

TO: Safety Director Mayor Forthofer

Fire Chief Bill Brown

Councilman Brian Holmes

Gentlemen:

My name is Kay Mayer. My husband, Dean Mayer, was involved in a horrible accident when a tree fell on his backhoe on October 20, 2024 and 911 was called. The Vermilion Police were first on scene followed by the Vermilion Fire Dept.

After reading the Vermilion Photojournal this week I feel the need to express my thoughts on that day, as they are not as described in the article.

First let me say that Life Care personnel were phenomenal. They monitored my husband constantly, performed any first aid they could while he was still trapped, they kept me informed of his status continuously, explaining what was happening and their plan to get him to Metro as soon as he was extricated in case of any internal bleeding. They were all the absolute best!

Also let me compliment the Vermilion Police Dept. Brian Beckwith, Nick Kowal, Zach Scholl, Dylon Wood and Pastor Cooper. These men stayed right with Dean and helped my son in-law who was frantically working to free Dean using his chain saw and cutting limbs away to get access. They were very hands-on and willing to do whatever it took to help out.

Now to the VFD. The article said it took under an hour to free my husband. This is not true at all as it took OVER an hour to free him. Dean and I have lived in Vermilion over 60 years and thankfully have never had to call for a Vermilion Fire Department Rescue and let me tell you, I am very glad I have never needed their assistance in the past because this was a huge disappointment.

The article states Captain Derek Kuba was the Officer in Charge. Again, a huge disappointment. He never once approached me as Dean's wife to explain how he was going to extricate Dean. He never once approached Dean the entire time he was trapped to speak to him. He just kept walking in and out of the scene, talking on his radio. I do need to acknowledge a firefighter by the name of Lassen was very helpful to my son in-law in cutting the limbs away from Dean. The majority of the fire crew stood by and watched as again, my son in-law and the guys from the PD tried to get the tree off of the back hoe.

The VFD informed us they did not have a chain saw of their own, nor did they have any other equipment that would benefit getting the tree off the backhoe or freeing my husband. Officer Beckwith called L&M as soon as he arrived on scene before the fire department even arrived. When L&M arrived, Captain Kuba would not allow them in the driveway with their crane. Please note that during this time Dean's medical condition was deteriorating with his blood pressure dropping, etc. Captain Kuba wouldn't have known this though because he was in the front yard while my son in-law and firefighter Lassen continued to cut branches to try to free him. I felt like I was watching my husband die a slow horrible death and the VFD was not able to help.

My son in-law asked if they had a hoist/crane on the truck and Captain Kuba said no, he then asked if they had air bags they could put between the upper frame of the tractor and the log and he answered no, he then asked if he had a winch on the truck to which Captain Kuba said they did. My son in-law instructed him to pull the truck back to where Dean was trapped. After much confusion by the VFD as to how in fact release the winch, my son in-law again stepped in to disengage it and pull the cable so he could attach it to his strap that was already wrapped around the tree. He then had to tell Captain Kuba to start pulling the tree with the winch to which he said it wasn't working. My son in-law then had to tell him how to engage the winch so it would start pulling the tree. Once the winch started pulling the tree it did not have enough power to pull the tree so Amherst went to get their porta power to assist in getting the tree pulled off of the backhoe. A lot of confusion on a simple task that you would assume the Captain would know how to work. They were able to figure it out and to move the tree enough to free Dean with Amherst Fire and my son in-law's help.

Over an hour later the tree was lifted, my husband was removed and again, Life Care went to work and stabilized my husband for transport to Life Flight.

When Life Care was leaving with my husband we were all out by the road and we noted that Florence Township was on the street as well as another heavy rescue tow truck. We later learned Kuba would not allow them on scene in the back yard. We are confused as to why the Captain would not have an "all hands on deck" approach rather than not allowing them to assist in the rescue?

We, as a family, were very confused as to what was happening. The firefighters were out by the road, in the yard, but no one was doing anything, as if they did not know what to do. They had no equipment to use in this situation. I really thought they would be trained in rescue as well as firefighting but that was clearly not the case. I noticed many body cams being worn and I would encourage you all to watch the footage and see what actually took place.

I sincerely hope there is some serious conversation with the fire department, chief, captain, and the firefighters who reported to the scene as to what they could have done better to not let anyone go through what we went through. I was just absolutely shocked that the one time we desperately needed help our fire department was not prepared and instead just stood by to watch as my own family and police officers were working desperately to get the job done.

I am also surprised that Captain Kuba never approached any of our family, including Dean, to let us know what his plan was (they obviously had none). I was surprised that after the accident the Fire Chief never reached out to get our assessment of the situation so that he may learn from this accident and better train his personnel for this type of situation (other fire departments did). I also am questioning how the Chief was informed of Dean's condition for him to state in the Photojournal that he had a broken collar bone? We did not relay that information to the Fire Chief as we have never spoken to him.

In my opinion the real heroes that day were the guys from the VPD, my son in-law, and the Life Care crew. The VFD states in the article "they helped produce a positive outcome". We as a family simply do not agree.

Again, please use this horrible accident as a training tool, have the VFD more prepared as to how to free an individual who is trapped, and don't leave the victim and their family feeling disappointed, or worse make the family watch as their loved one does not get the help they deserve. We thank God that Dean survived and he will heal from this horrible accident and I just pray no one else has the same disappointing experience that we did.

Kay Mayer

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Vermilion

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