

Born in fire

Scottsdale's revolutionary fire sprinkler ordinance continues to save lives

Scottsdale Rural/Metro Fire Chief Lou Witzeman took an audacious step in 1982—he convinced Womack Homes to put fire sprinklers in two residential models going up in Scottsdale.

Witzeman then set those homes on fire.



Paradise Valley High School graduate Jim Ford was a fire captain and manning the hoses that day.

“Lou pulled me aside and said ‘Jim, your job is make sure those fires go out;’” recalled Ford. “‘If those sprinklers don’t work I have to buy those houses, so you guys better be good today.’”

The sprinklers worked. Witzeman kept his money. And the smoke bellowing from the extinguished homes that day signaled revolution. Three years after the demonstration, Scottsdale became the first city in the U.S. with a mandatory residential sprinkler ordinance for new structures.

The move drew national headlines and heated commentary. The National Fire Protection Association hailed it. Most developers, however, detested the ordinance, calling it costly and overly bureaucratic.

Fourteen years after the model home demonstration and a decade after the Scottsdale ordinance adoption, Ford was tasked to compile a report to lay out the facts. Personally, he didn’t need a study to know the value of residential sprinklers. “I’d been on the trucks. I’d been on the calls,” said Ford, who today is a Scottsdale deputy fire chief.

In the first 10 years of data analyzed by Ford, no death was reported by fire in a sprinklered building. At least 13 people were saved by sprinklers in the first 15 years of the ordinance who otherwise would have died in fires. Property savings were also significant. The average fire loss per sprinklered building was \$2,166; loss per non-sprinklered incident was \$45,019.

Since the ordinance was adopted, Scottsdale’s total fire loss has been consistently about one-third that of comparable communities.

“One of the great characteristics of this community is our ability to look ahead and do the right thing instead of just the easy thing,” said Scottsdale Mayor W.J. “Jim” Lane. “Our residential fire sprinkler ordinance is an example of that. We stayed focused on the facts and the facts say this system works. It saves lives and property. That’s a blessing for this community and a testament to Scottsdale’s ability to lead.”

Learn more about Scottsdale’s revolutionary fire sprinkler ordinance at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “sprinklers.”

Flood hazard reduction efforts lower insurance costs for property owners

Scottsdale property owners started saving more on flood insurance May 1 thanks to city flood hazard reduction efforts.

Scottsdale scored tops in the state among municipalities during a recent federal audit of floodplain management practices, ranking in the top 1 percent of all U.S. cities and counties.

“These rankings are a significant achievement,” said Mayor W.J. “Jim” Lane. “Through smart floodplain management, property is safer and insurance costs are lower for residents. That’s an excellent return on taxpayers’ investment.”

Scottsdale has built extensive infrastructure to protect property from flooding—including the 11-mile Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt. More infrastructure is needed to curtail flooding. Scottsdale recently partnered with the Flood Control District of Maricopa County to complete area drainage master studies and plans for several watersheds. Completing those plans is one reason Scottsdale scored so high on the federal audit.

Scottsdale’s rating for flood risk improved from Class 6 to Class 5 because of the audit—a move that will boost the premium discount in special flood hazard areas from 20 to 25 percent. Policy holders outside the special flood hazard areas will continue to see their premiums reduced by 10 percent.

These adjustments will collectively save flood insurance policy holders an additional \$200,000 a year and bring total premium savings to \$1.1 million annually. That breaks down to an average overall savings of \$137 per year per policy.

In all, FEMA’s Insurance Services Office credited Scottsdale in 14 areas of flood hazard mitigation and floodplain management.

Learn more about Scottsdale stormwater and floodplain management at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “stormwater.”

Because severe weather and flooding can be unpredictable in the desert, Scottsdale urges all residents to consider carrying flood insurance. More information on the National Flood Insurance Program can be found at www.Floodsmart.gov.

Scottsdale elections will wait until November

There will not be an Aug. 28 primary election in Scottsdale. Six candidates filed to run for three City Council seats by the May 30 deadline, making a Scottsdale primary election unnecessary (one of the candidates withdrew June 18). Voters will elect three City Council members at the Tuesday, Nov. 6, General Election. The Scottsdale City Council also called a Special Election to run concurrently with the Nov. 6 General Election so voters can consider a temporary tax to fund transportation improvements. Find more information at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “elections.”



Register for fall Parks and Recreation classes beginning July 30. Scottsdale Parks and Recreation classes offer affordable prices, experienced instructors and convenient times and locations. Registration begins at 7 a.m. Monday, July 30, for residents and 7 a.m. Tuesday, July 31, for nonresidents. View the catalog and register at Recreation.ScottsdaleAZ.gov.

