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SHAPING VIRGINIA’S FIRE SERVICE

By: Lynn Cherry-Miller

It began in earnest in 2011 with the adoption of a new mission statement by the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, “The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, (VFCA) serves the communities of Virginia through its fire service leaders and advances the Fire & Rescue service through leadership, education and advocacy.” This year it continues, VFCA is moving forward, ‘full steam ahead,’ with clarifying its mission-re-branding itself, stepping forward as the organization that will shape Virginia’s fire service through leadership, education, and advocacy.

This year’s VFCA Retreat and Strategic Planning Session were held October 16-18 in Roanoke, Virginia. Following the board meeting on Thursday morning of the retreat was a presentation outlining a proposed campaign which will be used to accomplish a specific set of goals;

- To re-brand and raise the profile of VFCA and its activities
- To promote Virginia’s fire service and fire safety across the state
- To educate the public and potential partnering businesses
- To increase VFCA membership

“I’m a VFCA Member Because…” was the campaign that was initially presented. This would involve 30 to 60 second interviews of VFCA members of all ranks stating why they are VFCA members to run in print and television, followed by VFCA logo, the VFCA tag Leadership, Advocacy, Education, and any other sponsor information.

During the course of the retreat, two additional campaigns were discussed. Campaign #2 will consist of Fire Safety PSAs direct from the Fire Chief – “Your Safety is My Chief Concern” print and televised.

As many chiefs as possible will tape at least one fire safety message. For example, “Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries. In the City of (xxx) alone, (xxx) number of fires were attributed to cooking. To protect your family, never leave cooking unattended. Your safety is my chief concern.” That statement must accompany each safety message. Each PSA would be followed by a local association logo if there is one, VFCA logo, and the VFCA tag Leadership, Advocacy, Education, and any other sponsor information. This could also be done using a group of fire chiefs from a particular association using “Your Safety is Our Chief Concern.”

Campaign #3 will teach through humor. Sparky Burns is a comical character whose missteps and mispronunciations always bring a smile while educating the general public and appealing to younger potential members.

Just imagine what a powerful impact these combined promotional efforts will make across the state. All would bring positive attention to the VFCA and in turn to the fire service in general; what’s good for the VFCA is good for Virginia’s fire service as a whole. Will you participate and contribute to the shaping of Virginia’s fire service?

You can help, not only by agreeing to participate in the campaigns, but also by making the effort to provide to the media any positive things that occur in your individual department, or by volunteering resources like personnel who have video editing experience. If you have questions, or comments, feel free to contact me, lcherry@hampton.gov or 727-6431.
Happy 2014 to everyone. I hope you enjoyed the holidays with family and friends. It is hard to believe that 2013 has come to an end, but I’m excited about the opportunities that exist in 2014 for our organization. In October the full Board met in Roanoke to review the past year and set goals for the coming year. I would like to touch on some of the issues briefly. We worked hard in 2013 to advance the VFCA on three fronts - Leadership, Education, and Advocacy – and the Board still feels these focus areas are relevant as we move into the future. The VFCA is a leader in Virginia’s fire service through our involvement, along with other Fire and EMS organizations, in shaping the way forward for our profession. We have members on several boards, commissions, and work groups across the State working on issues that impact our service delivery and citizens. Finally, we provide some cutting edge educational opportunities for our members through our annual conference and the Fire Officer’s Academy held each summer in Richmond. Please plan on attending the Virginia Fire Conference, February 20-23, 2014, in Virginia Beach, and I encourage you to bring someone with you who has not had the opportunity to attend. The VFCA has already been working for the past several months to ensure we are bringing the relevant issues facing the fire service to our representatives in Richmond. On October 6, 2013, several of our Board Members, along with several State Legislators, met and formed the Virginia Fire and EMS Caucus. This meeting was the springboard that I hope leads to greater advocacy for the fire service in Virginia.

As we move into 2014, there will be some changes within the VFCA. First, we will see a mainstay of the organization step down to spend more time with his family. Chief Jimmy Carter will be missed on several fronts. He has been an out front leader of this association for over two decades as a Board Member, Past President, and the Executive Director. His insight and leadership has provided the VFCA the stability necessary to transition into the future. On a personal note, I want to thank Chief Carter for his guidance and direction in my career with the Virginia Beach Fire Department and as this Association’s President. He has been a true mentor for me! This move will provide the opportunity for Chief Chris Eudailey to become the next Executive Director for the VFCA. Chief Eudailey has also been very active in the organization as a Board Member and Past President and he will bring great knowledge to the position. I want to thank Chief Eudailey for his leadership.

As I transition from the role of President, I want to thank all of you for allowing me this opportunity. While I have been very busy trying to represent our members, I have learned so much along the way and I have met some people who are truly the greatest public servants on earth. I want to also thank our Board Members, along with Deborah Wilmoth, Ed Rhodes, Jimmy Johnson, Nick Caputo, Bill Smith, and Sharon Baroncelli, for their expertise and desire to improve the VFCA. I am proud of the working relationship that has been established between the Past Presidents, the First and Second Vice-Presidents, and me over the past several years. We have been able to create agendas and direction that will be sustained as we move forward into 2014 and beyond. So thank you Chief Jack Jones, Chief Walt Bailey, Chief Dave Hoback, and Chief Dave Layman for all of your time, effort, and leadership.

I believe 2014 will be another great year for this organization. Please get involved in some capacity in order to continue the legacy. Thanks for all you do and stay safe!

Steve Cover
2014 VFCA President
Virginia Beach Fire Department
VFCA Member Advantage

Mission Statement
The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, (VFCA) serves the communities of Virginia through its fire service leaders and advances the Fire & Rescue Service through leadership, education and advocacy.

Member Benefits
Your membership in the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association makes you a member of the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation, the companion non-profit educational organization that offers educational seminars, the Virginia Fire Officer Academy, the scholarship program and other such worthy programs. It’s a full palette of programs and services from which you can choose those of particular interest to you, the VFCA member.

1. Career Development Mid-Atlantic Expo & Symposium (MAE&S)
The premier fire and emergency services conference offering a mix of association business, networking and over 40 educational sessions during the event. The MAE&S is a cost and time efficient way to sharpen your skills, expand your knowledge base and broaden your fire service network.

Virginia Fire Officer Academy
This award winning four-and-a-half-day program assists fire and emergency services professionals to move from a tactical view to a comprehensive strategic view of fire and emergency services, operations, personnel safety, and administration. Participants will enhance their professional development through a unique four and one-half day hands-on, interactive learning experience designed to provide a better understanding of the relationship between leadership, ownership and safety.

