



## NEWS RELEASE



**February 12, 2010**

### **Texarkana, Texas Fire Department Chief Harry Simms Retiring**

For immediate release:

CEO/City Manager Dr. Larry Sullivan announced that Chief Harry H. Simms, Jr. is retiring from the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department effective March 1, 2010 after thirty plus years of valued service. “Chief Simms must be applauded for the many initiatives he has spearheaded for the Fire Department and our city during his tenure as Chief,” Sullivan noted. “The importance of raising our city’s ISO (Insurance Services Office) rating two full levels cannot be overstated. Moving from a level 4 department to a level 2 department translates to an approximate 10% reduction in individual insurance premiums for Texarkana, Texas residents.”

In November, 2008, under Chief Simms' leadership, the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department underwent an intensive survey to evaluate the fire insurance classification for the city. The resulting Public Protection Classification (PPC) number developed by ISO is one of several elements considered in the calculation of individual property insurance premiums by numerous insurance companies.

A Texarkana native, Simms is a graduate of Liberty Eylau High School and East Texas State University-Texarkana (now Texas A&M University-Texarkana) with a Bachelor of Applied Arts & Sciences degree in December, 1985. He began his career with the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department as a Firefighter/Paramedic in 1979. A dedicated public servant, Chief Simms rose through the ranks of Driver-Engineer, Captain, and Battalion Chief over Operations. He is certified by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection as a Structural Firefighter – Master, Instructor I, and Hazardous Materials Technician, and by the Texas Department of State Health Services as a Licensed Paramedic.

Chief Simms took the helm of the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department as Interim Chief in 1993, becoming Fire Chief in 1994. In October, 1998 Chief Simms completed the rigorous training at the National Fire Academy in Emmittsburg, Maryland to become certified as an Executive Fire Officer.

In 2006, Chief Simms served as President of the Texas Fire Chiefs Association having been active and serving in other leadership roles since 1994. He also served on the Texas Commission on Fire Protection's Funds Allocation Advisory Committee from 2007-2009 and is a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs and National Fire Protection Association.

Many community organizations and institutions of higher education have benefited from Chief Simms expertise including the Texarkana College EMT Program Advisory Committee and Northeast Texas Community College (Mt. Pleasant) Fire Academy Advisory Committee. Chief Simms has served on the Board of Directors of Morris-Sheppard Texarkana Federal Credit Union since 1996 and as the Board's President since 2001. In 2005-2006, Chief Simms served on the Governor's Director of Homeland Security - First Responder Advisory Committee.

During Chief Simms leadership era, the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department developed and constructed its state-of-the-art training facility. He has been instrumental in achieving operating efficiencies within his department. Throughout the period of construction on I-30 and other major thoroughfares, Chief Simms has collaborated with other Public Safety and Public Works personnel to insure optimum response times and safety for Texarkana, Texas citizens. Through his advocacy, the Firefighter's Pension Fund remains financially stable.

"I have enjoyed my service to the citizens of Texarkana and the Fire Department for this past 30 plus years. The people of this department have been a blessing to work with," Chief Simms recalled. "They have consistently proven that they are willing to do whatever is necessary to serve the needs of the citizens, and that has always been our first

priority. I have complete confidence in the leadership remaining within the department to continue this tradition of service and to continue to make the department better in the future.”

The respect and admiration Chief Simms has earned from his department are reflected in the words of Battalion Chief Kenny Copeland. “I have worked with Chief Simms for more than 29 years, including the last 14 years in the Administration Office. He is without a doubt one of the most intelligent people with whom I have ever worked and has been an excellent supervisor and a great person from whom to learn about the fire service. Chief Simms is honest, moral, and always tries to treat his employees with fairness and respect. He basically transformed our department from the archaic system of days past to the modern department it is today. Our city and our department owe a lot to Chief Simms.”

After a commendable and memorable career with the Fire Department, Chief Simms plans to enjoy having more time for some favorite hobbies such as fishing, camping and woodworking.

Chief Simms’ service to the Texarkana, Texas Fire Department and community will be celebrated with a reception on Wednesday, February 17, 2010, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Texas City Hall (second floor Conference Room), 3<sup>rd</sup> and Texas Boulevard.