



The members of the 2016-2017 Executive Committee are (l to r): Chairman Mike Meehan, First Vice Chairman Wayne Weisz, Second Vice Chairman Ted Wills, Secretary Linda Biernacki, Treasurer Jack Medovich, and Immediate Past Chairman Joe Heinrich.

# Meet Your 2016-2017 Board of Directors

## Officers and Directors Lead AFSA

**CHARLOTTE JOHNSON | American Fire Sprinkler Association**

The American Fire Sprinkler Association (AFSA) held its 2017 election of officers during the September 14, 2016 meeting of the Board at the 35th Annual AFSA Convention & Exhibition in Nashville. Michael F. Meehan, VSC Fire & Security, Virginia Beach, Virginia, will remain as Chairman of the Board. Also continuing to serve as officers of the 2016-2017 Board are: First Vice Chairman Wayne Weisz, Cen-Cal Fire Systems, Inc., Lodi, California; Second Vice Chairman Theodore C. Wills, Jr., Anchor Fire Protection Co., Perkiomenville, Pennsylvania; and Secretary Linda M. Biernacki, Fire Tech Systems, Inc., Shreveport, Louisiana. The newly elected Treasurer will be Jack A. Medovich, P.E., Fire and Life Safety America, Richmond, Virginia.

**2017 Board of Directors Election** AFSA's Board consists of seven Regional Directors (one for each of the seven membership regions), At-Large Directors, and the Immediate Past Chairman. Each year, one-third of the Board is elected to a three-year term, providing continuity in the association's governing body. The 2016 election process resulted in the re-election of four directors: R. Donald Kaufman of Kaufman Fire Protection, Albuquerque, New Mexico (Region 2); Jeff Phifer of Crawford Sprinkler Co. of South Carolina, Lugoff, South Carolina (Region 5); Michael F. Meehan of VSC Fire & Security, Virginia Beach, Virginia (Region 6); and Linda Biernacki of Fire Tech Systems, Inc., Shreveport, Louisiana (At-Large).

**Regional Directors** Region 1 Director Thomas J. McKinnon is president/founder of Aegis Fire Systems, Inc., located in Pleasanton, California. McKinnon entered the fire protection industry in 1984 when he joined Stop Fire, Inc., a residential, commercial and special hazards fire protection contractor located in San Jose, California. In 1993, Grinnell Fire Protection acquired Stop Fire and McKinnon assumed the role of residential division manager for the Grinnell

San Francisco branch. In 1996, McKinnon founded Aegis Fire Systems, Inc., a full-service fire protection firm serving the San Francisco Greater Bay area. Today, Aegis is one of the largest and most recognized merit shop contractors in Northern California. McKinnon serves as AFSA Region 1 Director, chair of the Budget & Finance Committee, and a committee member of AFSA's Apprenticeship & Education Committee. In addition to national involvement, McKinnon has and continues to serve on the California State Fire Marshal's Automatic Extinguishing Systems (AES) Advisory Committee and work groups.

Region 2 Director is R. Donald Kaufman, president of Kaufman Fire Protection, Albuquerque, New Mexico. With over 40 years in the sprinkler business, Kaufman was instrumental in starting AFSA's New Mexico Chapter and is a past president of the chapter. On the national level, Kaufman served as 2009-2011 Chairman of the Board and has chaired several committees including the Apprentice & Education and Convention Committees. He also served as chairman of the New Mexico State Board for Professional Engineers and Surveyors, three terms as chairman of the New Mexico State Apprentice Council, and currently serves on the New Mexico Construction Industries Commission. He is an active member of Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC), past president of ABC's New Mexico Chapter, member of the American Society of Professional Estimators, and past charter president of Albuquerque Rotary Del Sol.

Region 3 Director Rod DiBona is the vice president and part-owner of Rapid Fire Protection with their corporate offices in Rapid City, South Dakota. They currently have satellite offices in North Dakota, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. DiBona entered the fire protection industry in 1990 as a shop employee of Prairie Fire Protection. He then entered the AFSA apprenticeship



McKinnon



Kaufman



DiBona



Bateman



Phifer



DeLorie

program in 1991 and started working in the field. In October of 1993 he was asked by Marty Hammon to join him, his son and son-in-law to create Rapid Fire Protection. DiBona was a national finalist in the AFSA apprenticeship contest in 1995. DiBona started and has continued to grow Rapid Fire's apprenticeship training into a highly recognized program. Rapid Fire has had 17 national finalists, three AFSA national winners and one ABC national apprentice winner. DiBona currently serves on the board of directors for Rapid Fire, and he also serves on the AFSA Apprenticeship & Education Committee, Membership Committee, Insurance and Safety Committee, and Contractors Support and Advisory Committee. He is a NICET Level III Certified Engineering Technician in Water-Based Systems Layout.

