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Ken Freeman, deputy chief for the Fort Worth Fire Department, is making the move to Burleson. City Manager Dale Cheatham announced today that Freeman has been selected as Burleson's new fire chief. He will start Feb. 1, 2016.

"He brings a wealth of experience and I think he will be a good fit for Burleson," Cheatham said.

Freeman said he is humbled.

"I can't be more proud that the management team had the confidence to select me. It was a thorough and rigorous process," Freeman said. "I credit Chief (Gary) Wisdom for the legacy he has left, how he has moved the fire department forward, and for the excellence of the firefighters. This leadership has the safety of the firefighters and the community in mind. I am excited to serve this dynamic community."

Freeman has spent his 38-year firefighting career with the City of Fort Worth. He was 19 when he was hired as a firefighter in 1977. Freeman was promoted to engineer in June 1980, lieutenant in May 1983, and captain in June 1986. He promoted to battalion chief/operations division in February 1989, then deputy chief in the educational and training division, where he currently serves, in 2014. Freeman also served as fire marshal, May 2003-2005. His resume includes the role of training coordinator for the Tarrant County College Fire Service Training Center since 2009.

"One of my key areas of focus has been working to reduce the risks our communities face day to day," Freeman said. "In particular, I have served and continue to serve on numerous task forces and collaborative efforts that address the issue of childhood injury such as the Fort Worth Drowning Prevention Coalition and Peaks and Ladders."

Freeman's educational background includes an associate of arts degree from Tarrant County College in 1990 and a bachelor of arts degree in public administration from the University of Texas at Arlington in 1993.

The new chief has his basic inspector certification and advanced firefighter certification through the Texas Commission on Fire Protection. He was accepted in to the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland in 2015.

Freeman was born and raised in Fort Worth, but with his selection as Burleson's new fire chief, he will be moving his wife Margie and 13-year-old daughter Kendall to Burleson. The new chief has a 27-year-old son Martin and a 25-year-old daughter Mary Jane. His daughter's husband has been a firefighter with Fort Worth since December 2014.

Freeman is an active member of his church and leads mission trips to the Amazon region in Brazil. When he has spare time you can find him camping, scuba diving and riding four wheelers in Colorado.

Sixty-nine applied to be Burleson's next fire chief. Those were narrowed down to 11 who were interviewed by a panel of six. On Oct. 8, the names of the top three were released. They included Deputy Fire Chief/Training Brent Batla, Burleson Fire Department; Freeman; and Fire Chief Russell Sander, Missouri City, Texas.

The search started in August when Gary Wisdom, who became Burleson's first full-time paid fire chief in 1998, announced that he was retiring at the end of 2015.