



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Chaz Adams, Strategic Communications Manager, 954-828-4748 / [chazadams@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:chazadams@fortlauderdale.gov)

**City of Fort Lauderdale Names Rhoda Mae Kerr as Fire Chief**

*Former Fort Lauderdale Deputy Fire Chief Returns to Lead Department*

**Fort Lauderdale (February 7, 2018)** – City Manager Lee Feldman has announced the appointment of Rhoda Mae Kerr as Fire Chief for the City of Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Department effective July 1, 2018. Kerr, currently Fire Chief of the City of Austin, Texas, will take over for retiring Fort Lauderdale Fire Chief Robert Hoecherl who has served in the position since 2013. With the appointment, Kerr will become the City's first female Fire Chief in the 106-year history of the department.

"We're excited to welcome Rhoda Mae Kerr back to the City of Fort Lauderdale," said City Manager Lee Feldman. "Her decades of distinguished service, exemplary leadership, and commitment to community engagement will be a tremendous asset in her new role as Fire Chief. We are confident that under her leadership, the Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Department will continue to provide the highest level of fire rescue and emergency medical services to the neighbors and visitors of our City."

Kerr brings more than 30 years of experience to her new position as Fort Lauderdale Fire Chief where she will oversee a staff of more than 450 professional firefighters and administrative personnel and direct day-to-day operations for the fully accredited department that responds more than 54,000 calls annually. For the past nine years, Kerr has served as Fire Chief of the City of Austin, Texas, where she was responsible for managing one of the nation's 20 largest fire departments, with almost 1,200 sworn personnel, 113 civilian personnel, and 47 fire stations.

Prior to joining the City of Austin, Kerr served as Fire Chief of Little Rock, Arkansas from 2004-2009, where she was instrumental in the implementation of the 2004 Bond Program which provided for the renovation of the City's fire stations, upgrading communication equipment, and completing a Fire Training Academy.

A fourth-generation firefighter, Kerr began her career in fire service in 1983 with the City of Fort Lauderdale. Over the next 20 years, she steadily rose through the ranks serving as a Firefighter, Driver/Engineer, Lieutenant, Battalion Chief, Division Chief, and ultimately, Fort Lauderdale's first female Deputy Fire Chief.

Kerr has been a pioneer and trailblazer in the fire profession for decades. In 2015, she was elected President and Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), becoming the first woman to hold executive office in the association's 142-year history. She has previously held IAFC positions including First Vice President and Chair of the Human Relations Committee.

**Strategic Communications Office**

101 N.E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Suite 1400, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301  
[strategiccommunications@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:strategiccommunications@fortlauderdale.gov)

[www.fortlauderdale.gov](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov)

Her professional affiliations include serving as past President of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO), and as a board member of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association, Fire Rescue magazine's Editorial Board, and the Austin Area Urban League. She is also a member of the Texas Fire Chief's Association, the Capital Area Fire Chief's Association, and the International Association of Women in the Fire and Emergency Services.

Kerr holds a Master's in Public Administration from Florida International University, a Bachelor of Arts degree in Physical Education and Health from William Paterson University, and an Associate's degree in Fire Science Technology from Broward Community College. She received two certifications from the Harvard University program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government, and is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. Prior to entering the fire service, Kerr was a coach and physical education teacher at the high school level for 12 years.

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