



**SPECIAL PRESENTATION  
FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO  
FIRE COMMISSION**

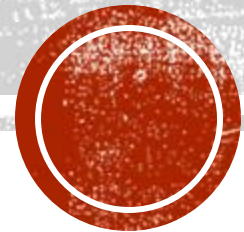
**LT. JONATHAN BAXTER**





**MEET THE PIO**

**LT. JONATHAN BAXTER**



# FIRST, A LITTLE ABOUT ME...

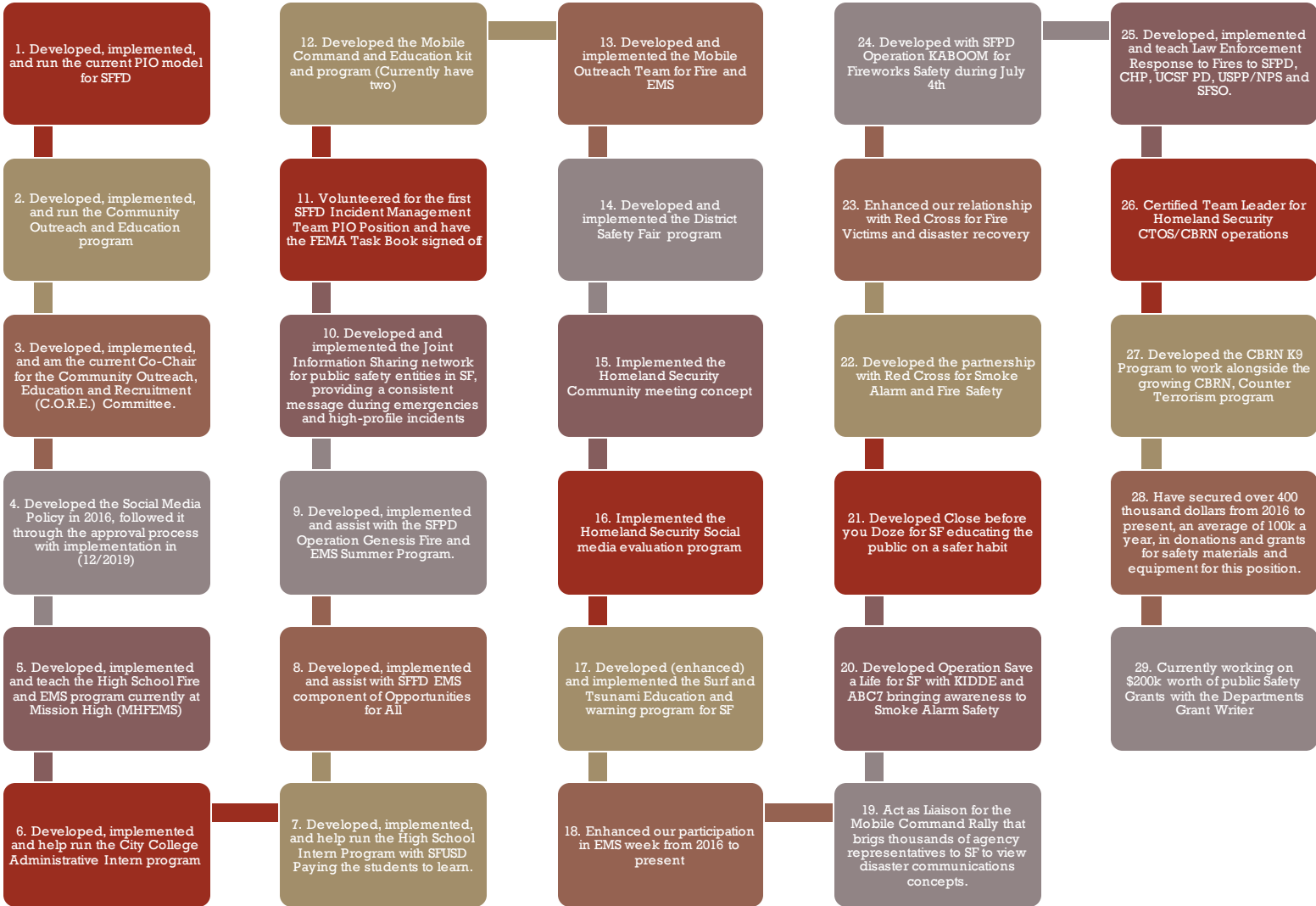
- 1989 Entered public service, working for Sonoma County Fire
- 2000 Joined the SFFD
- 2000 – 2006 Worked in stations all over SF as a Firefighter/Paramedic and Rescue Swimmer
- 2006 – 2016 Volunteered for assignment to Station 1, one of the Nation's busiest stations
- 2008 – 2016 Temporary Lieutenant on Fire Suppression Apparatus
- Appointed by then Chief Hayes-White as Department PIO
- May 2016 Promoted to Lieutenant



