

It is evident the convention serves these community departments as a mechanism to create and renew bonds between its members. To this end, it was extremely successful.

Team competitions included donning turn out gear and SCBA and running across a short expanse. Raising ladders, and connecting nozzles to hose lines. Forget changing any of the rules, in the crowd older members could be overheard reminiscing about the best teams and the fastest times. They could just as easily been talking about the greats of baseball. This was an all American game and it was their game. The competition was serious business and bragging rights the grand prize. There were no strangers in the crowd, this was family.

In these times of shrinking tourism budgets it is remarkable the Virginia State Fireman's Convention goes relatively unnoticed. However, given a little further reflection, I'd say the firefighters think the arrangement is perfect.



*Ladder Competition
Teamwork is the key to winning.*



*Keeping an eye on the kids
Association members were there to help.*