

# GENESEE FIRE RESCUE HOT TAKES

FALL 2022



## Letter from the Chief

Dear Residents of the Genesee Fire Protection District (GFPD):

One of our firefighters was chatting with a longtime community member about recent, ongoing mitigation and the incredible uptick in work. While acknowledging the improvements, the resident indicated that they've experienced this before, saying that it won't last long—it's just the pendulum swinging.

I've determined that I agree—partially. The pendulum has swung to the benefit of the community, but in terms of swinging back the other way... that's where I disagree. It's our mission to recalibrate so that at any point in the arc we are productive with our efforts to mitigate our wildfire risk.

So, how do we recalibrate? The answer lies in awareness through education.

We live in a wildland urban interface (WUI) where fire is a natural part of our environment; fire does and will occur in our community. We must accept that reality and put effort into regulating fire behavior so that first responders can manage or suppress it.

Fire behavior sits tall atop a three-legged stool, with legs made up of fuel, weather, and topography. We can't change our topography or alter the weather, so we are left with fuel. We evaluate fuel mitigation on several levels:

- The landscape scale, through our Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
- The local level, through our WiRe rapid risk assessments, and
- The homeowner level, through individualized home assessments

We utilize each of these scales in a complementary manner so we can protect the wildlife, our forests, and our community through strategic and thoughtful mitigation.

Fuel mitigation that is focused on restoring our natural environment to the pre-settlement times creates a fire-resistive WUI that is beautiful to live in and aids in the health of the wildlife. It is also much more likely to withstand a wildfire so when we all return home, it's still a community we want to live in.

I strongly encourage everyone to do their part to recalibrate the pendulum, permanently.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Puffett".

Jason Puffett  
Fire Chief



## Warm Regards



“ A huge thank you to the Genesee Fire Department. Our kitten, Otis, escaped our house today and was promptly chased 30 feet up our neighbor's aspen by a coyote. They brought the big ladder truck after it got dark and showed an incredible amount of professionalism and kindness to both me and Otis. Plus, they all got some pats in before Otis was brought home safely and without injury.

This was my third call to Genesee Fire—once for a medical emergency in the middle of the night and another when my furnace caught fire. Every call was met with the same level of care. We are incredibly lucky to have such dedicated individuals who volunteer their time to keep us all safe. Even naughty kittens. ”

# Igniting a Culture of Community and Volunteerism

Genesee Fire Rescue (GFR) is composed of 43 members—40 of whom are volunteers. How do you get so many people to not just volunteer, but stay for the long haul?

That's Joe Auster's job. He has volunteered with GFR since 2014 and was elected to his first two-year term as Deputy Chief in July 2021. With the dedication and support of his leadership team, he manages all the volunteers, helps them stay safe, and creates a culture of respect, camaraderie, and community. Volunteerism is down nationally, but GFR continues to grow—so it's clear that Auster is doing something right.

"We volunteer because we want to give back to our community and we want to give back to people in general," said Auster, noting that almost all GFR volunteers have full-time jobs and families. But GFR isn't another thing they "have" to do—it's about spending time with friends who become family.

When Auster joined GFR, he'd go down to the station every Saturday morning to hang out. Other volunteers started showing up as well, so he began making breakfast for them. Now, eight years later, Saturday morning breakfasts are a



regular thing for the group. Even at the height of the pandemic, Auster would cook his fresh biscuits and deliver them to the regulars to keep that camaraderie going.

In addition to taking care of the community, GFR takes care of each other. If one of the firefighters is dealing with a personal issue, like the loss of a job or loved one, or even if a tree falls in their yard during a storm, the team is there to offer support. "You never feel like you have to ask for help, because everyone from the fire department is there to help without you asking," said Auster.

At the heart of GFR, and something all the volunteers share, is passion—passion for the community, giving back, and helping others. And if

you want any further proof of Auster's commitment to GFR, just ask to see his shoulder.

"I've always said I'll never get a tattoo unless it's something that's just totally meaningful to my life ... it's got to be something that's really ingrained in me," explained Auster. "And I got a tattoo of the fire department symbol on my shoulder."



**About Joe Auster, Deputy Chief**

**Career:** Active volunteer firefighter; Lieutenant (2017–2019), Captain (2019–2021), Deputy Chief (2021–

present). He currently owns a fire alarm and fire detection business, but has worked in the building industry his whole life and was a professional pilot for 20 years.

**Hobbies:** Hunting, fishing, hiking, the outdoors, and computers.



## Lt. Bob Dalton's Famous Brisket Chili

### Ingredients

- **Cooked Brisket:** 1-2 pounds, diced into bite-sized chunks
- **Vegetable Oil:** 1 tablespoon
- **Yellow Onions:** 2 cups, chopped
- **Bell Pepper:** 1 pepper, chopped
- **Minced Garlic:** 1 tablespoon
- **Chipotle Peppers in Adobo Sauce:** 1 can (To moderate heat, remove the seeds from the peppers, or remove some peppers altogether. Keep the sauce, though.)
- **Chili Powder:** 2 tablespoons
- **Emeril's Essence Seasoning:** 1 tablespoon
- **Cumin Powder:** 2 teaspoons
- **Dark Beer:** 1 bottle
- **Crushed Tomatoes:** 1 28-ounce can, include the juices
- **Tomato Paste:** 3 tablespoons
- **Sugar:** 1 teaspoon
- **Beans:** 6 cups of your favorite (red, black, white, etc.)
- **Salt and Pepper:** To taste

### Directions

1. In large heavy pot, heat oil over medium high heat. Add onions and bell pepper and soften, about 4 minutes.
2. Add chili powder, Emeril's Essence, cumin, and garlic. Stir for 2 minutes.
3. Deglaze with beer. When foam subsides after about 1 minute, add beans, crushed tomatoes, chipotle peppers/sauce, tomato paste, sugar, and the brisket. Stir well and bring to boil.
4. Lower heat and simmer uncovered, stirring frequently to prevent sticking, for 30 minutes. Season to taste with salt & pepper.
5. Remove from heat and transfer to a crockpot. Simmer on low until ready to eat, approx. 4-6 hours.

### Extra Flavor!

Add any of these optional toppings to your bowl of chili before you dig in:

- Grated cheddar cheese
- Sour cream
- Ketchup
- Chopped green onions
- Frito Scoops

