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State Fire Marshal Bert Polk to Retire

Robert O. "Bert" Polk, who has 45 years of professional fire service experience, is retiring from his position as State Fire Marshal with the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. Polk's last day will be Friday, February 3, 2017.

"I have had the honor, and good fortune, to serve the great state of South Carolina as State Fire Marshal on two different occasions, for three Governors and four Agency directors," Polk said in announcing his retirement. "It has been a privilege to work alongside the dedicated men and women of LLR and the Division of Fire and Life Safety in their resolute mission to protect and serve the citizens and visitors to our state."

Polk began his career at the St. Petersburg (Florida) Fire Department in 1972. During his 24 years of service with the Department, he worked up the ranks to become Division Chief.

In 1996, Polk accepted the position of Fire Chief in Moline, Illinois. Four years later, in 2000, he was appointed by then South Carolina Gov. Jim Hodges as State Fire Marshal. In 2003, Polk was reconfirmed by newly elected South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford to continue in the position of State Fire Marshal.

A few months later, Polk had the opportunity to leave state government and represent the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) on a full-time basis. During his NASFM tenure, he represented the organization on a national level dealing with state and federal government agencies on issues of fire and life safety. He was also active in fire and building code promulgation and appeared before the U.S Senate in hearings on matters of public safety.

In 2010, Polk returned to full-time fire service, serving as Fire Chief/ Fire Marshal for a Special Purpose Fire District in Florida. He served in this capacity until his current appointment by South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley in 2014.

"Bert's expertise and commitment to providing excellent service to the state's firefighters and citizens will be greatly missed," LLR Interim Director Emily Farr said. "Thank you Chief Polk for your dedication to LLR and the State of South Carolina."