

[Narrator] You've tuned in to another  
edition of The Breakroom, a

weekly conversation about how  
the City of Saint Augustine

works from those who do the  
work every day. Hosted by the

City of St. Augustine's  
communications director,

Melissa Wissel. The Breakroom  
offers a closer look at the

different city departments and  
provides updates on current and

upcoming projects and events  
and now, your host Melissa

Wissel. [Melissa] Welcome to The  
Breakroom. Thanks for tuning

in. I'm Melissa Wissel. I've  
invited Dustin Hamilton to join

me this week. He is a  
firefighter with the Saint

Augustine Fire Department he's  
also the city's fire safety

inspector Dustin welcome back  
[Dustin] yeah thanks [Melissa] we we're going to

shift gears no pun intended I  
we're going to we're not

going to talk about smoke  
detector batteries short term

rentals and safety inspections  
I know that's what you do but I

want to ask I've been dying to  
ask this burning question what

is it like to drive a fire  
truck through the streets of

the nation's oldest city [Dustin] oh man  
so it's it's different than

obviously any other city I can  
think of so I have worked at

other fire departments before I

came here so and I've drove in

other normal cities and this

this one here is is an animal

all on its own so. [Melissa] And you're

you haven't because you're the

safety inspector now. Fire

inspections. [Dustin] Yeah. [Melissa] You don't

really drive the truck much but

you went on a call recently. [Dustin] I

I did. So I've been in admin

for about two years now and so

I have not drove a truck in

about two years on on a call of

lights and sirens and so the

other day they had all of our

trucks out at a brushfire and

so me and our Chief Aviles

jumped on one of our spare

trucks and we were responding

to calls here in the city. So  
and and. [Melissa] Just like riding a

bike. The big bike. [Dustin] You know to  
be honest with you I I didn't

know because I hadn't done it  
in a while and I mean I knew I

could drive it fine but there's  
there's definitely like from

doing it for a while there's there's  
certain things that you just

you know you don't know if  
you're going to hang on to it

because you do it every third  
day and I hadn't done that in a

while but yeah it it was all  
there and I was like man I

could I could walk out of this  
office right now and jump back

on this truck and not miss a  
beat. I mean it it it was all

just like it happened  
yesterday. [Melissa] Well that makes me

feel good. [Dustin] Yeah. [Melissa] And I don't  
have to worry about who's

driving the truck. [Dustin] Well and  
both of us you know Chief

Aviles likes to jump on  
periodically just for reason.

[Melissa] Right. [Dustin] You know, just to run  
some calls and just make sure

that we don't lose that skill  
set by. [Melissa] Sure. [Dustin] From us being in

the office. So, but no, but as  
far as driving in the city, so

there most cities have larger  
streets. Obviously, we have

tighter streets here and then  
just the traffic density. I

mean, it it's not uncommon for

these guys to be responded to a

call and and they've got one  
inch of clearance on each side

of a a giant fire engine or  
ladder truck. Um. [Melissa] And there's

where to go. There is no  
shoulder on King Street. [Dustin] No shoulders. Yeah. I

mean you'll sometimes you may  
see us we're up on sidewalks.

That's pretty common. Uh I mean  
we're we've always said if you

can drive a fire apparatus in  
this city you can drive it in

any city. You know that  
including New York. I mean

we've had FDNY guys that stop  
by and visit us like man you

guys I don't know how you drive  
in this town. And I was like

you know that's coming from  
about yeah stationed in

Manhattan. [Melissa] Right. [Dustin] You know it's  
like oh wow. I guess it is

pretty hard to drive here. But  
it it is it's one of those

things To where when you're new  
and starting new guys, it seems

like it's it's this big monster  
to tackle. You know, it's

kind of intimidating but once  
you do it for a while, it it

really is. You get used to it.  
You get used to the size of it.

I mean, and everything's  
different because it is so big

but yeah, it it it doesn't take  
long before you figure it out.

[Melissa] Now, another question though  
when you're driving and you

arrive on scene somewhere

downtown, there is a

significant meaning to the fire

hydrants. [Dustin] Yeah. [Melissa] Which one you

choose? Which one you pick? Can

you talk to us a little bit

about that? I don't think

people realize the significance

of fire hydrants and they're

not all the same. [Dustin] No, they're

not. So, one of the things and

and I guess I'll kind of walk

through this. So, when we get a

call at the station, we have

big intercom system and we got

multiple TV screens that are

throughout the station and all

those screens do is they give

us information as to what the



call is. So we get you know

loud beeping and everything  
going off. Letting everybody

know that there's a call. As  
we're walking downstairs the

guys are able to look at those  
screens and see what the call

is. If it is a fire. Um we're  
in the truck and that truck's

moving out of our station  
within about a minute or less

from the time that we receive  
that call. So it it's quick.