Educational Seminars
From broad-based tactical and fire ground training to more focused programs such as “Horse Sense” that hones and prepares officers to lead and manage their organizations on a day-to-day basis.

2. Information & Idea Exchange
Commonwealth Chief Magazine
Touted as one of the country’s best fire and emergency services organization member publications, Commonwealth Chief magazine puts the latest thinking and current issues – as well as all you need to know about your association – in your hands on a quarterly basis.

Exhibitor Trade Show
The exhibitor show, held in conjunction with the Annual Conference, presents a unique opportunity for chiefs, company officer’s, firefighters and others to spend quality time with the vendors who provide the very latest in technology, products and services utilized by today’s modern fire service.

VFCA Website at www.vfca.us
Your source for the latest wide-ranging information about the association and its activities at your fingertips – 24/7. Register on-line or download a conference registration application, peruse the latest and back issues of Commonwealth Chief magazine, or obtain LODD information. VFCA's website is changing continually to provide you with the information you need when you need it!

Networking Opportunities
Opportunities occur throughout the year to learn informally from your peers. At VFCA events or on the Website, you can connect with the fire chiefs and other fire service personnel from around the state who share your concerns, but from a slightly different perspective.

3. Political Action
Legislative Summit
VFCA leadership plays a leading role in the Annual Legislative Summit where major fire/EMS organizations from across the Commonwealth come together to decide what legislative issues are important and relative in today’s ever-changing environment.

Advocacy
Members and leaders take the fire service story directly to state and federal elected representatives to work for laws and regulations that enhance your ability to provide safe communities. VFCA appointments to many state boards and advisory bodies ensure fire and emergency services input on actions that affect us all.

4. Personal/Family
Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance
Each VFCA member is provided with AD&D insurance benefits in the event an unexpected tragedy should strike.

Membership Application
Join today by filling out the membership application and paying online at www.vfca.us or Mail this application and payment (check payable to VFCA): VFCA · P.O. Box 70907 · Richmond, VA · 23255-0907

Name: ________________________ Fire Dept/Organization: ___________________________ FID#: ______________________
Rank/Title: _____________________ Chief Officer: Yes No Retired: Yes No
Address: _________________________ City: ______________ State: _________ Zip: ____________
Phone: __________________________ Fax: __________________________ Email: __________________________
Pay by Credit card: Visa Master Card AMEX Discover
Credit card #: ___________________ Exp. Date: ____________ Security Code: (3digit # on back) ____________
Name on Card: ____________________ Billing Address if different from above: __________________________
Please check the following:
Register me as one of the following Sections: Admin. Professionals Federal/Military Company Officer None
DFP Division: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Type of Department: Volunteer Career Combination

If you have questions concerning this application and/or membership status, contact VFCA Member Services at (888) 818-0983 or email memberservices@vfca.us
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“Hey Chief one of your stations has a bug problem.” This exact statement was made to me one morning back in May of this year. Unfortunately, the word problem was later upgraded to Infestation. A vast majority of the general public are aware that bed bugs are a growing concern. In spite of this fact, many industries continue to be plagued with the presence of the parasites. Infestations have been noted in hospitals, nursing facilities and even airports! When asked, many people say the Hotel/Motel industry has suffered the most with regard to infestations. However, I am of the opinion they have responded more definitively than any other industry. There are many reasons for this, first and foremost profits. As stories about bed bugs became more prevalent in the news, many travelers became “skittish” and altered travel plans, affecting profits. And while this article is not about the Hotel/Motel industries’ profit loss, there are many lessons to be learned in their response to the problem. We will take a look at a few of these later.

There were many lessons learned (the hard way) by Norfolk Fire-Rescue.

NFR, a 500 member department, serves the citizens of Norfolk and more than 100,000 visitors each day. The department operates out of 14 stations and responds on over 40,000 calls a year. Calls range from emergency medical, commercial and residential structure fires, hazardous materials and, technical rescue events. Needless to say our job takes us into a vast number of locations. All of which may or may not have these unwanted guests. Our initial encounter with bed bugs occurred at fire Station 15 in May of this year. At the outset, a few department members began notifying the chain of command that they had unusual bites. While our response was immediate, we still did not realize we were dealing with a Bed Bug problem. Station 15, built in 1963, recently had undergone renovations to upgrade the HVAC system. It was thought that the renovation had loosed insects living in walls i.e. spiders, etc. When the department finally came to the realization the bites were the result of bed bugs, it was clear, we had an infestation!

Get to Know Your Newest Enemy
The Bed Bug...
Lessons Learned
By: Battalion Chief William Tull (Norfolk Fire-Rescue)

“Hey Chief one of your stations has a bug problem.” This exact statement was made to me one morning back in May of this year. Unfortunately, the word problem was later upgraded to Infestation. A vast majority of the general public are aware that bed bugs are a growing concern. In spite of this fact, many industries continue to be plagued with the presence of the parasites. Infestations have been noted in hospitals, nursing facilities and even airports! When asked, many people say the Hotel/Motel industry has suffered the most with regard to infestations. However, I am of the opinion they have responded more definitively than any other industry. There are many reasons for this, first and foremost profits. As stories about bed bugs became more prevalent in the news, many travelers became “skittish” and altered travel plans, affecting profits. And while this article is not about the Hotel/Motel industries’ profit loss, there are many lessons to be learned in their response to the problem. We will take a look at a few of these later.

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Education
In the case of Station 15 there was a two week timeframe between employees reporting bites and the confirmation of an infestation. There were a few reasons for this delay. The first, already mentioned, we thought we were dealing with different pests (i.e. spiders). Exterminators were called in to inspect the station. As a matter of fact, the station underwent two inspections. Neither of which revealed the presence of bed bugs. It is obvious now; we did not know what we were looking for. Realizing Station 15 was infested led to a few “gut checks” for our department leadership. The first being, “it can happen here” and the other we were under-educated about the problem.

A plethora of information can be found about bed bugs from many sources. Make sure the sources are reliable. In the absence of information from department leadership, employees will begin seeking it from less than accurate sources. This was the case in our situation and it created more problems. The presence of the bugs was missed at Station 15 because the parasites were in the early stages of their growth cycle.