# CERTIFICATIONS

- Certified Level 1 FEMA Public Information and Liaison Officer
- State of California Certified Fire Officer
- Paramedic
- Police Officer
- Fire Investigator
- Fire Inspector and educator
- Homeland Security Operations Liaison

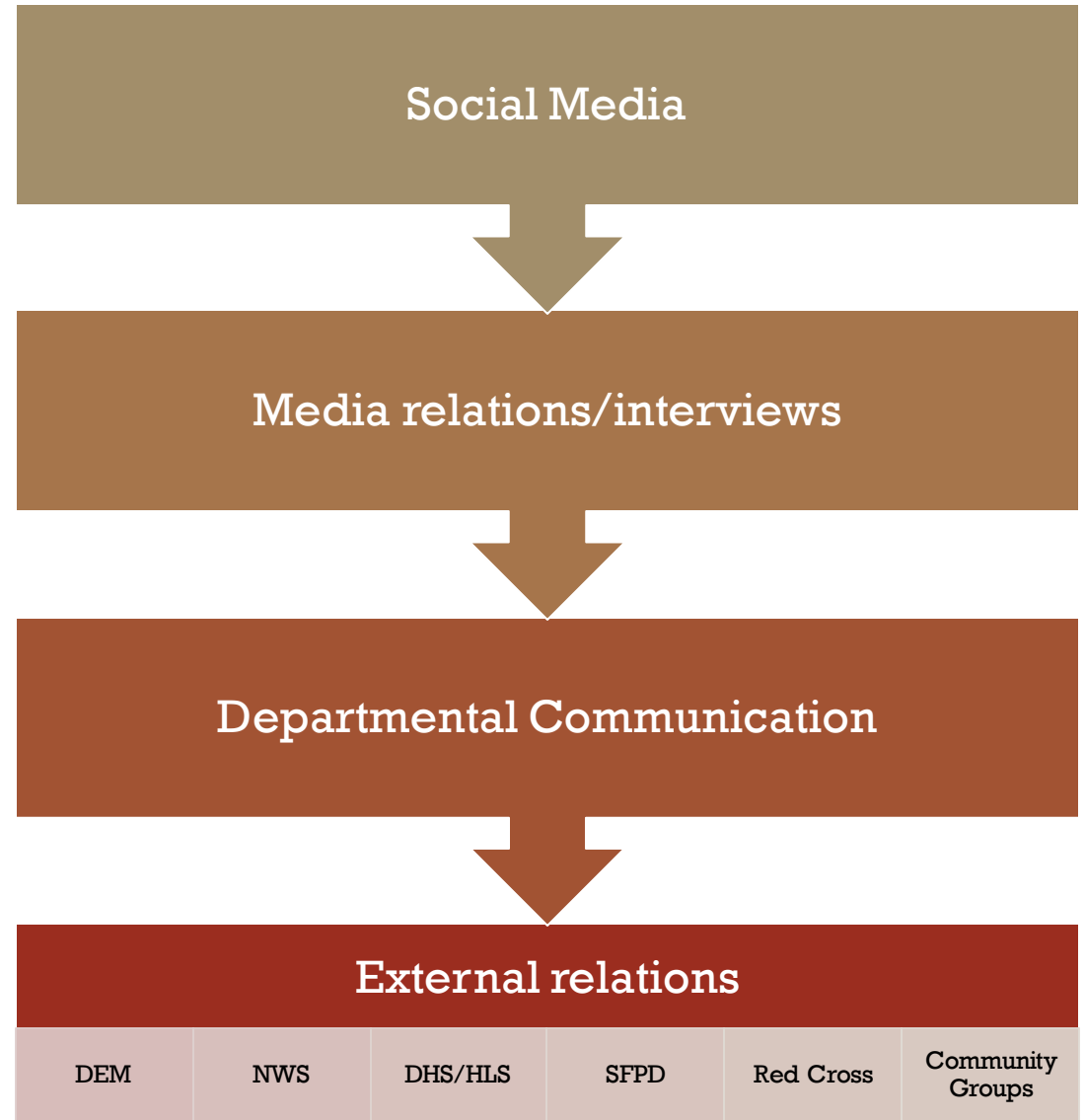




# PROJECTS SPEARHEADED SINCE 2015

## I CAN FIELD QUESTIONS IF DESIRED...







# COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS OF PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES

How do we take complex incidents, conditions, events and:

- Make the details digestible to the pertinent members of our diverse community?
- Create concern without creating worry, or – worse – panic?
- Stay transparent while respecting privacy?
- Get the info out fast?
- Not "overshare"?



How do we take this...