Guys are getting ready in the  
back. The person that is

setting in the front passenger  
seat. That's the officer of the

truck. That's who's in charge  
of everybody on that truck. Um

he has a Computer in front of  
him and it is receiving live

data as that 911 call, the  
dispatcher is talking to the

individual on the other end  
that called 911. She

is constantly typing and we're  
seeing that updated real time.

Uh to give us, you know, notes  
as to, hey, what what are we

going to? You know, is this a  
nothing call? Um and then we

have a mapping system that pops  
up and it shows us it has an

overview of the building and  
then we normally have data on

that building square footage  
when was it built what's the

building used for kind of  
everything from occupant load

to we also have every hydrant  
in the city is on that system

as well and it'll tell us you  
know is this a a dead end

hydrant is this a hydrant that  
has a high flow rating and it

it gives us you know if it's a  
large building fire we know we

don't want one you know off of  
the same main. We want multiple

mains. Um so it it gives us all  
of that data. So there's a lot

going on as you see guys you  
know running lights and sirens

even if it's just a medical  
call. It it it's the same

thing. Um we're we're gathering  
that information and kind of

you know painting that picture

in our head for when we get

there on scene to like what are  
what are we walking into here?

[Melissa] Cuz the flow of the water makes  
a Difference. [Dustin] The flow of the

water makes a huge difference.

Yeah. [Melissa] As to the yeah. Two

story, one story. [Dustin] Right. Yeah.

Yes. Yeah. That and it's

they're different throughout  
the city. You know, I mean you

you you don't know and without  
that data in front of us, we

wouldn't be able to like just  
glance at a hydrant and look

and go, I know exactly what the  
flow rating is of that. And

that's a GIS map, correct? That  
was a coordination with our GIS

department. [Dustin] Yeah. Yeah. So,  
because the city has a

department that goes out and  
test those hydrants and they'll

get those flow ratings. They  
make sure they're maintained.

If one of them's broken or  
busted, they update us and let

us know for that day like, hey,  
if you guys get a call in this

area needing that hydrant, it's  
not working today, you know.

[Melissa] That's incredible. [Dustin] Um but and  
then it's all updated through

that department that test the  
hydrants and we have manually

inputted a lot of that data and  
then GIS has also gave us a lot

of their data to input on that.

Uh the software that we're

using currently. Uh we've been  
using it now for about a year

and a half. So and it was a it  
it was a much needed for us

whenever we got it. We didn't  
really have we had a lot of

information before but not near  
to what we have now. Um certain

houses if it's a frequent call  
that we go on that people call

pretty often. We have notes on  
them. We kind of know who these

folks are and and kind of you  
know what their needs may be

before we get there. [Melissa] More than  
just jump in the truck and wait

and see what you got when you  
get there. [Dustin] Oh yeah yeah for

sure. And and you know so

Sometimes we always like in the

fire service we we come from  
the mindset of bring more than

what you need. You can always  
cancel. [Melissa] Right. [Dustin] You know so

because we don't know. I mean  
I've I've had multiple calls in

my career where it's somebody  
that's like hey I think they

got a bee sting and I've rolled  
up there and it's like no

you're having a heart attack  
and. [Melissa] Right. [Dustin] You know that that

changes everything. Sure. You  
know. Yeah. So. [Melissa] If you're just

now tuning in. You're listening  
to the break room. I'm Melissa

Wissel communications director  
for the City of Saint Augustine

and I have Dustin Hamilton with  
me. He is our fire safety

inspector. We've got a little  
bit off script this week. We're

talking about some of the fun  
stuff. What's what actually

happens on those fire calls. I  
wanted to ask one other thing.

We've got a few minutes left.

[Dustin] Yeah. [Melissa] We talk about you're

talking about emergency  
response, traffic in and out,

getting around in the city.

Let's talk for a second. Um

when we have those large crowd  
weekends, festivals, and even

something like sing out loud.

Um we changed up the parking

garage this year. Shut it down  
to the public for emergency



response. [Dustin] Right. [Melissa] Give me a little bit so the public can

understand why is something like that so important because

we didn't do that 10 years ago.

[Dustin] Right. [Melissa] And those crowds of

people being able to respond and help people that are in

attendance. Oh 20, 000 people is great. [Dustin] Right. [Melissa] Maybe 18 would

be better. [Dustin] Yeah. [Melissa] Can you give us a little bit of that? [Dustin] Well.