Region 4 Director is Dwight E. Bateman, founder and president of Southeast Fire Protection, Inc. in Houston, and past chairman of the Board. Beginning his career as vice president of Semico International, Inc., a fire sprinkler contractor, Bateman has 40-plus years of experience in the industry. He opened Southeast Fire Protection in 1986 and joined AFSA in 1989. Bateman has served on and chaired a number of AFSA national committees.

Region 5 Director Jeff Phifer is president of Crawford Sprinkler Co. of South Carolina, based in Lugoff, South Carolina, one of the oldest family-owned and continuously operated fire sprinkler contractors in the nation. Phifer has been working at Crawford for 40 years, working as a fitter, service technician, and in administration. In 1999, he became the third generation to be president and chairman of the board. Phifer was on the board of directors of the South Carolina Fire Sprinkler Association from 2000-2009, serving as president from 2003-2006. He is also a member of ABC and was a member of the board of directors for the ABC Carolinas Chapter from 2001-2004, vice-chairing the chapter in 2003.

Region 6 Director and Chairman of the Board is Michael F. Meehan, senior vice president and a co-owner of VSC Fire & Security, Virginia Beach, Virginia. As Board chairman, Meehan also chairs the AFSA Executive Committee. A 1981 graduate from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, Meehan began his fire sprinkler career working summers as a pipe fitter apprentice. He is a NICET Level IV Certified Engineering Technician in Water-Based (formerly Automatic Sprinkler) Systems Layout and has more than 35 years' experience in sprinkler design engineering, estimating, project management and senior management. Meehan has served on

the AFSA Board of Directors since 2008, as the Region 6 Director. On January 1, 2017, Meehan will be named president of VSC Fire & Security.

Region 7 Director Paul DeLorie is senior vice president of Hampshire Fire Protection Co., based in Londonderry, New Hampshire. Hampshire Fire Protection is one of the largest merit shop fire sprinkler companies in New England. DeLorie is a graduate of the University of New Hampshire. He has over 30 years' experience in sprinkler design, estimating, sales, project management and senior management. He serves on the AFSA Contractor Support & Advisory Committee, Insurance & Safety Committee, and Legislative Committee. He is an active member of the ABC. He was a member of the board of directors of the ABC New Hampshire/Vermont Chapter from 2002-2012, serving as chapter chairman in 2007, and an ABC National board director from 2008-2012.

**At-Large Directors** Donald G. Albares, vice president of American Sprinkler Co., Inc. in Harahan, Louisiana, started his career in the fabrication shop at the age of 13. After attending the University of South Alabama on a baseball scholarship, he began as an apprentice fitter. As past president of the Louisiana Fire Sprinkler Association and an active member of ABC, Albares worked jointly for two years with the state chapters of ABC and AFSA to get the AFSA apprenticeship program recognized by the state of Louisiana. He has served on several AFSA national committees including Contractor Support & Advisory, Convention, Legislative, and Membership. He also sits on the Louisiana ABC's Legislative Review Committee, and was Chairman of the Insurance Committee for many years, ending his tenure with that committee in 2016.

At-Large Director and Secretary Linda M. Biernacki is founder and president of Fire Tech Systems, Inc. in Shreveport, Louisiana. She has served on the AFSA Board of Directors since 2007, holding the office of secretary, and chaired the 2016 Convention Committee. With over 26 years of experience in all phases of business, she is certified by the Women's Business Council Gulf Coast. She holds NICET Level IV, Senior Fire Protection Engineering Technology Water-Based Systems Layout and represents AFSA on the NFPA 232 Committee for Protection of Records. The Louisiana state fire marshal appointed Biernacki to the state's Residential Task Force, and the mayor of Shreveport appointed her to the city's Architectural and Engineering Selection Committee. Biernacki is president of the Louisiana Fire Sprinkler Association, which won the AFSA 2016 Out-

standing Chapter of the Year award. The Governor of Louisiana appointed her to the Small Business Entrepreneurship Commission, and she has received numerous leadership awards from her community; the Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year Award 2015, 2014 and 2004, Better Business Bureau Torch Award, and Women in Construction Region 5 Crystal Vision Award. Fire Tech Systems, Inc. has earned the AFSA Quality Contractor designation and is one of the first to attain Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) Residential Fire Sprinkler Contractor Accreditation.