As shown in the diagram, the bed bug must progress through 5 molting stages after hatching. To progress to each growth stage, they must have a blood meal. Visual detection of the pests cannot be achieved until they are in the later stages. Again, it is believed Station 15 members who reported bites, were the victims of bugs in these early growth stages.
Response

Station 15 personnel were instructed to remove from the station, all personal effects from both gear and personal lockers. Additionally, personnel were instructed to decontaminate turnout gear and uniforms. Carpet was removed from all areas of the station down to bare floors. This was based on the fact that carpeted surfaces are prime hiding places for eggs and larvae. Finally, all furniture including, bed frames, mattresses, chairs and, sofas were totally removed from the station and disposed of. The department would later learn that this was an unnecessary step. Once this process had been completed, the treatment of the station began. In the weeks following these treatments, a few employees still reported seeing bugs. What’s more, the department was relying on an extermination process designed to control, not eliminate, the pests. While our goal was to eliminate the pests, we lacked experience with them. NFR would later learn that the best method for eradication of bed bugs is the application of heat. Station 15 received the “all clear” about a month following the initial reports. The victory however, was short lived. Our problems were far from over.

Lesson 1 – Don’t ASSUME

It was assumed that the situation at Fire Station 15 was an isolated incident. This assumption was severely incorrect. Department leadership did monitor the situation for month’s following the infestation. Unfortunately, we failed to understand the resilience of these parasites and their ability to migrate. Bed bugs have been labeled as excellent “hitch-hikers”. Additionally, the adult bed bug can live up to 12 months without a blood meal. Even though Station 15 was clear, it was a matter of time before NFR would again encounter an infestation. Factors such as call volume, “fill-ins” (personnel being detailed to other stations for 12 or 24 hours) and, the absence of control/prevention strategies, led to a second fire station becoming infested.

Lesson 2 – Immediately ACT

In early October a second infestation was reported at Fire Station #1. Once again, an extermination company was called in to identify the extent of the problem. Bed bugs were located in the personnel bunkroom and all officers sleeping quarters. Fire Station #1 is a two story building. No bugs were found on the first floor of the station. It was obvious the problem had not gone away and a more urgent response was needed. Department leadership met and began exhausting all efforts to keep the problem isolated to a single station. This was extremely difficult. All department resources were called upon to find solutions to the problem. These included Operations, Fire Prevention, Logistics, Public Information and the Health/Safety divisions. In similar fashion to Station 15, all personal belongings and issued gear were removed from the station and required to be decontaminated. Furnishings, carpet and, mattresses were removed from the station. With the assistance of the Fire Marshal’s office, NFR partnered with the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA). NRHA had extensive experience with these parasites. Bed bugs are attracted to the CO2 we emit while sleeping. They are typically found in carpet, baseboards and, bed frame components. NRHA specifically uses heat to kill these parasites, a method consistent with the hotel/motel industries’ approach. They employ three commercial heaters. Affected rooms are emptied of electronics and personal items. Beds, bed frames and other furnishings are placed in these rooms and heat is applied. The devices raise the ambient temperature to around 130 degrees. This heat level is sustained for 3-4 hours. This method kills not only adult bed bugs, but eggs and larvae as well. Heat was applied to all affected rooms of Fire station #1 with excellent results.

Lesson 3 – Don’t Alarm, INFORM

The idea that bed bugs are present, whether in a hotel, residence or fire station, is unsettling for the majority of people. Fire-Rescue personnel are no exception. As previously stated, many department members began seeking information from less than reliable sources. Several employees began submitting injury reports resulting from what they thought were bed bug bites. Providing timely information to your department will prevent wide spread panic and misinformation. The sooner this information is provided the better. The department developed a fact sheet identifying the steps being taken to address the problem. The information was disseminated to all employees through battalion meetings conducted by department command staff. In addition to these efforts a PowerPoint presentation was developed and all department members were required to view it. Topics included bed bug identification, signs of an infestation and, decontamination procedures. NFR maintains an open relationship with local media partners and the community. Requests for information were provided in a timely fashion to all media outlets that requested it. In addition to these steps, Bed bug traps were placed in all stations to provide early detection of a problem. The traps, baited with a CO2 pheromone, are only designed to identify the presence of bugs. They are not meant to eliminate them. Nonetheless, the traps also provided some much needed “peace of mind” to department members.

ISO Points for using NFIRS...

Are you aware that in ISO’s (Insurance Service Office) fire suppression rating, fire departments can earn up to six points for reporting in NFIRS?

1043 USE OF THE NATIONAL INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM (IRS)

Give credit for satisfactory reporting using the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) for the 3 years before the evaluation. Up to ………………..6 points

Confirmed bed bug bites. Notice the bites are all in a row

Going Forward

Bed Bugs will continue to be a national issue. Thankfully, NFR has been free of bed bugs for several months. However, based on the experience and education we now possess, our guard is not down. The department has employed several “ongoing” strategies aimed at preventing any further infestations. These include: Early detection (traps), early notification and, a daily station cleaning regimen. The department has revised general orders concerning Infection Control and Station Maintenance. Each station was provided with several tools to aid in housekeeping endeavors. These included Shark steamers (designed to heat cracks and crevices of bed frames) and bag less vacuums. Finally, all bed mattresses and box springs were covered with encasements. With the assistance of NRHA, a GREEN product was purchased and placed in all stations and on each medic unit. The product is mostly vinegar, kills bed bugs on contact.

Final Thoughts

A few final points to consider... Make sure your department members understand how to prevent contaminating their homes. Also, provide them with the education necessary to avoid infesting citizen’s homes and businesses. Finally, remember when an infestation occurs it can be costly. When alerted to a possible problem, respond immediately. Do not assume anything. The costs incurred by NFR to deal with these infestations exceeded $30,000 dollars. An expensive lesson, indeed!
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- games to help you brush up on safety
- ability to share with the whole family

Fire spreads quickly. But with FireSafe Family VA, information and prevention can spread even faster.
Impacts on the Fire & EMS Workforce & Barriers to Volunteerism

By: Chief Jack Jones

Stop and ask yourself, in our current public safety environment are we seeing qualified candidates lining up to serve in fire and rescue roles in the numbers that we once did? Or more importantly, in the numbers that our department and community require? If you said no to either, then keep reading. If you said yes, then please write your formula for success in an article for the next Commonwealth Chief.

If the economy, demand for service, complexity of our disciplines and culture of our community as well as that of our potential members has changed, why then should the Fire and Rescue leadership and local government officials continue to think that our approach should stay the same. Training, education and certification parameters remain unapproachable as the historic immovable pillars of yesteryear. If we as a discipline, not career or volunteer, but simply as a discipline of Fire & Rescue responders desire to continue being the very service that our citizens require, then we as a collective group must recognize that it is time for active participation in the very things that impact our response prospective candidates. It is said that the first step to being a leader is to be present, now more than ever we need to be present and engaged in the discussion of what are becoming the barriers to recruitment.

