



News Release

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Fire & Rescue Spokesperson Earns National Award *Campbell Recognized for Outstanding Management of Critical Incident*

FREDERICK, Md.– The National Information Officers Association recognized Frederick County Division of Fire & Rescue Services Public Information Officer Sarah Campbell with their 2023 Outstanding Management of a Critical Incident Award. She earned the honor for her work coordinating public communications following the March 4 tanker truck explosion and resulting fires along U.S. Route 15. Campbell accepted the award last week at the NIOA Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

“I am grateful for Sarah and our public information officers across Frederick County Government who work hard to ensure our community is informed during critical times,” County Executive Jessica Fitzwater said. “Sarah did a remarkable job. I congratulate her on this impressive honor.”

“Frederick County is fortunate to have such a professional advocate to keep the public informed of emergencies that occur in our community,” Fire Chief Tom Coe said. “Mrs. Campbell is a hard-working public servant who cares deeply about Frederick County and is incredibly committed to our organization’s mission. I am excited that the National Information Officers Association has recognized Sarah with this most prestigious award.”

On March 4, emergency responders received multiple calls for reports of multiple house fires, a vehicle explosion, and a large brush fire, all along the Route 15 corridor near Rosemont Avenue. Quickly realizing the severity of the incident and its impact on residents and travelers, Campbell stood up a Joint Information Center within the Frederick County Emergency Operations Center, bringing in communications staff from multiple agencies to assist. She provided oversight on all aspects of communications crisis management, providing information to the public through social media channels and media outlets in a timely manner. As news of this event spread to a national audience, Campbell coordinated a press conference with officials from numerous state and local agencies.

When the public began questioning whether hazardous materials from the incident threatened a nearby drinking water source, Campbell worked with the Maryland Department of the Environment, Frederick County Division of Fire & Rescue Hazardous Materials Team, and the City of Frederick City’s Department of Public Works to distribute accurate information. By dispelling rumors quickly, their efforts prevented additional chaos to an already critical incident.

Throughout the event and into the following week, Campbell guided community leaders and elected officials on communication aspects. She worked with leaders to hold a Town Hall forum for affected residents. With representation from multiple state and local agencies, she oversaw an open forum event in which community members could get their questions answered. Throughout the entire incident, Campbell maintained a calm, cool attitude and maintained control of the communications aspect of the situation.

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Pictured from left: NIOA President Jason Pack, Sarah Campbell, and NIOA Vice President Jason Elmore.

