



HEARTS 4 HEROES USA

Founded by First Responders for First Responders!

Retired Chief Rick Bartee

Chief Rick Bartee has dedicated more than three decades to the fire service, emergency response, disaster operations, and the well-being of first responders. His career has taken him from the Phoenix Fire Department to Fire Chief of the City of Roseville, California, and across the country as a leader within FEMA Urban Search and Rescue.

Chief Bartee began his 34-year career with the Phoenix Fire Department, serving in every rank and gaining experience throughout all areas of the department. He was promoted to Chief Officer in 1997 and continued to advance through the chief officer ranks, ultimately serving as Assistant Fire Chief. In that role, he managed several major divisions and programs, including the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team, Fire/Police Joint Homeland Defense Bureau, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement, Technical Services and Dispatch Center, and Strategic and Special Events Planning.

His involvement with FEMA Urban Search and Rescue began in 1992 as a Fire Captain with Arizona Task Force 1 (AZ-TF1) and continued throughout his career. His early deployments included the 1994 Northridge earthquake, September 11 attacks in New York in 2001, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in Texas in 2008.

In 2013, Chief Bartee was elected National Task Force Representative for all 28 FEMA/USAR Task Forces, a position he held until May 2021. As a member of the FEMA/USAR Blue Incident Support Team (IST), he deployed to major disasters including Hurricanes Earl and Sandy, the 2013 Colorado floods, and Hurricane Joaquin in 2015.

After becoming Fire Chief of the Roseville Fire Department, Chief Bartee joined California Task Force 7 (CA-TF7) in Sacramento and continued serving with the Blue IST as Deputy Leader. His subsequent deployments included Hurricane Matthew in Georgia in 2016; Hurricanes Harvey in Texas and Irma in Puerto Rico in 2017; Hurricanes Olivia and Florence in 2018; Hurricane Barry in 2019; Hurricane Dorian as a FEMA USAR Liaison Officer to FEMA Region 4; and Hurricane Laura in 2020.

In the summer of 2021, Chief Bartee and the FEMA/USAR Blue IST unified with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue to lead search, rescue, and recovery operations following the Champlain Towers collapse in Surfside, Florida. More than 600 search and rescue personnel were involved in the response.

That fall, Chief Bartee was appointed Leader of the FEMA/USAR Blue Incident Support Team. He has since led FEMA task forces during responses to major natural disasters including the Mayfield,

Kentucky tornado, Eastern Kentucky floods, and multiple Florida hurricanes. In December 2022, he participated in an Israeli search and rescue workshop with the Israel Defense Forces as part of the FEMA/USAR system.

In the summer of 2023, the FEMA Blue IST deployed to Lahaina, Maui following the devastating wildfires. Chief Bartee's team led more than 500 rescuers in the search and recovery efforts. He continues to serve as a member of the FEMA Incident Support Team, with more recent deployments including Hurricane Helene and flooding in Kentucky.

Throughout his career, Chief Bartee has been equally committed to leadership at home. As Fire Chief of the Roseville Fire Department, he considered it a privilege to lead a team of professional firefighters dedicated to providing the highest level of service to the Roseville community. He also served as President of the Western Placer Fire Chiefs Association and as an Area Director with the California Fire Chiefs Association.

Chief Bartee has maintained the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence since 2014. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Safety and Emergency Management from Grand Canyon University and an Associate of Applied Science in Fire Science from Phoenix College. He is also a graduate of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security Executive Leaders Program at the Naval Postgraduate School.

A Lifelong Advocate for First Responder Wellness

Alongside his operational leadership, Chief Bartee has long been a strong advocate for supporting the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of first responders. His commitment began early in his career as a peer counselor and continued when he became Fire Chief in Roseville, where one of his priorities was ensuring department members had the resources and support necessary to remain healthy throughout their careers.

During his time with Roseville Fire, Chief Bartee had the privilege of helping place Blaze, the department's first therapy dog—an experience that demonstrated firsthand the powerful role these dogs can have in supporting first responders.

Today, that commitment has come full circle through Hearts 4 Heroes USA and its Paw Platoon Placement Program. Chief Bartee is honored to serve as a Paw Platoon handler as well as a peer support volunteer with the Roseville Fire Department and Roseville Public Safety Foundation. His therapy dog, Lady Liberty, works alongside him to provide comfort and support during critical incident stress management, critical care, and community response efforts across the country.

For Chief Bartee, Lady Liberty represents another chapter in a career centered on caring for those who serve—whether leading hundreds of rescuers during a national disaster or simply being there for a first responder who needs support.

Chief Bartee and his wife, Jennifer, live in Roseville with their three younger children. Together they have six children, including three adult children who live in the Phoenix area, and four grandchildren.