It may be reasonable to submit that with our present workforce deficit, the critical need for appropriately trained responders available to communities is bordering on crisis. The first step is to define “appropriate,” one item that must be considered in light of initial entry and basic skills required of a responder. What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are required for entry level responders and who is most appropriate to determine which KSAs meet the litmus test of “appropriate” in relation to today’s critical need for certified local responders. Academic models may have a place in the overall preparation of our emergency services workforce; however, one key word in our title is “responder”. If we allow external forces to so clog our pipeline that we are not in a position to get responders through the training matrix due to bureaucracy, policy, and national standards, then we are no longer response agencies. We have allowed ourselves to become academic institutions or museums of theory, versus fire and rescue response organizations.

In light of the increases in training hour requirements over the past years, Firefighter I & II and Haz-Mat Operations increase and EMT training hour increases from 80 hours prior to 1996 to a total of over 150 hours in 2013. These increases have had an impact on our members, departments and communities in real and tangible ways. Keep in mind that local first responder availability is not a career versus volunteer issue and there is a real need for appropriately credentialed responders. Some changes resulted in unintended consequences and subsequent detrimental impacts promoted by various external forces as professionalism, better service, patient care and external mandates as the reason for change.

The local level fire and rescue leaders of our Commonwealth must be seated squarely in the center of any decision making discussions on training and certification that impact the availability of these critical first responders. After all, emergencies are local in nature! National standards and state mandates should never be considered without a pulse check at the most grass roots level to determine how any changes or standards will impact the very people that need our service, our friends, neighbors and family.

The VFCA is aggressively pursuing this very topic to determine how better to meet the needs of our responders and citizens. If an individual has to wait 45 minutes for a Paramedic with a glitter patch versus 15 minutes for an appropriately trained and credentialed First Responder, is that “better care” or just “care delivered at a higher level”? Is it important to have entry level firefighters that pose all of the skill sets and knowledge components of the current curriculum on the nozzle or a firefighter with a blended learning from a selection of topical areas with a knowledge base obtained over time, to be as effective? Would this not meet the immediate need for communities to get boots on the ground in a structured, safe and appropriate methodology?

In the past weeks we have been afforded the opportunity to speak about this matter with the State EMS Advisory Board Executive Committee at the EMS Symposium in Norfolk, to the Virginia Fire Services Board at its November meeting in Glen Allen and to the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) at their annual conference in Bath County as well as the Regional EMS Council Executive Directors state wide meeting in Bedford County. What is consistently shared with these groups is that attention to detail is needed in our programs, and how changes impact overall recruitment and how doing business the old way without bringing stake holders to the table may not be the most beneficial practice in regards to work force development and retention. If after deep and open review and assessment things can not change in regards to training and certification to allow for flexibility in initial certification, then at least we have fact based data that supports the current methodology.

In the volunteer arena, unnecessary hours in training negatively impacts time away from work and family, or time may simply not be available and therefore results in loss of potential or long serving volunteer members. In the career arena the length of time for training correlates to funding for training hours and lack of availability of an assigned individual “in company”. In relation to ongoing training, the correlation comes now to back filling of assigned positions for recertification hours all of which negatively impacts the agency budget. In our current economy the need to be prudent fiscal managers is a routine that will not be going away any time soon. The detrimental impact on training and therefore agency budgets due to increased requirements for training that may not be necessary cause serious consequences to a community’s ability to provide critical service.

Our goal in Virginia should always be to insure the appropriate preparation and fielding of a local and statewide workforce, prepared to provide service, not approach public safety training and education as a catalyst that prepares responders for employment in other states or disciplines. What will we gain if a concerted multi-level approach to first responder training and certification is achieved, is an appropriate citizen and responder focused collaboration that meets safety and service delivery goals of our communities!

Chief Jack Jones, Jr. EFO, CEMSO, is the Chief of Department, Bedford County Department of Fire & Rescue and is a past President of the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and current Board Member.
STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT HELD

The VFCA Board of Directors and Committee Chairs held their annual retreat in October, hosted by Roanoke City, Roanoke County, and Salem Fire Departments in Roanoke, Virginia. The purpose of the retreat was to reflect and celebrate the accomplishments of the association during the past year, decide the goals for the coming year and plan for how to accomplish them.

The retreat started off with an excellent presentation by Virginia Tech University titled “The Lean Management Program.” We then moved into reviewing our goals for 2013 and the successes we had during the past 12 months as well as the issues we need to improve on. We followed that by laying out the issues that are most important to move the association forward within the next 12 months and beyond. Those issues are: Membership Growth; Financial Stability (Sustainability); Division VP’s responsibilities; Committee function/job description; Working with/promoting the Foundation; Outreach Training Programs; Communication, internal & external; refining the new VFCA website; and other ideas. Our facilitator, again this year, was Ms. Sharon Baroncelli who did an outstanding job of leading us through the process.

Representatives of Virginia’s fire and emergency medical services first responder stakeholders came together earlier this year to discuss and identify the top legislative initiatives affecting our service areas. Photo: David Bailey

2014 Virginia Fire And Rescue Conference

The Name Has Changed, But The Mission Has Not!

By Nick Caputo

Normally in this issue of the Commonwealth Chief, the Professional Development Committee usually takes time to highlight the upcoming training and development programs that are being planned for the upcoming conference. However, I think most of you can find all you need to know about the 2014 conference at the VFCA website under the “conference” window.

With that being said, the Conference Planning Committee, with the support of the Executive Board, has decided to change the name of the VFCA Conference. Since its inception, the conference has been referred to in many ways: Mid-Atlantic Expo and Symposium, State Chiefs Conference, VFCA Conference and the Virginia Chiefs Conference, etc. Now in effect for 2014, the new name of our conference will be the Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference. This name change was made to let all fire service personnel know that our conference is not just for chiefs, and that it is open to all types and ranks of fire service personnel. In addition, our conference is not just about fire. We realize that the fire service is multi-disciplined and includes all types of responses including specialized rescue, EMS, hazmat, homeland security, etc.

For these reasons, the name change occurred.

Several of the VFCA’s strategic goals are directly related to the training and professional development of current and future company and chief officers. While the name of the conference has formally changed, our commitment to delivering a top-quality, world class conference has not changed. We implore each of you to take advantage of our affordable and outstanding professional development opportunities; and challenge each of you to bring a fire service friend to the 2014 Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference. We realize that times are tight and that training budgets have been cut, however, we ask that you continue to support YOUR conference and ensure that YOUR personnel receive the training that they deserve. Neither you, nor they, will be disappointed in the quality of training and the overall “bang for the buck” that is offered at our conference. The VFCA truly needs your department’s SUPPORT at the 2014 Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference! Can we count on you to attend and bring a friend?

