

SPOTLIGHT

Texas is made up of 254 counties, each with a team of locally elected and appointed county officials serving their community. Polk County's elected offices include a County Judge and four Road & Bridge Commissioners that make up the Commissioners Court, the County Court at Law Judge, four Justices of the Peace, four Constables, a County Clerk, District Clerk, District Attorney, Treasurer, Tax Assessor-Collector and Sheriff.

There is no hierarchy in county government, so the only boss of these elected officials is *You, the People*.

There are two District Court systems that serve Polk County, the 258th and the 411th Courts, which are responsible for appointing our County Auditor. The County Judge appoints the Emergency Management Coordinator, and all other officials are appointed by the Commissioners Court to run various county departments. These include Aging Services Director, Environmental Enforcement Officer, Fire Marshal, Grant & Contract Coordinator, Human Resources Manager, IT & Systems Administrator, Maintenance Superintendent, Museum Curator, Permits/Inspections Supervisor, Social Services Director and Veterans Services Officer. Learn more about your local offices by reading this latest installment of

Spotlight on Polk County:

Fire Marshal

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Polk County

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ON POLK COUNTY: Fire Marshal Jacob Chapman

The Polk County Fire Marshal's Office (PCFMO) was recreated by the Polk County Commissioners Court in October of 2019, under the guidelines set out in the Local Government Code Chapter 352. The Fire Marshal Office is committed to Fire and Life Safety for the citizens and visitors of Polk County. We accomplish both of these commitments by using a few of the methods listed below.

First is Fire and Life Safety education. We speak to people all over the county about fire and life safety. The Fire Marshal's Office sees every child between the grades of Pre-k to Sixth grade every year during fire prevention month (October). We teach them how matches, lighters, and candles are not toys, how to fall and crawl, and even to stop, drop, and roll. During this time the Fire Marshal's Office has some help from other agencies like the Texas Forest Service, Local Volunteer Fire Departments, and the City of Livingston Fire Marshal's Office. The biggest help during fire prevention is Marty the Fire Dog. He loves talking to the kids and giving cool fire safety tips. By the way, if you see Marty, you should ask him to sing his song.

Secondly, we achieve our goals with Fire and Life Safety Inspections. The Fire Marshal's Office conducts routine and random Fire and Life Safety inspections on all commercial buildings in the unincorporated areas of Polk County. During these inspections, personnel looks for any violation of the fire code i.e. blocked exits, no or damaged fire extinguishers, emergency lighting not working, exposed wiring, and countless other issues. When issues are found the owners are advised on how to fix the issues, as well as the extreme importance of correcting the issue. If we can prevent a fire from happening, we will all be safer.

Thirdly, we accomplish our goals by Cause and Origin investigation on all property loss fires where the cause and origin are unknown. Fire Marshal personnel are certified fire investigators through the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, as well as Licensed Peace Officers through the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement. During the Cause and Origin Investigation, an Investigator looks at many different things; to name a few, charring, burn patterns and electrical wires, and in some cases, they will call the State Fire Marshal's Office K9. If the investigators find there to be evidence of criminal acts, they will continue the investigation and make an arrest if necessary.

There are several other methods used by the Polk County Fire Marshal's Office to accomplish the above stated commitments. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to any PCFMO Personnel with your questions. The PCFMO is located at 602 East Church Suit 145, Livingston Texas, our office telephone number is (936) 327-6820 Ext. 2.

Thank you for reading the spotlight article, and remember to keep thinking about fire safety.

Jacob Chapman, Polk County Fire Marshal