

OPINIONS

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MY TURN

Mesa fire needs help to beat the clock

The Fire Department is and always will be our name. But this name does not adequately describe the range of emergencies to which your firefighters respond every day.

While we certainly still fight plenty of fires, the list of emergencies to which our people respond goes far beyond putting the wet stuff on the red stuff.

From providing lifesaving oxygen and medications to a needy heart patient to rescuing a worker from a collapsed trench; from mitigating a hazardous chemical spill to rescuing a window washer from seven stories up; from rescuing the pilot from a small plane on fire at one of our airports to cutting away a mangled car to stop the bleeding of the driver; from protecting people from downed electrical lines to teaching children to stop, drop and roll; Mesa firefighters are still making house calls.

And we are making a lot of them.

Emergency services have always been a point of pride in this community, as those who have built our Fire Department over the years have truly been on the cutting edge. Intelligent



**BRYAN
JEFFRIES**

planning and rigorous training have provided Mesa with emergency systems that grew with this community and brought well-trained providers to you when you needed us fast.

All Mesa firefighters can tell stories about

how they were able to extinguish a laundry room fire and protect the rest of the house from burning down because they arrived in less than four minutes.

Every Mesa fire paramedic can recall patients who were able to come by the station to say thank you, because they received oxygen and heart-saving medicine in less than four minutes.

Some of us have been able to watch children grow up healthy because we arrived quickly after they were pulled breathless out of a pool. Not all of our stories have happy endings. The enemy of the happy ending is the ticking of the clock.

The No. 1 issue weighing heavily on the minds of firefighters lately is

that our department has not kept pace with the growing number of emergencies in Mesa. The city's inability to add emergency units over the past five years is causing response times to rise at an alarming rate.

With the strong support of our City Council, city manager and fire chief, we have all made looking for ways to stretch our resources priority No. 1. We will continue to be innovative and do our best to reverse this trend, however.

Take it from those who know when a Band-Aid will simply not do. A stark example of our crunch came this week when, if only one additional firetruck would have experienced a mechanical problem, we would have been looking to our neighboring communities in hopes of borrowing one from them.

Mesa must find the resources necessary to turn this tide.

Mesa needs additional fire stations and trucks to give us a fighting chance to make a difference.

Bryan Jeffries is president of Mesa Fire Fighters Association.