



City of Duluth - Fire Department

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SUBJECT: DFD Captain Benjamin Tessier completes National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program

BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer

NATURE OF INCIDENT:

CASE NO.:

INCIDENT DATE:

INCIDENT TIME:

INCIDENT LOCATION:

DFD Captain Benjamin Tessier completes National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program

[DULUTH, MN] Duluth Fire Department Captain Benjamin Tessier recently completed the National Fire Academy's Managing Officer Program. The Managing Officer Program is a multiyear program of distinction offered by the US Fire Administration's National Fire Academy (NFA) to introduce emerging emergency services leaders to personal and professional skills in change management, risk reduction, and adaptive leadership. The NFA prepares future leaders in emergency services through a combination of education and the linking of people and ideas.

The NFA's Managing Officer program provides instruction on leadership, community risk reduction, community safety and firefighter safety, contemporary training issues, and analytical tools for decision making. "I've always really enjoyed advancing my education through structured programs and developing my skills through training programs," said Captain Tessier. "This educational experience was a lot of rearranging of life and work to allow for my travel and class time, but it was extremely helpful in opening my eyes to whole-organization, systematic ways of approaching a challenge."

The program offers four unique courses that require the student to develop and complete a capstone project that directly benefits the student's own fire department and community. The capstone

project allows the student an opportunity to demonstrate application of course theory and concepts to real-life fire station operations. For his capstone project, Captain Tessier is overseeing DFD's transition to the new US fire data reporting system, NERIS, or the National Emergency Response Information System, which must be fully integrated by January 1, 2026. The transition from NFIRS to NERIS is no small feat, either. The action requires significant cross-departmental work from not just the fire department, but from various administrative services divisions across the municipality. "That's exactly the kind of training the Managing Officer Program has afforded me – the whole-city, whole-community approach to solve complex issues ranging from small communities to local, state, and tribal governments," said Captain Tessier, indicating that the network of other Managing Officer program participants he was encouraged to build as he worked through the curriculum has proven to be a huge help in the project. "I'm grateful for this opportunity not just for the training, but to now have a cohort of experts to lean on to share experiences and best practices—it's just invaluable." It's natural that the NFA would lean into the familial culture-aspect of firefighting to enhance the Managing Officer program, as it is a hallmark of the fire service and one that called to Captain Tessier when he was growing up visiting his father on-shift at the Hermantown Fire Department. "It's not just about supporting one another. It's about building a culture that allows for unbreakable trust across the department," he said, crediting the program for solidifying his desire to maintain such trust amongst his brothers and sisters of the Duluth Fire Department.

While several recent DFD staff have attended training with the National Fire Academy, Captain Ben Tessier is the first to have completed this distinctive program. DFD Fire Chief Shawn Krizaj remarked about the accomplishment, "In the past, we have struggled to provide advanced leadership training and continued succession planning for the next generation of DFD leaders. Captain Tessier is exactly the kind of employee we like to support with his involvement in a program like the Managing Officer program. Any company officer or firefighter who seeks professional development opportunities of this caliber tends to perform at a level that pays dividends for the department and the Duluth community. We congratulate Captain Tessier and celebrate this accomplishment."

Captain Tessier thanks his family and his wife, Emily, for their support while he went through the training. "While I was gone, Emily was navigating a lot on her own," said Tessier. "Our oldest, Kolbe, was preparing for his first year in kindergarten; our daughter, Brinley, was starting preschool; and our youngest, Quentin, was about to turn one year old and learning how to walk. She persevered through it all and I have the utmost love and respect for her."

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Captain Benjamin Tessier