Mark your calendars for February 20 - 23, 2014. Please visit www.vfca.us for more details.

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NFPA launches refreshed older adult fire and fall safety program

NFPA offers free, updated fire and fall prevention program for older adults

In late October the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) produced/released a new version of Remembering When™: A Fire and Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults. Program materials, available for download at no cost, are widely used by fire departments and other safety educators interested in reaching older adults with fire and fall prevention messages developed especially for them. The revised program includes updated fire and fall statistics, safety messaging, trivia, art work, and inclusion of “younger” older adults.

Since 1999, Remembering When has been implemented in communities throughout North America to help thousands of older adults learn strategies to help them live safely at home for as long as possible. The program’s foundation remains the same: the 16 key safety messages—eight fire prevention and eight fall prevention—developed by experts from national and local safety organizations and focus group testing in high fire-risk states. The program will continue to be implemented through group presentations, home visits, and as part of smoke alarm installation and fall intervention programs. All of the revised training materials are available online.

“Over the next decades, the population of older adults will increase dramatically,” said Karen Berard-Reed, senior project manager for NFPA. “The new version targets adults who are just entering their older years. We hope to encourage these ‘younger’ older adults to develop important safety habits that will carry them through their senior years and help those around them develop safer behaviors.”

Representatives of fire departments and home visit agencies across the United States and Canada that have been chosen to participate in the Remembering When conference December 1-3, 2013 in Boston, were to be the first trained with updated materials.

“Training is available for fire and life safety educators at the annual NFPA Remembering When Conference and at a variety of state and regional venues,” added Berard-Reed. “However, you do not have to attend a training to use the program. Tools, along with support materials to assist instructors, are readily available online to be downloaded at no cost.”

To obtain the free materials go to: http://www.nfpa.org/rememberingwhen

Latest firefighter injury report shows that nearly 70,000 injuries occurred in the line of duty in 2012

NFPA released the latest edition of its U.S. Firefighter Injury Report, highlighting data on injuries sustained by firefighters on duty that was collected from fire departments responding to the 2012 National Fire Experience Survey.

Firefighter injuries have declined over the past three decades, hovering around roughly 100,000 from the early 1980’s through early 1990’s. In 2012, 69,400 firefighter injuries occurred in the line of duty.

- Of those injuries, 31,490 (45.4 percent) occurred during firefighting operations, with the leading causes reported as overexertion, straining (27.5 percent) and falling, slipping, and jumping (23.2 percent).
- The Northeast also reported a higher number of firefighting injuries per 100 fires than other regions of the country.

The major types of injuries received during firefighting operations were:
- strains, sprains, and muscular pain (55.2 percent)
- followed by wounds, cuts, bleeding, and bruising (12.2 percent)
- thermal stress (5.8 percent)
- and burns (5.7 percent)

An estimated 13,820 occurred during other on-duty activities, including:
- 4,190 while responding to or returning from an incident
- 7,140 during training activities
- and 12,760 occurring at non-fire emergency incidents
- Strains, sprains, and muscular pain accounted for 58.5 percent of all non-fireground injuries

In addition to injuries, there were 8,150 exposures to infectious diseases, and 19,200 exposures to hazardous conditions.

Read the latest NFPA Journal article on this newly released report for more information.

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Meet The Chief
Getting to know Keith Brower...

In this issue we will meet one of the many fire chiefs who will be spotlighted in the coming issues of Commonwealth Chief this year. Here we take a look at Chief W. Keith Brower, Jr. of the Loudoun County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management.

Tenure in the fire service
40 years, includes volunteer and career time.

Career “Journey”
Probably began at age 2 or 3! The story goes that I started chasing my dad, who had 51 years in the Purcellville Volunteer Fire Company, when he would leave for a fire call. Actually, I became one of the first junior members at Purcellville VFC in 1973 at the age of 16. I continued volunteering with the Bridgewater (VA) Volunteer Fire Company and the City of Harrisonburg (VA) Fire Department from 1975-1978 while attending Bridgewater College. After graduation, I was hired by the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and worked there until 1984 when I was hired by Loudoun County as a Fire Training Officer. Through promotions, I became Assistant Director, then Fire Marshal (2004-2010) and was appointed Chief of Department in November 2010.

Form of Government
Loudoun County utilizes a County Administrator form of government, with a 9-member Board of Supervisors.

Sources of Funding for Your Organization
Funding comes principally from local real and personal property taxes. Certain additional funds come from Aid to Localities, 4-for-Life and federal UASI projects.

Population Served
When I started in 1984, we were at 80,000 population. Today we are at 340,000. Loudoun County has been one of the fastest growing jurisdictions in the United States for the last decade, and we continue to see massive growth, despite the recent economic downturn.

Square Miles Covered
520 square miles, and this includes 7 incorporated towns.

Department Composition
Loudoun County uses a combination fire and rescue service. The Department employs 505 career firefighter/EMT’s and there are 16 volunteer companies with a collective strength of approximately 1,000 operational and administrative volunteers. The service operates out of 19 stations. Operationally, career members provide 12 or 24 hour coverage to assist in all but one volunteer agency. In addition, the Department manages the 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center, the Fire and Rescue Training Center, the Fire Marshal’s Office, Volunteer Programs and the Office of Emergency Management. The Department is the system lead agency for programs related to Safety and Health, Human Resources Management, Fleet Management and Facility Maintenance.

Department Equipment
The system utilizes 75 front line and reserve heavy fire and rescue apparatus (pumpers, ladders, heavy rescues) and 40 transport ambulances. Specialty apparatus includes a HazMat response unit, HazMat support unit, a Medical Ambulance Bus (MAB), Mass Casualty Support Unit (MCSU), Mobile Air Unit (MAU), Mobile Command Unit, 2 Bomb Squad response units, a Total Containment Vehicle (TCV), 8 swift water boats and a host of Incident Command and other Support vehicles. We also utilize an accelerant canine provided by ATF.

Call Summary
Last year our combined service answered 17,644 EMS calls, 5,635 fire calls and 2,482 public service calls.

