

# Causey: Volunteer firefighters needed

BY MILES LAYTON AND PETER WILLIAMS  
Cooke Communications

State Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey paid a visit to fire departments in Bertie, Chowan and Perquimans counties recently to discuss the need for better ways to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters.

"One of the problems across the state is that volunteer fire departments are having difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers," Causey said during his visit Aug. 2 to the Edenton Fire Department. "Across the state this is a big problem. That's why I'm trying to call attention to local fire departments about how important it is that we do more to recruit volunteer firefighters and to help retain those firefighters."

Causey, who also serves as the state fire marshal by virtue of his job as insurance commissioner, said the state currently offers support services to aid recruitment efforts but what may be needed are what some fire departments are already offering: incentives.

For example, some volunteer departments are adding a small amount to the pensions firefighters receive if they serve at least 20 years, Causey said. Other fire departments pay for a volunteer's out-of-pocket expenses for gear and equipment as well as

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Craig Forlines  
Edenton fire chief

any coursework they need for certification.

Causey said another incentive could be to offer lifetime hunting and/or fishing licenses — as some other states do — to attract more volunteer firefighters.

"We're looking at different opportunities and options to help volunteer fire departments," he said.

Causey said based on conversations he's had with fire chiefs around the state, firefighters are required to have more and more training each year. That may be creating a hardship for volunteers, he said.

"Every year it seems like the training requirements for volunteers seems to keep going up," he said. "That's another reason it makes it more difficult to recruit or retain volunteers, because people simply don't have the time that they once had."

Edenton Fire Chief Craig Forlines said he appreciated the visit by Causey, who was elected state insurance commissioner last year.

"It's always a good op-

portunity when he's here to discuss current issues we have," Forlines said. "Causey's got an open ear to hear any complaints or problems that we have and he's able to go back and address those with his people. It's always good to have a direct conversation with our state officials."

After Causey's visit to the Edenton Fire Department, he and Forlines took in the buffet of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy served up at Bayside Marina and Grill.

"Chief said the buffet was the way to go," Causey said, referring to Forlines.

During lunch, Causey called his visit to Edenton "constructive."

"I learned a lot by talking with the chief and other firefighters," he said.

Causey, the first Republican insurance commissioner in state history, said he has learned something from each of his visits with fire departments around the state.

"I learn more about that department, the local community as well as... the con-



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

State Insurance Commissioner/Fire Marshal Mike Causey (right) talks to Perquimans County officials Wednesday afternoon at the Hertford Fire Department.

cerns and issues that the county commissioners, firefighters or fire department staff may have to help make insurance and fire marshal's office more user friendly," he said. "I learn how we can be more helpful to the people that we serve."

His visit to Edenton also offered Causey a chance to do something special.

"Another reason for this visit was to ride the 1923 REO Speedwagon fire truck," Causey said. "Chief Forlines was chauffeuring me down all the way down Broad Street to the waterfront and back to the fire station."

During his visit to Hert-

ford later in the day, Causey met informally with local officials at the Hertford Fire Department. Also in attendance were representatives from the six volunteer departments in the county.

Causey seemed pleased that Perquimans County High School has a Fire Academy that trains students how to become a certified firefighter. He reiterated that the lack of volunteers at small local fire departments is a problem he sees across the state.

"That's what we need," Causey said about the high school program. "A lot of high schools don't have that."

Michael Cartwright, who teaches the firefighter certification program at the high school, estimates he's had about 25 students graduate from the four-year-old program, nine of them just this year. He said about 75 percent of those grads have gone on to join local volunteer fire departments.

"In much of the state volunteers are struggling to recruit and retain volunteers," Causey said.

Causey also applauded Matt Leicester for teaching an emergency medical services class at the high school.

"Thanks for all you do," Causey told Leicester.

## Solar eclipse coming August 21

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
For the Chowan Herald

Sometimes you have to be in just the right place to get an once-in-a-lifetime experience.

On Aug. 21, the Albemarle region isn't exactly the right place, but it's close.

On that day — weather permitting — area residents will get a pretty good look at what a partial solar eclipse solar eclipse looks like.

To see the full total eclipse — know as the 'path of totality' — you'll have to be somewhere

along a roughly 70-mile swath that goes from Oregon across the country to South Carolina.

A total eclipse happens when the moon completely blocks out the light of the sun. Total solar eclipses are not unheard of. One happens about every year or every other year somewhere on Earth. But they may happen in remote places.

The last time a total eclipse was visible in North Carolina was in 1970. Before that, it was 1900.

If you want to wait for the next one, it's in 2078. If you miss that, there is an-

*Optometrist Dr. Peter Mitrev urges people to use common sense if they want to view an eclipse no matter if it's total or partial.*

other one in 2099.

The total eclipse will pass over the far western part of North Carolina including Bryson City and Murphy. There the total eclipse may last between 2 minutes 39 seconds to two minutes and 30 seconds.

