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Text to Speech Helps Firefighter Ace One of Law Enforcement's Toughest Tests

Long Commutes Became Valuable Study Time, Thanks to NextUp's TextAloud

CLEMMONS, NC and NEW YORK, NY – Fire Marshal **John Holohan**, 43, was committed to excelling on his upcoming exam for Supervising Fire Marshal, as well as finding a way to maximize his long commutes by using the time to study. By using *TextAloud*, an affordable program from **NextUp** (www.NextUp.com) that converts text into spoken audio files for listening on a PC or portable device, Holohan was able to use his daily commutes as crucial preparation time for one of the law enforcement industry's toughest and most grueling exams -- and surpassed his expectations in the process.

The test for Supervising Fire Marshal is a formidable one, and involves a thorough understanding of science, law, investigation, logic, and management. Supervising Fire Marshals fulfill a demanding series of duties -- everything from supervisory or administrative work in the operation of a squad, command or special unit, to personal response to major alarm fires, to investigations into the causes, origins or circumstances of explosions or fires. Supervising Fire Marshals also carry a firearm and have the ability to make arrests in the course of their investigations, and they are routinely called upon to testify as expert witnesses in court, as well. They also may be called upon to train, counsel, evaluate, and assign duties to Fire Marshals, review investigative reports on fires, prepare reports, supervise the records of known arsonists, prepare felony complaints, assist the DA in cases for trial, interview witnesses, and more. With so much at stake, test-takers for Supervising Fire Marshal must demonstrate the mastery of such skills beyond question to pass with flying colors.

But it's a lot of knowledge to memorize, and in studying for his test, Holohan quickly decided to try *TextAloud* Text to Speech to maximize his study time (and retention) so that no hour was wasted during the day as he prepared.

"We have reams and reams of information to study for the exam -- a huge amount of knowledge to cover," comments Holohan, "but with the help of *TextAloud*, I was able to convert all of the documents into speech for later listening." While converting all of the documents to spoken audio using *TextAloud*, Holohan also worked with *TextAloud's* pronunciation editor to personalize diction and pauses. "I wanted the spoken version to be as natural as possible to listen to." Holohan also purchased two premium AT&T Natural Voices to enhance the listening experience, as well. Once the voices and listening style were set to his satisfaction, Holohan then converted everything he had to MP3 files, which he loaded onto his MP3 player and also exported to CD for listening in the car, as well.

"I loved being able to work with the pronunciation editor," he comments, "especially being able to make the listening experience specific to me. With the investment of just a little time and effort, I was able to modify the text as I needed, so that it was easier to study and listen, and so that pauses came more naturally. Once this was done, I could then transfer voluminous amounts of information into spoken audio very quickly. It was well worth the investment of time in the early stages of the process."

He then began the study process, listening for hours at a time each day -- on his daily commutes of up to 3 hours per day, as well as during his free time at home or on the go. "Spending this amount of time with the material each day gave me a great familiarity with the material very quickly," he comments. "And whenever I did read or study, nothing was new. I already had a built-in understanding of the information."

Even more advantageous for Holohan in his studies by ear was the fact that listening to the text enabled him to incorporate changes and updates to the material into his studies almost without effort. "When changes or updates were made to our materials, I was so familiar with what I was studying that I was able to instantly recognize what was new," he comments. "I was able to update my files quickly and easily, and to incorporate the new information into my studies."

For Holohan, *TextAloud* assisted him in augmenting his understanding of the often complex material necessary for the exam. "The test for Supervising Fire Marshal covers a huge amount of information, from the origin and cause of fires, to investigating steps and techniques, to understanding the laws and codes surrounding violation, investigation and prosecution. But with a few hours each day of built-in study by ear using *TextAloud*, hearing the information as well as reading and studying it, it made the entire process so much easier. The information became a real part of my knowledge base and long-term memory."

Holohan's study paid off -- after nearly two years of preparation and study, he took the test in 2006, and received word recently that he had scored #5 out of 100 test-takers, and with his official promotion as the next step. In the meantime, he continues his work as a Fire Marshal in New York, managing investigations, working with computer systems while pursuing leads and information, and more.

Holohan still uses *TextAloud* occasionally, and has even encouraged his kids (ages 10 and 12 years) to use it for their studies. "It's great for trips or vacations -- when they have a lot of homework, they can just export their studies to their MP3 players, just as I did!"

About *TextAloud*

TextAloud has been featured in *The New York Times*, *PC Magazine*, *Writer's Digest*, on CNN, and more. Hailed by critics and users alike, *TextAloud* is priced at just \$29.95, and is compatible with systems using Windows® 98, NT, 2000, XP and Vista. The program is available for fast, safe and secure purchase via <http://www.NextUp.com>.

About NextUp.com

NextUp.com, a division of NextUp Technologies, LLC, provides award-winning Text to Speech software for consumers, professionals, businesses, educators, and those with visual or vocal impairment, or learning disabilities.

In addition to *TextAloud*, NextUp.com markets other innovative Windows software designed to save time and deliver vital information. *NewsAloud*[™] is a talking personal “news agent” that finds the stories users want, and then reads them aloud or to portable audio files.

WeatherAloud[™] is a weather application that lets users select and listen to personalized weather forecasts, while *StocksAloud*[™] reads stock updates and related news headlines aloud for specific companies of interest. NextUp *Talker* is an easy and affordable program that allows people who have lost their voices to use the latest in high-quality computer voices to communicate with others. Most recently, NextUp introduced a new text reader, *AbleReader*, available with the AT&T Natural Voices[™] for use on Mac computers. Information on *AbleReader* is available at <http://www.AbleReader.com>.

NextUp.com also offers *TextAloud* with optional premium voices from **AT&T Natural Voices[™]**, **NeoSpeech®**, **Nuance®**, **Acapela®** and **Cepstral®** for the most natural-sounding computer speech anywhere. Available languages include U.S. English, U.K. English, Indian Accent English, Scottish Accent English, French, Canadian French, Latin American Spanish, Castilian (European) Spanish, Mexican Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, European Portuguese, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, Korean, Japanese, German, Italian, Dutch, Belgian Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish, and Arabic.

Evaluation copies of *TextAloud* are available upon request. For more information on NextUp.com or *TextAloud*, or for other case studies involving users ranging from doctors and lawyers, to truck drivers, musicians, and more, please contact publicist Angela Mitchell at **(904) 982-8043** or via Admitchell@Nextup.com.

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