What is the most challenging issue or issues facing your department today?
Certainly the continued rapid residential growth of the County and the economic situation is at the forefront of our issues, as this has stressed our service. Both have led to recruitment and retention challenges for many of our volunteer partner agencies, who have seen operational membership drop to a point where they must ask for emergency expanded County career support. The effect of this on the Department is felt in the overtime budget, resulting in the need to hire and train additional career staff. Related to hiring, we also struggle to make the Department more diverse to mirror the community we represent. Success here is dependent upon money and people to manage outreach programs, and we are limited in resources at this time. Preparing for additional technical rescue service delivery, thanks in part to the pending arrival of Metro into the County in 2016, is another challenge. And, of course, as we seem to be the lightweight construction poster child, we are challenged by the hazards and of rapid energy fires, exterior fire spread and early collapse. “We have ascribed to the USFA theme that “fire is everyone’s fight,” so we are focusing on developing aggressive public fire and life safety programs as well as heavy stream placement as an offensive strategy when public education fails.
How would you describe your management style?
I attempt to provide broad direction in order to empower staff to run their programs. Day-to-day I utilize a collaborative style which maximizes input from staff and the myriad stakeholder groups that are present in a combined service. I clearly don’t have all the answers, but there is always someone out there who does.

Does your department have a formal, long-range strategic plan?
The Board of Supervisors adopted our service plan about 7 years ago. It has provided a solid base to guide the direction of the service, however, it is out of date. My hope is that there will be authorization to revise this soon.

How have current economic times impacted your department?
The recent economic downturn resulted in several statewide program cuts and unfunded mandates, i.e., Loss of ATL interest, local funding of Line-of-Duty, VRS cost share and so on, that have been felt by all local government employees. Maintaining employee morale has been made more difficult. I also believe that the economy has forced people out of the volunteer pool as they must seek employment elsewhere or work additional jobs just to make ends meet, and this has resulted in the unplanned, emergency hiring of first responders at several our volunteer stations.

Are you doing things differently today because of the economy?
We rely heavily on part-time instructors and have started to civilianize certain positions in the organization to save money on salaries and benefits. We are hopeful to begin implementing EMS Transport Reimbursement, which will lessen the upward pressure on the real property tax rate. These funds will be dedicated to supporting our EMS training and delivery services.

What challenges do you see facing the fire service today?
We must change the culture to better understand fire dynamics so that we do more to cool fires down before we go in. Eliminating the flashover risk is imperative if we are to reduce LODD’s brought on by the rapid energy fires of today. Really is OK to hit the fire quickly from the outside. It will probably go out, which is why we were called in the first place! Related, we need to get the public to understand they are not safe in their homes during a fire. Fires in new construction have reduced occupant escape time from an average of 13 minutes to 3-4 minutes. We must focus on smoke alarms and other prevention programs because we can’t get there fast enough. We must also stress the importance and success of simple citizen CPR. We must use all avenues of technology to get information out to the public, and we must also prepare for the new technologies that will help us (on-line learning) as well as other run us (NG 911) if we aren’t careful. Last, we must live Life Initiative #13 by educating personnel about cancer. Every member should read the publication “Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service” and make the simple as well as longer term changes to reduce our exposures.

How do you view training?
I think we do a better job at training to use “things” as opposed to working on the “soft skills” that are critical to leading and developing our personnel. A well-developed training program prepares and maintains all ranks in both areas. Officer preparedness is another critical area. We are just now implementing an Officer Candidate School to prepare aspiring officers to assume rank. The cost was huge, but we view it as an investment that will last for a career. Last, I think we now have the technologies in place to better use simulations to train on differing situations. This provides a safe environment where mistakes do not result in a tragic event. Our hope is to have a full command competencies lab in service in the next year or so.

Do you have a close working relationship with neighboring departments?
Yes. September 11, 2001 bore witness to the benefits of a regional approach to fire and EMS delivery, and our Board of Supervisors has formally committed us to regional participation. We have recently updated most of our automatic mutual aid agreements with contiguous jurisdictions and have adopted regional communications and operational practices. As Chiefs, we interact on policy on a regular basis. But, what makes this successful most of all are the personal working relationships that we develop and share in crisis, we literally know our mutual aid partners.

What do you look for in a new recruit?
Be honest, demonstrate integrity and possess a “can do” attitude. We can teach the rest.

What’s in the future for the fire service as you see it?
Continuous change, doing more with less and increasing our community outreach. I view these as opportunities to re-assess how we do business. Operationally, it is clear that we have not achieved the intended outcomes for residential sprinklers in new construction. Homes will continue to burn at unprecedented speeds and green initiatives, namely natural lighting, use of solar panels, roof gardens and so on, will only compound our problems with access and structural integrity. So, instead of jeopardizing our crews, maybe it’s time to embrace that a heavy defensive fire attack is the best and safest offense. In addition, maximizing public contact is vital to getting prevention information out to the public. We also have the technology to target and teach fire and life safety to a variety of audiences. Finally, my hope is that we are ripe to grow out of the “good old boy” network, as we are seeing more emphasis on education, professional development and diversity and inclusion. The public pays a high price for the protection we provide and we need to honor that.

How has being a member of the VFCA helped you become a better chief/leader?
For me it has been about the friendships that I have been able to cultivate. I was fortunate early on to have trained and run calls in two areas of the state- Northern Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley. I have expanded these friendships to all parts of Virginia through VFCA. I believe that exposure to other leaders and their ideas provide more ideas that we can “borrow” to be more effective in our jobs.

If you know someone who would be interesting to read about in this column, contact Bill Smith, Editor, Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (888) 819-0893 or bsmith@vfca.us

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- Vendors will enjoy extended times to interact with attendees during the day on Friday and Saturday
- Attendees are invited to a “All Hands Rehab” – a fun, networking social on Saturday night
Focus On Cancer Among Firefighters...

In this issue we will feature several articles on the problem of cancer among firefighters. It is a growing problem among firefighters in today’s environment. However, it is a problem that can be beaten.

Chief Bill Metcalf, IAFC president and COB recently highlighted the problem in his **IAFC INSIGHTS**

An enemy among us

The fire service in recent years has expended an incredible amount of energy – and rightly so – on firefighter safety. We’ve implemented seatbelt pledges, wellness/fitness programs and dramatically improved fireground safety. But while we have been focusing in those areas, an insidious threat has been going on among us – cancer in the fire service.

Here are a few statistics that hopefully will get your attention:

- More firefighters have been diagnosed with cancer in the last two years than in the previous years combined.
- The firefighter death rate from many types of cancer is two to three times that of the general population.
- Retirees have shown cancer diagnosis rates of 50% or more per year.

Today, the line-of-duty deaths from traditional causes hover between 80 and 100 per year. Certainly, those numbers are concerning; but while we have focused elsewhere; cancer has emerged as the No. 1 killer of firefighters. If we were to add in the deaths due to cancer contracted as a result of firefighting, the annual death rate would be between 700 and 800.