[Melissa] Side of things. [Dustin] Yeah. [Melissa] From your perspective. [Dustin] Whenever these

events come up, you know, we sit down. There's there's a a

panel of us that help prepare for it. You know, the the folks

at the amphitheater tell us

what they're bringing and they

have a company that writes the  
emergency plan for them that

they contract out and we  
provide the information of what

we need to be added to that  
plan as well. Um as far as the

parking garage, that was done  
this year because alright,

we're doing this in September  
and inclement weather can pop

up at a moment's notice in  
Florida. You have 20, 000

people on a field, you know,  
Where where do you go? You know

where do [Melissa] you're not going to  
run into. [Dustin] Right. [Melissa] It's like into

the neighborhood into five or  
model land. [Dustin] You're in a a wide

open field. Some thunderstorm  
or potential tornado type issue

comes up. The safest thing we  
can do is we can put those

folks in the parking garage if  
we needed to. And so that was

the that was the thought behind  
that. And that'll happen for

the next one I'm assuming as  
well. Um we we felt like that

was a pretty good idea. The  
other other part that was just

due to the nature of the  
traffic in that area of if we

had allowed parking in there  
getting those folks out of

there it would have been  
absolute gridlock you know

because everybody the it's over  
this everybody's wanting to

leave at the same time right

[Melissa] yeah they can trickle in all

afternoon when the gates open

but then it's over everybody

wants to yeah and you've got an

absolutely full parking garage

with every vehicle in that

parking garage all running and

sitting at the same of July.

[Dustin] Right. [Melissa] All over again. [Dustin] Yeah

exactly. So. [Melissa] And you have an

easy I I say easy. How is it

for you all in terms of a

response? Have you seen any

major incidents shall we say?

We've been we've been fortunate

knock on wood. You know no we

haven't had any attacks. [Dustin] Right.

[Melissa] You know you you you read in

the news about these festivals

where they have active shooter  
incidents or it gets violent.

We've we've been really  
fortunate. We staged for that.

[Dustin] Yep. [Melissa] We all we prepare for it  
but we've been real fortunate.

But we don't we've never really  
run in any major Issues but you

guys still need to be able to  
respond and get to someone who.

[Dustin] Right. [Melissa] Falls down in the crowd.

[Dustin] Yeah and we do that within in

the calculation of you know  
however many people are

going to be there and we  
calculate for that. It's like

how how many bike teams, EMS  
bike teams do we need on the

field? How many law enforcement  
officers on bikes do we need

and we have a command staff  
that's you know sitting in a a

building on the other side of  
town that is all running this

from you know we have a large  
law enforcement presence there

[Melissa] even stuff we can't see we you  
[Dustin] there's a lot of stuff there

that you cannot see. That is  
all for your safety. I mean and

you know from Intel on the SO  
side of stuff that I don't even

know about that I just kind of  
hear pieces of. So yeah

depending on how large the  
crowd is we're we're able to

calculate for that and plan  
accordingly you know obviously

the larger the crowd the more  
we're going to need and

resources because once you get  
that many people on the field

even this last year I mean with  
our bike teams it was getting

crowded enough where okay we're  
kind of getting off the bikes

and we're just walking with  
backpacks and you know our EMS

stuff with us so [Melissa] well you keep  
us safe Fourth of July nights

of light up night concerts in  
the plaza if if you're out and

about and you see our first  
responders and of course that

applies to our police  
department. Give them a high

five. Thank them for their

service. They're keeping us

safe. You and we appreciate  
you. [Dustin] Oh yeah. Uh we're we're

grateful to be able to do it. I  
mean, it's a great city and

some great events that we've  
been able to put on. So, we're

we're just we're proud to be a  
part of it. [Melissa] Well, that that

wraps us up today. That was a  
fun conversation. [Dustin] Yeah, goes quick

[Melissa] I love talking about stuff you  
guys do. We will have you back

to talk about the boring stuff,  
the smoke detector batteries,

the short-term rentals, safety  
inspections, all that but

thanks for giving us a fun  
interview today Dustin and



Always a pleasure. We  
appreciate your service.

[Dustin] Alright, thank you. [Melissa] If you  
missed part of this broadcast

and want to go back and listen  
from the beginning, you can

find us on your favorite  
podcasting app and on our

website. A list of those  
podcasting apps is at City

StAugRadio.com Again,  
the website to check out all

that is CityStAugRadio  
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informed about what's happening  
in and around the city. You can

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Fire Department at City St  
Aug Fire. You can catch us on

Facebook and Instagram and  
until next time. Thanks for

tuning in. [Narrator] You've been  
listening to The Breakroom, a

weekly program addressing  
projects and programs offered

by the City of Saint Augustine.  
Join us each week as the city's

communications director,  
Melissa Wissel, has in-depth

conversations with the people  
who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. See  
you at this time next week for

another edition of The  
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