# AND COMMUNICATE

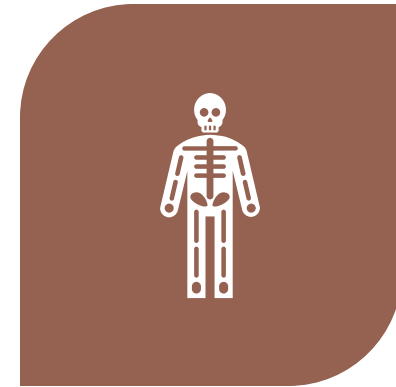
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THE RIGHT INFO



TO THE RIGHT  
PEOPLE



AT THE RIGHT  
TIME??



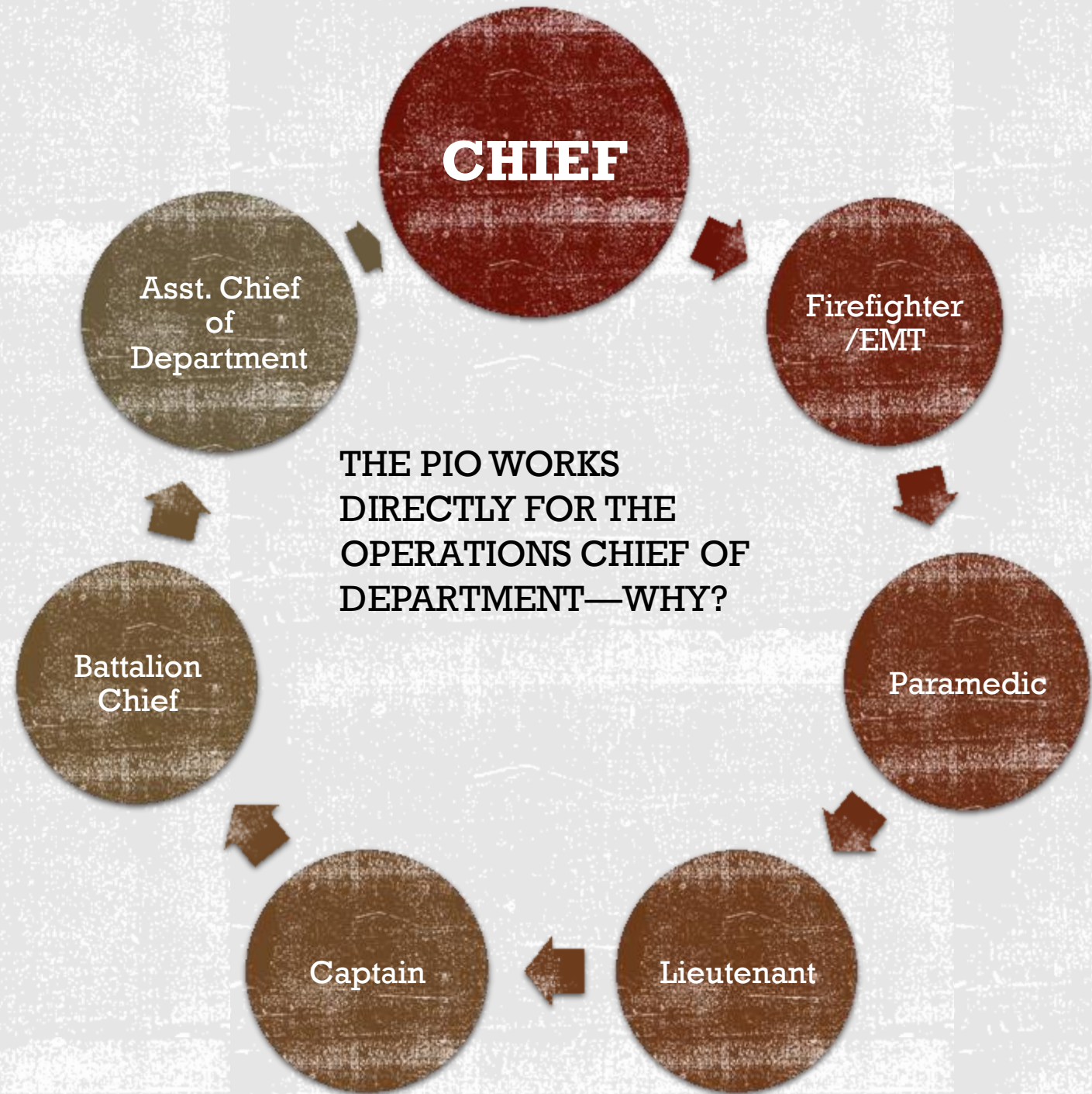


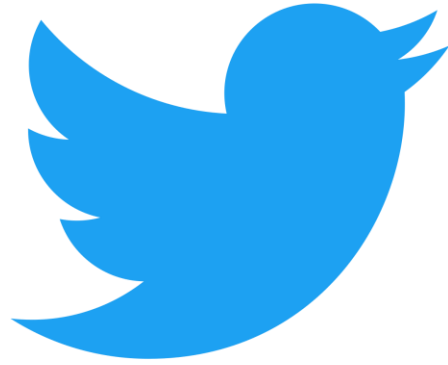
**HOW DO I EXPLAIN**

***THIS??***

***GEARY STREET GAS LINE EXPLOSION  
6 FEBRUARY 2019***







## DEVELOPING OUR AGENCIES VOICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

**In the constantly-changing landscape of social media, a few reliable stalwarts have remained over the years. We have relied heavily on these platforms and, in some cases, have developed collaborative relationships.**