Cancer doesn’t receive the attention of the other occupational causes of death. It grows silently and makes itself known at home or in the doctor’s office – often years after the event or well into retirement. But cancer among firefighters is clearly a significant problem and one that we need to pay more attention to.

A number of organizations, including the IAFC and IAFF, are working on this issue. The Firefighter Cancer Support Network actively is working to increases firefighter awareness on the issue. In August at Fire-Rescue International, the FCSN released a white paper called “Taking Action Against Cancer in the Fire Service.” It highlights the cancer problem, what we know now about the causes and suggests some simple activities we can take today to make it safer for firefighters. ([Download the paper at www.firechief.com/bonus-content/](http://www.firechief.com/bonus-content/))

The whitpaper replaces misconceptions with fact. For example, while respiratory disease is a threat, the bulk of the cancers that are showing up are due to dermal contact. That is, we are exposed to materials on our skin

and in sensitive places where it is absorbed and bad things happen. We can do the most good in preventing cancer in firefighters by staying clean: clean our gear, clean ourselves and do it every time.

The white paper concludes with a simple list of 11 steps we can take to dramatically reduce cancer among firefighters. ([see related article](http://www.firechief.com/bonus-content/)) The list needs to be printed out and plastered all over our stations.

While the work being done is important, we all need a great deal more data and research in order to really understand what is happening. The research effort is getting a big boost right now with a FIRE grant – funded study on firefighter cancer being conducted by NIOSH. The study will take place over the next few years and will follow 30,000 firefighters and their experience with cancer. For more information on this study, visit [http://tinyurl.com/l7mh6fx/](http://tinyurl.com/l7mh6fx/).

If we are going to make true progress against this killer among us, we must recognize it for what it is – the single biggest killer of firefighters. We need to develop and implement tracking mechanisms to measure the occurrence of firefighter cancer and attract more research dollars so we can better understand the problem and identify solutions.

This is a problem that can be beaten, but it needs to come out of the dark corners of the fire service and into the bright light where we can talk about it, study it and develop the tactics necessary to beat it. Let’s put as much energy into this fight as we do into other challenges that have come before us.

This article is being reprinted with permission of the IAFC.

Chief William R. Metcalf, EFO, CFO, MiFire, is the president and chairman of the board of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. He also is the fire chief for North County Fire Protection District in Fallbrook, California, a suburb of San Diego, and has served in that position since 2003.
Taking Action Against Cancer

In April 2013, the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN) invited a small group of experts to Indianapolis to develop a white paper on cancer in the fire service.

The participants came from the legal, medical and social-research communities, and the fire service – including volunteer, combination and career departments and chief officers, firefighters, company officers, union leaders and local and state fire training directors. Two firefighters who are cancer survivors participated and every workshop participant knew firefighters who currently have cancer or who died as a result of cancer.

They willingly shared their knowledge, experience, commitment and questions to better understand the complexity of firefighter cancer awareness. The discussions addressed prevention, diagnosis, treatment and long-term implications for the firefighter, the firefighter’s family, their co-workers, the fire department and community policy. Importantly, they also identified a series of actions that firefighters can take to reduce their exposure to chemicals that can cause or facilitate cancer.

In two-and-a-half days, the working group outlined and wrote the initial draft of a white paper describing the status of cancer in the fire service and developed answers to very challenging questions. This report is the result of that working group which was enhanced by the additional review of multiple career and volunteer operational fire companies, additional clinical researchers and medical physicians, other stakeholders and the leadership of FCSN.

Indianapolis Fire Department hosted the workshop at its headquarters, and the Indianapolis Metropolitan Professional Firefighters Association IAFF Local 416 extended its well-known and gracious hospitality and support, complimented by the facilitation skills of the Volunteer & Combination Officers Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs. A special thanks to Chief John Buckman for taking great notes during the workshop and to Gary Briese for writing the document, to the Indianapolis Firefighter Emerald Society Bagpipe Band for their bus, to the Indiana State Professional Firefighters Association for their support and to Captain Tim McDonnell, IFD and FCSN Board Member, who did yeoman’s work in making the on-site arrangements and logistics.

The FCSN offers our sincere appreciation to all of these individuals and organizations for this successful effort. The report was released in late August.

Firefighter Cancer Support link is: www.FirefighterCancerSupport.com

What is the Firefighter Cancer Problem?

Firefighter cancer is a looming personal catastrophe for each and every firefighter. Cancer is the most dangerous and unrecognized threat to the health and safety of our nation’s firefighters.

Multiple studies, including the soon-to-be-released NIOSH cancer study, have repeatedly demonstrated credible evidence and biologic creditability for statistically higher rates of multiple types of cancers in firefighters compared to the general American population.

WHAT IMMEDIATE ACTIONS CAN I TAKE TO PROTECT MYSELF?

1. Use SCBA from initial attack to finish of overhaul. (Not wearing SCBA in both active and post-fire environments is the most dangerous voluntary activity in the fire service today.
2. Do gross field decon of PPE to remove as much soot and particulates as possible.
3. Use Wet-Nap or baby wipes to remove as much soot as possible from head, neck, jaw, throat, underarms and hands immediately and while still on the scene.
4. Change your clothes and wash them immediately after a fire.
5. Shower thoroughly after a fire.
6. Clean your PPE, gloves, hood and helmet immediately after a fire.
7. Do not take contaminated clothes or PPE home or store it in your vehicle.
8. Decon fire apparatus interior after fires.
10. Stop using tobacco products.
11. Use sunscreen or sun block.

The importance of annual medical examinations cannot be overstated – early detection and early treatment are essential to increasing survival.
Five Things Every Firefighter Needs to Know About Mesothelioma

In the chaos of a fire scene, the last thing on a firefighter’s mind is avoiding asbestos exposure. Yet nearly every day, firefighters are exposed to this carcinogenic material – and some will develop life-threatening health problems because of it.

Whether you’re relaxing at the station or enjoying a day off at home, take a few minutes now to commit the following information to memory. You may be in the business of saving others’ lives - but it’s important to give yourself the same courtesy.

1. Malignant mesothelioma is a rare cancer caused by asbestos exposure. Only 3,000 Americans are diagnosed with mesothelioma each year. Almost all of those diagnoses are traced to asbestos exposure. When the carcinogenic fibers are inhaled, they can get trapped in the lining of the lungs, the lining of the stomach, or the lining of the heart. From there, they can cause inflammation, scarring and cancerous developments.

2. Firefighters have a higher risk of developing mesothelioma than many other people. Any time they respond to a fire scene where the property was built before the 1980s, there’s a significant chance that firefighters will be handling friable asbestos products. As asbestos-contaminated drywall, shingles, floor tiles and other similar products burn and smolder, they can release their asbestos fibers into the air.