At-Large Director Lyle Hall, vice president and co-owner of Western Fire Protection in Poway, California, has been in the fire sprinkler industry for 36 years, with the last 20 years at Western Fire. Prior to that he was a helicopter-based wildland firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service. He has a degree in fire science with continuing education at University of California San Diego. Hall started in the fire sprinkler industry as an apprentice pipe fitter and worked his way into design, project management, sales and eventually management. His past accomplishments include: past board of director for the San Diego Fire Protection Association; past chapter chairman of the San Diego Chapter of the AFSA; past chairman of the California American Fire Sprinkler Association – Unilateral Apprenticeship Committee; and past chairman of the California Fire Training Alliance. Hall currently serves on the California American Fire Sprinkler Association – Unilateral Apprenticeship Committee and the AFSA Legislation, Contractor Support and Convention Committees. He also co-chairs the Apprenticeship & Education Committee and is the chairman on the subcommittee to develop AFSA's new Inspector Development Training program.

At-Large Director and newly-elected Treasurer Jack A. Medovich, P.E., is senior vice president and founding partner of Fire & Life Safety America, formerly known as East Coast Fire Protection Inc., in Hanover, Maryland. A 1983 graduate of the University of Maryland School of Fire Protection Engineering, Medovich served three years as fire marshal of Fairfax County, Virginia, before joining the fire sprinkler industry 30 years ago. He has been active in AFSA since 1991, chairing its Chesapeake Bay Chapter from 1994 to 2002 and currently chairing the Virginia Chapter and its board of directors. He has served on several AFSA committees, including Apprenticeship & Education, Membership, Legislative, and Convention. He chaired the 2010 Convention Committee and has previously chaired the Fire Sprinkler Public Education & Awareness Committee. He represents AFSA on the Sprinkler System Discharge Committee of NFPA 13, and in the past he has served as a member of the following NFPA committees: NFPA 14, 20, 25, 101 and 750.

At-Large Director and First Vice Chairman Wayne Weisz started his career as an apprentice in 1979 and worked his way up through the ranks to foreman and later general superintendent at American Fire Systems in Lodi, California. In 1986, Weisz and his brother Byron founded Cen-Cal Fire Systems, Inc. in Lodi, California, and in 1997 he established D-M Fabrication, an independent pipe fabricator serving the western U.S., which later sold to a national supplier. Cen-Cal Fire Systems became

an AFSA member in 1987, and Weisz has been on the AFSA national Board since 2005. He has twice served as chairman of the Convention Committee and has chaired the



Albares



Hall

Membership/Chapter Development Committee since 2008. Weisz is actively involved in the AFSA Sacramento Valley Chapter, which he helped to establish in 1999. He has been very involved with apprenticeship issues in California and served on CAFSA's California Apprenticeship Training Board for over 20 years, including two terms as its chairman.

At-Large Director and Second Vice Chairman Ted Wills, Anchor Fire Protection Company, Perkiomenville, Pennsylvania, was an active member of AFSA in its early years. He previously served on the AFSA Board of Directors from 1987-1993 and chaired the Convention Committee in 1990 and 1991. He currently chairs the Legislative Committee. A graduate of Waynesburg College, Wills began his fire sprinkler industry career in 1978, when he started a fire protection division as part of his father's mechanical company. The division flourished, and in 1981, Wills and his father incorporated that division into Anchor Fire Protection. Wills is an active member in ABC and a partner in G&T Properties, a real estate development company, and serves on the advisory board of QNB Corp., a regional banking concern.

Immediate Past Chairman of the Board Joseph A. Heinrich, president of Bamford Fire Sprinkler Co., Salina and Shawnee Mission, Kansas, entered the industry as a fitter after college in 1972 and has nearly 40 years of experience in design, estimating, sales and administration. His company joined AFSA in 1982, and he has served on the AFSA Board since 2004. Heinrich has been involved in a number of AFSA committees and has served as chairman of the Bylaws, Legislative, and Contractors Support & Advisory committees. He has been actively involved in updates of the apprentice training modules and has served as a judge for the National Apprentice Competition for several years. Heinrich has also served on the Board of Directors and serves on the board of the Center for Life Safety Education (CLSE), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational affiliate of AFSA. In addition to his AFSA involvement, Heinrich is a longtime member of Associated Builders & Contractors (ABC) and served a term as president of its Kansas Sunflower Chapter.

**Conclusion** AFSA's Board of Directors is committed to the continuance of the merit shop philosophy, the promotion of property and life safety through the use of automatic fire protection, and the continued development of training for fire sprinkler fitters, layout technicians, inspectors and management. AFSA members are encouraged to voice any questions, concerns or suggestions with any member of the Board or staff. If you have a question or comment, please select the member you wish to contact from the list located in the front of every issue of *Sprinkler Age* or on the AFSA website, firesprinkler.org. ■