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Longtime Fire Chief Lebacken to retire after 43 years
Assistant Chief Tom Salsbury steps up on June 1

OTHELLO, Wash. — After more than four decades of service to his community, Adams County Fire District 5 (ACFD5) Fire Chief Gary Lebacken will retire on May 31.

Chief Lebacken started in the fire service career as a volunteer firefighter in 1982. He rose through the ranks, becoming volunteer captain in 1989, assistant chief in 1999, and was hired as a career firefighter in 2001. He was appointed fire chief in 2008 and has led the district with dedication and integrity ever since.

During his tenure, Chief Lebacken prioritized firefighter safety by upgrading personal protective equipment, apparatus, and tools. He oversaw improvements to several fire stations and helped develop the first City of Othello–Fire District 5 agreement for fire protection. The district earned multiple clean audits under his leadership, reflecting his strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. He also helped design several wildland and structural fire engines.

“Chief Lebacken has given so much to this department and the community,” said Assistant Chief Tom Salsbury. “His impact will be felt for years to come, and we are grateful for his steady leadership.”

Chief Lebacken looks forward to traveling with his wife, Tiffany, and spending more time with their three children and six grandchildren.

Assistant Chief Tom Salsbury, an Othello native and U.S. Air Force veteran, will succeed Chief Lebacken on June 1. Salsbury began his fire service career in 1991 and has served as assistant chief at ACFD5 for the past several years. He has enhanced firefighter training programs, expanded fire prevention education, and developed a fire inspection program under the district’s agreement with the City of Othello.

A formal retirement celebration is being planned and details will be announced soon. For more information, visit acfd5.org.

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Adams County Fire District 5 provides fire suppression, rescue, and wildland fire services to over 7,600 residents across 215 square miles in the heart of the Columbia basin. The district also serves the City of Othello, home to 7,000 residents, through a contract for service in place through 2026. Five full-time and 21 volunteer personnel respond to a range of emergencies with professionalism and pride. Learn more at www.acfd5.com.