San Francisco Fire  
Department  
@yoursffd

Home

About

Photos

Reviews

Videos

Posts

Community

Events

Create a Page



Liked Following Share ...

Send Email

Send Message

Create Post



Write a post...



Photo/Video



Tag Friends



Get Messages



Photos



2.7

2.7 out of 5 - Based on the opinion of 126 people

Community

See All

Invite your friends to like this Page

9,064 people like this

12,772 people follow this

Joshua Rado and 46 other friends like this or have checked in



446 check-ins

About

See All



698 - 2nd St (24.49 mi)  
San Francisco, California 94107  
Get Directions

## HOW DID WE CREATE A FOLLOWING?

- Understanding what the community expects
- Making information available quickly, conveniently, and for free
- Providing (non-emergent) information to generate interest
- Honesty while delivering difficult news
- Allowing the community to see themselves and interact on our social media platforms





**“What the BLEEP does all that jargon mean?”**



Take agency lingo and translate it into widely-accessible language.



*\*\*\*That does not mean “dumbing it down...”*



Repeat important messaging for emphasis and absorption



Use anticipated clarifiers:  
“What I mean by that is...”

# CLARITY





BE HONEST: the balance between saying too much and saying too little



Anticipate the "need-to-knows"



Be willing to admit that an incident is dynamic, developing and that frequent updates will come as we learn more

**TRANSPARENCY**



# SPECIFICITY

Getting the ***RIGHT*** information to the ***RIGHT*** people at the ***RIGHT*** time.

- “Does this pertain to me?”
- “This sounds serious. Should I leave/stay/pull my kids out of school?”
- “What part of town is this in?”
  - Example: Tsunami alert will mean different things to residents living on the Great Highway VS Bernal Heights







# GRANTS AND NEW INITIATIVES

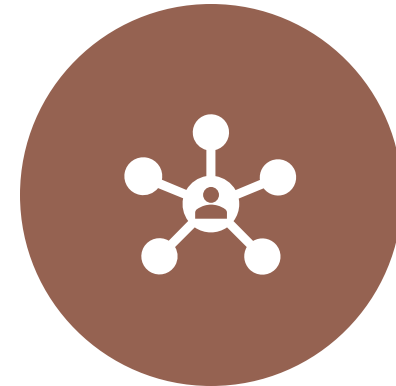
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OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSION FOR  
FUNDING AND TRACKING OF EVENTS



GROWTH OF FUNCTION



COMMUNITY NEEDS/RELIANCE ON  
THE (NOW-PRESENT) OPEN LINES OF  
COMMUNICATION TO #YOURSFFD



# ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUR AGENCY

- Why do we need a PIO, anyway?
- Wouldn't this money be better spent hiring more...?
- How many are needed?
- Is it feasible for PIO responsibilities be adjunct to full-time job function?
- How many languages does our PIO speak?
- The public needs to know what we do. How do we let our community know how complex and important our work is?





## **WHAT WORKED? WHAT DIDN'T WORK?**

Challenges often arise among a wide array of community members, city agencies, media, political entities, and special interests

How have we worked with all the players to develop a messaging system to rapidly deploy information when it's needed most?



# CHALLENGES WITH CONSTANT MEDIA INFORMATION REQUESTS



# MAKING SURE OUR STORY IS HEARD:



**HOW DO WE GET  
THE TOOLS WE  
NEED?**

## CREATIVITY

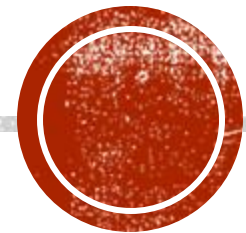
Making a dollar out of 15 cents: where does the money come from?!

## CREATING A TEAM

More ears, more eyes, more coverage = more information to share with the public.

A satisfied public sells the program for you. It's easier to ask for what resources we need from our agencies when our communities are asking as well...

**QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION?**





# THANK YOU!!

- On behalf of the San Francisco Fire Department, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve you as your Public Information Officer over the past 4 years. Together we are building a stronger and safer community.
- Community is our best resource, and I am honored to serve this community.

