

Underpaid First Responders in Orange Beach

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Rauf Bolden, Orange Beach

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Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon has often said, he will evaluate raises on a case-by-case basis. In this case Orange Beach's First Responders lag behind the state's average and the national average, according to a report on Zip Recruiter (<https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/How-Much-Does-a-First-Responder-Make-a-Year--in-Alabama>).

Our First Responders deserve better than below average pay, training constantly, dedicated to our community, responding to any emergency within three minutes. I raise this voice, hoping someone will hear.

There is no plan in place to correct responder's compensation imbalance, having reviewed Council's online minutes for several years. Should the city reward First Responders for exceptional public service?

"My husband was chronically ill before his [liver] transplant and required First Responders to come to our house often. We had numerous obstacles they would have to work around. Our house is an older house with two small steps coming up through the door. My husband was often incapacitated and the gurney would not fit around the corner into the bedroom and with his excessive weight it was never easy getting him to the gurney. But they never failed us and they always did their job in the most professional manner. We have nothing but praise for them," said Jeannetta Bell a Bear Point resident in a text.

"There have been several occasions that Orange Beach Emergency personnel have been called to my home for medical emergencies. Their response time was always very quick. I cannot say enough about their kindness and concern for me and my husband. Orange Beach is very fortunate to have such competent first responders," said Sherry Brandler a Marina Road resident in a text.

"On my way home from work one evening, an extremely large, and therefore very old turtle decided to cross Canal Road. Fearful of his fate during the crossing, I could only think of one way to preserve his life. I called 911. My call was taken most seriously. [The] officer captured him, and relocated him deep within the state park," said Patsy Rose, retired Children's Librarian, having lived her entire life in Orange Beach.

The city's business is keeping the resident and visitor populations safe. I see no rational objection to paying our First Responders a better-than-average wage, enabling the departments to recruit and retain the best people.

"The First Responders in Orange Beach have provided excellent professional service during times of trouble," said Sarah DeLazzer Property Manager at Sea Chase Condominiums in a text.

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"Recently, one of my friend's home caught fire [in Orange Beach]. The fire department worked hard to put out the fire. That is their job and they did it well. But they went beyond doing their expected job. They all stayed and helped console the family and start the cleanup. They helped drain the water and salvage what they could for the family. These men and women don't just do what's expected. They care about our community and citizens. Their guiding force is service. These dedicated men and women deserve to be well paid and have solid benefits. They risked their lives to help save this family's home and then gave them the gift of being there to help them start to pick the pieces. They gave this family a bit of hope when they were down. That's what they do every single day without hesitation. It is simply a part of who they are and we are blessed to have them in our City," said Kim and Jared Byrd, part-time residents of Orange Beach in a text.

"ALEA [Alabama Law Enforcement Agency]: Driver killed when crashing into Orange Beach police vehicles," according to a report on Fox10News (https://www.fox10tv.com/news/alea-driver-killed-when-crashing-into-orange-beach-police-vehicles/article_cfe604ce-a310-11e9-810c-0ba4387b742f.html).

I argue, all First Responders are dedicated to our community in ways that are priceless.

Mayor Tony Kennon may not agree, probably thinking an underpaid paramedic or officer is replaceable. This logic works until someone has a stint failure, bad car accident at the turn around, or needs resuscitating in the Gulf, raising questions about going cheap.

Orange Beach is a wealthy community, taking in \$15 Million annually above expenses. Paying Firefighters and Police Officers a salary that reflects the city's standing as the premier beach resort in Alabama is the right decision.

ENDS.

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Disclosure: The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the author. I have no business relationship with any company whose stock is mentioned in this article.