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Huntington Beach Fire Department Promotes First Female Marine Safety Captain, Leslie Schwene

The Huntington Beach Fire Department (HBFD) announces today the promotion of the City's first female Marine Safety Captain, Leslie Schwene. A 12-year veteran of the Huntington Beach Fire Department, Marine Safety Captain Schwene supports the Department's Marine Safety Division. As a Marine Safety Captain, she supervises approximately 20 ocean lifeguards, assists in the management of the Division's Community Risk Reduction Program, oversees Marine Safety community outreach, and supports ongoing employee training and development.

Formed in 1909, the HBFD was largely a volunteer Department until 1922 when the first full-time employee was appointed. The HBFD and fire profession in general has remained largely a male dominated profession. In recent years, the HBFD has prioritized hiring diverse and well-qualified candidates, resulting in an increase of female Department personnel and the promotion of females to leadership roles within the HBFD.

"I am proud of the efforts our City's Fire Department has put into adding more women and diversity to first responder staff," said Huntington Beach Mayor, Barbara Delgleize. "It is so important that we show our youth that regardless of background or gender, you have opportunities to achieve whatever career you aspire to."

Marine Safety Captain Schwene joined the City of Huntington Beach as a lifeguard in 2010. Since then, she has received numerous commendations and awards, including the HBFD Marine Safety Commendation for Surfers' Awareness in Lifesaving Techniques in 2017 and the HBFD Marine Safety Employee of the Year Award in 2019. In 2020, Marine Safety Captain Schwene was assigned to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for COVID-19 response and again in 2021 as a Planning Chief for the oil spill response. In the EOC she was responsible for creating incident action plans and providing daily situation reports to City staff and stakeholders.

"Leslie has done a phenomenal job since joining the Department in 2010. Her positive attitude, adaptability, intelligence, and ability to remain level headed in any situation has made her a valuable part of our City's Fire Department," said Fire Chief, Scott Haberle. "I am hopeful that Leslie is the first of many female Marine Safety Captains we see within the HBFD."

In addition to her experience, Marine Safety Captain Schwene has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Southern California and a Master's Degree in Emergency and Disaster Management from Georgetown University.