

## 2019 THOMAS YATABE AWARDS - TAMPA BAY LEPC

Thomas Yatabe Awards are presented annually by each Local Emergency Planning Committee within the State to signify “outstanding contribution(s) made in the implementation and support of the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.” This year’s Thomas Yatabe Award for the Tampa Bay LEPC was presented to Mr. Jeff Tobergte of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection/Office of Emergency Response.

**Mr. Jeff Tobergte** - *“Jeff Tobergte recently retired from the Department of Environmental Protection Office of Emergency Response after 36-years of dedicated service. During his time with the Department, he handled over 9,000 hazardous material incidents that varied from overturned exploding tanker trucks with 8,000-gal fuel spills to identifying the contents of abandoned drums on roadways.*



*Jeff Tobergte was a valuable member of the Tampa Bay LEPC from 1996 - 2019 and the acting Vice Chair for several terms. Mr. Tobergte always participated in LEPC exercises, often acting as the State On-scene Coordinator. He was always willing to review and suggest changes to SERC guidance documents. With his advanced knowledge of the HAZCAT chemical field identification kit, he provided free training to HAZMAT teams and first responders throughout the State. HAZMAT Teams would*

*call Jeff after-hours to request assistance with chemical releases. With his retirement, the entire State of Florida has lost a pioneer in HAZMAT response and environmental cleanups.”*

**Nominations were also submitted for the following well-deserving individuals: Robert Collins, Mike Bloski, Brooke Martin, Frank DeFrancesco, David Ray and Darryl Turmel. Their respective Nominations read as follows:**

**Robert Collins** - *“Special Operations Chief Robert Collins supported the participation of the Special Operations team to partner with Mosaic's Port Sutton facility in the internal inspection of a 50,000 ton ammonia tank. The Special Operations team was essential in the pre-planning tabletop exercise with Mosaic to ensure that we accommodated any potential needs due to the unique circumstances for an internal inspection that involved hazardous materials, confined space entry and potential high-angle access rescue. Based on the tabletop exercise, Mosaic implemented additional proactive controls to prevent a critical confined space entry hazard related to heat stress. Upon completion of the Port Sutton Tank inspection, the Special Operations team was able to perform a safe entry into the space to better visualize the internal space and design of an ammonia tank. The participation in these types of activities and conversations better prepare any emergency responder entering an industrial facility and allows our facility to better understand the concerns from an emergency responder's perspective.”*



**Mike Bloski** - *"Capt. Mike Bloski graciously volunteered to serve as the Exercise Planning Coordinator as well as the leader of the Hazmat Group during conduct of the Operation Double Stack exercise. Ensuring compliance with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program, numerous meetings were conducted in order to maximize the exercise benefit and potential. With Compliance Associates Inc. & CSX serving as facilitators, this Functional exercise was deemed a tremendous success. This exercise drew the participation of 53 individuals representing a variety of agencies, departments and/or facilities. The scenario invoked the anticipated hazardous materials response to the fictitious derailment of 15 railcars carrying a variety of hazardous materials commodities, including sulfuric acid (an EHS chemical), immediately adjacent to Port Manatee in northern Manatee County. Among other exercise objectives, response to the exercise injects resulted in coordination with and assistance requested from Hillsborough County Fire Rescue and Tampa Fire Rescue. Many lessons were learned during the exercise and corresponding corrective actions have been taken. The exercise was conducted on May 1, 2019 at the Manatee County Emergency Operations Center."*



Accepting on behalf of Capt. Bloski was Battalion Chief Chris Gould.

**Brooke Martin** - *"In conjunction with Compliance Associates Inc., Ms. Brooke Martin was instrumental in the facilitation of the Operational Double Stack exercise held on May 1, 2019 in Manatee County on behalf of CSX. This "Functional" exercise was deemed a tremendous success, drawing the participation of 53 individuals representing a variety of agencies, departments and/or facilities. The scenario invoked the anticipated hazardous materials response to the fictitious derailment of 15 railcars carrying a variety of hazardous materials commodities, including sulfuric acid (an EHS chemical), immediately adjacent to Port Manatee in northern Manatee County. Many lessons were learned during the exercise and numerous corrective actions were made to local response plans."*



Accepting on behalf of Brooke Martin was Denise Lynch.

**Frank DeFrancesco** - *"Capt. Frank DeFrancesco graciously volunteered to assist as an Evaluator in the conduct of the Hazmat Technicians Capabilities Course for Southern Manatee Fire Rescue on July 29-31, 2019. His participation and expertise were instrumental in performing these assessments and, in turn, gauging the future training needs of the department. Capt. DeFrancesco has always gone "up and above" in terms of service to the Tampa Bay LEPC and is considered a tremendous asset regarding hazardous materials response to the entire State of Florida."*



**David Ray** - *“Capt. David Ray graciously volunteered to assist as an Evaluator in the conduct of the Hazmat Technicians Capabilities Course for the Pinellas County Hazmat Team on August 27-29, 2019 on short notice. In total, the skills of 91 Technicians were assessed over the three-day period. His participation and expertise were instrumental in performing these assessments and, in turn, gauging the future training needs for the Pinellas County Hazmat Team.”*



**Darryl Turmel** - *“D/E Darryl Turmel graciously volunteered to assist as an Evaluator in the conduct of the Hazmat Technicians Capabilities Course for the Pinellas County Hazmat Team on August 27-29, 2019 on short notice. In total, the skills of 91 Technicians were assessed over the three-day period. His participation and expertise were instrumental in performing these assessments and, in turn, gauging the future training needs of the Pinellas County Hazmat Team.”*



Accepting on behalf of Darryl Turmel was Chief Robert Collins.