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## **Town Marshal's Office 2020 Year in Review**

What a year 2020 has been; From suffering two devastating wildland fires (requiring rapid evacuations within the town), to dealing with COVID -19. We were able to host the first Cave Creek Craft Beer Festival on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February and then shifted to emergency management duties shortly thereafter.

The East Desert Fire began on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May and was a rude awakening. We went from a small town whom had typically experienced three rather small fires a year, to a small town with a huge Wildland Fire. I have had a very diversified career in law enforcement, however the East Desert Fire added a new dimension to my career. Air tankers and helicopters were brought in to contain a very fast-moving wildland fire. We launched our first CodeRed mass evacuation since I brought CodeRed to Cave Creek in 2005. Nothing has effected me more in my career, than watching an uncontrolled fire force our residents from their homes in the middle of the night. The decision was made to utilize Cave Creek Public Works and utility staff to drop huge amounts of water from our water trucks up and down effected roadways providing a much needed fire break and preventing embers from possibly jumping the roadways and threatening more homes. My emergency management skills were tested daily as we worked with the State Forestry Fire Management Incident Commander as well as our local fire departments and state and county emergency management staff. We were able to notify residents quickly and effectively of the evacuations as well as we were able to map out the effected area and manage the roadway closures until fire command gave us an all clear. All town staff worked together efficiently and effectively to manage a very serious community crisis. The fire reached "containment" on 22 May 2020.

Cave Creek was dealing with the aftereffects of the East Desert Fire when once again another fire began. 30 May 2020 yet another fire, the "Ocotillo Fire" began just north of Rancho Manana. If the East Desert Fire was bad, the Ocotillo was far worse in my book. We once again had to launch a CodeRed mass evacuation after mapping-out the fire area. We had residents awakened in the middle of the night and told to immediately evacuate their homes. We worked with livestock rescue as well as local Animal Rescuers to evacuate horses and other animals. We established a Red Cross Disaster Aid station as well as a fire camp for the fire staging area. On 03 June the Ocotillo fire was contained and residents were allowed back home. Seeing the

destruction of people's homes and properties was devastating. Telling people they were not allowed to return home was exceedingly difficult, as many of the fire spots were no longer visible, however power lines were still down in many areas and gas / electric needed to be secured prior to allowing people back into the area. Seeing a fire rapidly burn through a large residential section of Cave Creek was devastating.

COVID -19: another disaster not on anyone's radar. A Global Pandemic unseen before in most of our lifetimes. We now found ourselves attending almost daily briefings and learning as a town and as an emergency manager, how to properly address the health and safety concerns in a small town. We were able to source PPE equipment for staff. Hand sanitizer. Disinfectant...TOILET PAPER...who would have known how important toilet paper would be in the midst of a global pandemic. We had to check on our at-risk residents. Safeguard staff. Regulate businesses for mask and social distancing requirements. We went from reviewing Special Event Permits to reviewing COVID mitigation plans and business re-opening plans. Who would have thought that we would all be wearing masks this long? Now we prepare for the "vaccine" and the dreaded Mass Spread and Red Zones as well as limited capacities at businesses throughout town.

Protests and threats of Civil unrest in our sleepy little town brought sleepless nights to residents and business owners. The Marshal's Office along with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office and the Arizona Rangers patrolled countless nights ensuring Cave Creek was safe and our businesses were free from the mischief that was plaguing Phoenix, Scottsdale and parts of this country.

Of course, we had a National Election with over 37 election signs not in compliance resulting in very unhappy groups on both sides of the political spectrum as signs had to be removed then returned for corrections throughout town. Then add to the national and state elections conundrum a local school board election with parties from every direction complaining about misplaced, stolen and removed signs. Interesting times.

We had a local business catch fire and burn down. We managed the emergency closure of traffic on the north side of Cave Creek Road around the fire for almost an entire day. We also facilitated the removal of more hay than I have ever seen in my lifetime. Who would have known how dangerous smoldering hay was? Figuring out how to remove and transport so much hay to a facility within town where it could be separated and then monitored and drenched with water was certainly a different experience and not something most Marshals ever have to deal with. I am happy to see a structure finally going up at that business and wish them a speedy opening.

The Marshal's Office has received and investigated close to 120 complaints this year. Everything from Building Safety Violations to Grading and Draining issues and Zoning Violations mixed in. I have had the privilege of talking to so many residents this year. I have spoken to neighbors whom have been feuding for years to neighbors whom have recently moved to Cave Creek and thought this was a suburb of XYZ and could not understand why we allowed horses in Cave Creek. Cave Creek is unique and it is my privilege to be the Marshal of Cave Creek.