In South Carolina, the cities of Greenville and Columbia are within the "path of totality." Charleston is too, but just barely.

If you don't want to travel hours and hours for something that may only last for three minutes, you can be prepared to enjoy what you do have right here at home.

Important safety tip: Don't stare at the sun.

Second safety tip: Sunglasses alone won't stop you from doing permanent damage to your eyes.

If you want to learn more about eclipses, the Khan Planetarium at Elizabeth City State University is one place to go.

It's named for Dr. Sultana Khan and she can put on a program for groups of at least 20 people. Even if you don't have a group that large, Khan said call her at 335-4759 and she can arrange smaller groups into a larger group to accom-

modate everyone.

Khan said the educational star show is not specific to this eclipse coming up in August. It's more generic to show what an eclipse, why it happens and how to view it. The program is geared toward elementary school-age children, but Khan said adults should get something out of it as well.

Just don't expect to see Khan at the ECSU planetarium come Aug. 21. She'll be in South Carolina. She said she booked her room months ago.

If you want to make the trip but are concerned about cloud cover, Khan said NOAA will offer a forecast of where the best place to view it may be. Khan said she'll be monitoring that when she goes to South Carolina.

If you can't make the trip, a visit to NASA's website may be your best decision.

"They will do an actual video feed of the eclipse," Khan said.

Optometrist Dr. Peter Mitrev urges people to use common sense if they want to view an eclipse no matter if it's total or partial. He works at offices in

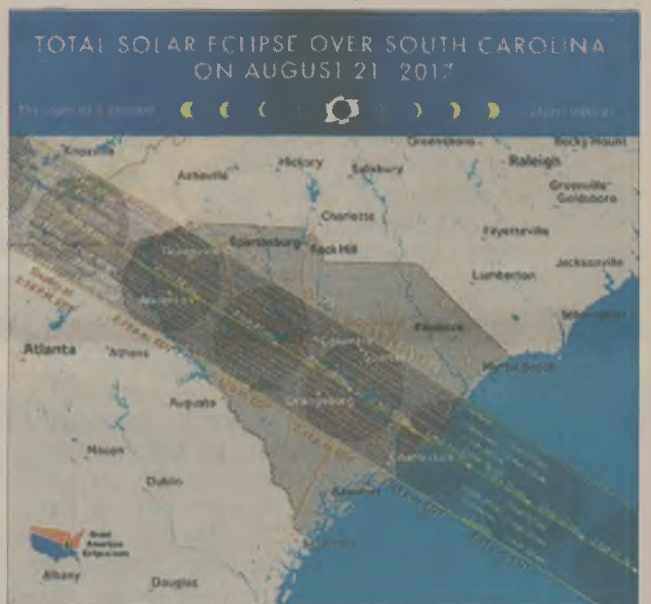


IMAGE COURTESY OF GREAT AMERICAN ECLIPSE.COM

A map shows the route of the total eclipse over South Carolina.

Elizabeth City, Kitty Hawk, Nags Head, Edenton and Washington.

Looking directly at the sun for more than a few seconds poses risks, Mitrev said.

"They don't recommend looking directly at the sun for any length of time."

While it may not immediately blind a person, Mitrev said it could create a condition that causes problems later. He recommends looking at optical supply stores for the proper filter, and says sunglasses alone aren't enough. He stressed do no look at the sun through binoculars or a scope because it will make the damage worse.

Dr. Scott Mathews, an optometrist who practices in Williamston, said staring directly at the sun for over 10 or 15 seconds car-

ries the risk of solar retinopathy.

"Sometimes it's reversible. You could have vision loss for a couple of days and get better."

Based on his research, the mentally handicapped may be at a higher risk of doing damage to their eyes because they won't appreciate what is happening.

"With solar retinopathy, the only thing you can do is hurry up and wait. There are no medications to make it better. It could be years worth of damage, or weeks, or days."

It's also possible the eyes will never totally heal.

For more on the eclipse, visit:  
<https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/>  
or  
<http://www.eclipse2017.org/2017/viewing.HTM>

**Free Admission**

## Rumble on the Roanoke 2017

### Drag Boat Races Plymouth, NC

Saturday, August 12	
8:00 a.m.	5K Color Run - (919) 675-9811
9:00 a.m.	Washington Co. Back-to-School Festival
9:30 a.m.	U.S. Coast Guard Helicopter Demo
11:00 a.m.	Opening Ceremonies
11:15 a.m.	Virginia Outlaw Drag Boat Assoc. Races
Afternoon	Jet Boat Demo - Henry Morris
7:30p.m.	440th Army Band Concert
9:15p.m.	"Fireworks on the Roanoke"
Sunday, August 13	
12 Noon	Opening Ceremonies
12:15 p.m.	Virginia Outlaw Drag Boat Assoc. Races

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