August is Drowning Impact Awareness Month. Wear a purple ribbon, available at any Scottsdale fire station or aquatic center, to help boost awareness of water safety and the threat of drowning. Eldorado Aquatic Center hosts a free, “Safety Luau” from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 4, with fun for the whole family. Consider enrolling yourself or your child in a swim lesson to help prevent drowning as well. Lessons begin Aug. 6. More info at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “aquatics.”

Save the date for the Mayor and Council Economic Development Breakfast. Join community and business leaders for this annual look at economic trends and insights in Scottsdale. The breakfast takes place from 7:30 to 9 a.m. Sept. 27 at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts. Learn more and register at ChooseScottsdale.com.

Scottsdale offers rebates for saving water. Earn them by installing WaterSense-labeled irrigation controllers, showerheads, and toilets and for removing water-intensive turf, in-ground pools/spas and water softeners. Funds are limited. Get information at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “water rebates.”

The Community Mediation Program helps solve neighborhood issues. Trained volunteer mediators help people work through issues such as barking dogs and landscape disputes to achieve mutually agreeable solutions among neighbors. For more information or to request a mediation session, visit ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “mediation.”



Want to drive a police robot? Operate a garbage truck? Scottsdale’s Show and Tell event takes place in conjunction with the free Children’s Learning and Play Festival from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 8, at WestWorld. Learn more about city programs and services while enjoying activities such as nature exhibits and a children’s play zone. Learn more at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “Show and Tell.”

SCOTTSDALE UPDATE is published six times per year by the city of Scottsdale. If you have questions or suggestions, please email communications@ScottsdaleAZ.gov.

General city information:

480-312-3111 or email questions@ScottsdaleAZ.gov

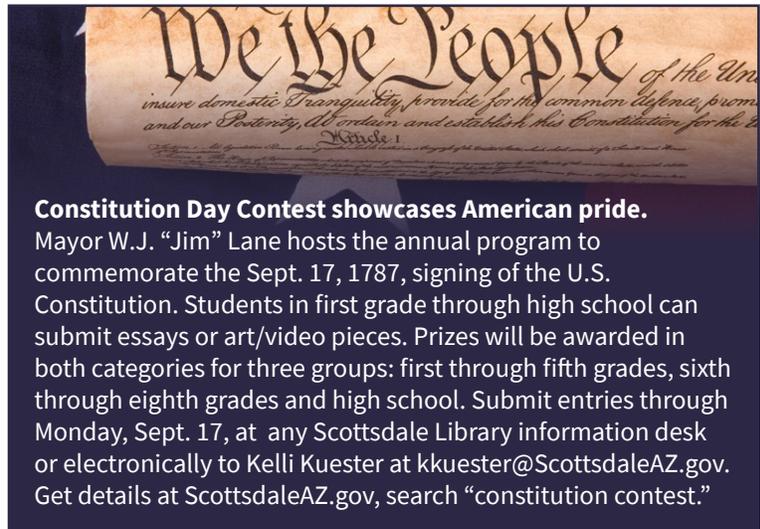


Celebrating Scottsdale’s unique personal stories

Scottsdale for All is a new campaign highlighting Scottsdale’s diversity and perspectives, our community’s welcoming people and their individual stories.

Through images and video interviews, Scottsdale for All supports Scottsdale as a Golden Rule City, reinforcing fundamental values of kindness, empathy, respect and civility.

Free “Scottsdale for All” posters are available at several city locations, including City Hall and all libraries and community centers, while supplies last. Find the campaign home on Facebook at fb.me/ScottsdaleforAll.



Constitution Day Contest showcases American pride.

Mayor W.J. “Jim” Lane hosts the annual program to commemorate the Sept. 17, 1787, signing of the U.S. Constitution. Students in first grade through high school can submit essays or art/video pieces. Prizes will be awarded in both categories for three groups: first through fifth grades, sixth through eighth grades and high school. Submit entries through Monday, Sept. 17, at any Scottsdale Library information desk or electronically to Kelli Kuester at kkuester@ScottsdaleAZ.gov. Get details at ScottsdaleAZ.gov, search “constitution contest.”

THINGS TO DO

For details, search terms **in bold** at ScottsdaleAZ.gov:

- Eldorado Aquatic Center hosts **Safety Luau** Aug. 4
- Celebrate National **Senior Citizens Day**, Aug. 21
- Old Town **ArtWalks** every Thursday evening
- Learn about out of school activities at **Lights on Afterschool**, Sept. 29



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