3. Mesothelioma symptoms are primarily related to the respiratory system. Firefighters are no strangers to lung disease – and while they’re on high alert for symptoms of COPD, asthma or emphysema, they should also be mindful of mesothelioma’s respiratory symptoms. Coughing, shortness of breath, bloody sputum and chest pain are the first complications to develop.

4. Mesothelioma treatments can improve a patient’s prognosis – but prompt treatment is essential. Approximately 40 percent of patients achieve one year survival, with a few survivors reaching 10 or 20 years. Early diagnosis and aggressive treatment (often a combination of lung surgery, radiation therapy and cisplatin or other mesothelioma chemotherapy drugs) can improve a patient’s chances of survival.

5. Asbestos-related disease screenings and SCBAs are firefighters’ most valuable tools against mesothelioma. Respiratory gear – specifically self-contained breathing apparatuses with HEPA-grade filters – can prevent asbestos from entering the body. However, to monitor the effects of exposure that has already occurred, regular health screenings are a must.

For additional information on Mesothelioma, check out this website, www.asbestos.com/mesothelioma/.

This month’s guest article is from Faith Franz, a writer for The Mesothelioma Center. It is reprinted with permission.
The U.S. Fire Administration announced in mid-September the release of the report Firefighter Fatalities in the United States in 2012. There were 81 on-duty firefighter fatalities as a result of incidents that occurred last year. The fatalities occurred in 31 states, one territory, and one overseas military facility. A record low number of firefighter deaths were caused by heart attacks (39) but deaths caused by vehicle crashes were back up with 18 firefighters killed as the result of 14 accidents, six involving POVs, six involving apparatus, and six from two incidents involving aircraft.

Eighty-one firefighters died while on duty in 2012.

- The total break down included 42 volunteer, 28 career, and 11 wildland agency firefighters.
- There were 4 multiple firefighter fatality incidents claiming a total of 10 firefighters.
- Fifteen firefighters died in duties associated with wildland fires.
- Activities related to emergency incidents resulted in the deaths of 45 firefighters.
- Twenty-two firefighters died while engaging in activities at the scene of a fire.
- Seventeen firefighters died while responding to or returning from 16 emergency incidents.
- Eighteen firefighters died as the result of 14 vehicle crashes, six involving POVs, six involving apparatus, and six from two separate incidents involving aircraft.
- Heart attacks were the most frequent cause of death with 39 firefighter deaths.
- Eight firefighters died while they were engaged in training activities.
- Twelve firefighters died after the conclusion of their on-duty activity.

The highest number of firefighter deaths, based on the location of the fire service organization in 2012, occurred in North Carolina and Pennsylvania, with nine deaths each. New York and Texas had the next highest totals of firefighter fatalities in 2012, with six firefighter deaths each. Virginia suffered four firefighter deaths.

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“Medic in Mind” is offered with a double-wide bench or sliding swivel seat and is available on all PL models.

Interior is custom-designed to work with the individual departments and incorporate their protocol into the layout.
Obamacare could require volunteer agencies to offer health insurance… NVFC asks for exemption

On September 9, the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) sent a letter to the Acting Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) asking that volunteers be clearly exempted “…from being considered ‘employees’ of the organizations they serve under the Employer Shared Responsibility Provisions of the (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or PPACA).” On September 12, the NVFC issued an Action Alert through our Capwiz system asking subscribers to contact their members of Congress, the President, Vice President, and the IRS to let them know that, “…fire and EMS agencies cannot afford to provide health insurance for volunteer personnel and that volunteers do not have an expectation of receiving such benefits from the agencies that they serve.”

The basic problem is that the IRS considers volunteers to be common law employees of the agencies that they serve. PPACA, commonly referred to as “health care reform” or “Obamacare,” requires large employers to provide full-time employees with health insurance coverage. Because the IRS considers volunteers to be employees and it falls to the IRS to enforce the Employer Shared Responsibility Provision of the PPACA, the NVFC believes that many fire departments could end up facing penalties starting in 2015 if they do not offer health insurance benefits to their volunteers.

Not all volunteer departments will be required to provide health insurance as a result of the PPACA. Many departments will not have enough members working enough hours on a consistent basis to be subject to the PPACA penalties. Employers must have 50 or more “full-time or full-time equivalent employees” to be considered “large employers” under the law. “Full-time employees” are individuals who work for 30 hours or more per week on a consistent basis for a particular employer. Employers with 30 or fewer full-time employees will not be penalized for not offering health insurance coverage under the PPACA, even if they qualify as a “large employer.”

Paying for members’ health insurance just isn’t an option for the overwhelming majority of volunteer fire and EMS agencies. One of the main reasons that emergency services rely on volunteers is that they often lack resources to pay full-time salaries and benefits. Volunteer emergency responders commonly serve in rural communities with small tax bases and higher-than-average rates of poverty.

Injury rates in emergency services professions are much higher than for other occupations, and it is critical that volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel have access to affordable health insurance coverage. Most volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel have full-time jobs outside of the department which, ideally, would offer health insurance benefits. Those without access to employer-provided insurance should be able to purchase affordable coverage through the exchanges if they don’t qualify for Medicaid.

The goal of the PPACA is to make it possible for those without access to employer or government-provided insurance to be able to purchase affordable coverage through insurance exchanges. It is critical that volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel have access to affordable health insurance coverage. Exempting volunteers from being treated as employees under the law will allow them to make use of the exchanges without having to worry that the agency that they serve will be fined as a result.

The impact of the PPACA on the volunteer emergency services community could vary greatly depending on how or whether the final implementing regulations that the IRS issues address the application of the law to volunteers. Fully exempting volunteers (including individuals who receive minor benefits in appreciation for their service) from being considered employees under the law as requested by the NVFC would be the quickest and easiest way to address this. If volunteers are not exempted it will depend on what the final regulations say, how individual agencies choose to interpret them, and how the IRS goes about enforcing them.

Until the final implementing regulations are published it will be difficult to estimate how many agencies will be impacted. Very large volunteer agencies, combination departments, and departments that are part of a unit of government that employs people on a full-time basis are the most likely to be considered large employers. Without clear guidance, even agencies that do not have enough personnel working enough hours on a regular basis to be considered large employers under PPACA may take steps to protect themselves, potentially including eliminating recruitment and retention incentives or restricting volunteer membership and/or hours worked.

Some in Congress have called for the PPACA to be repealed or defunded. Despite repeated attempts in recent years, both houses of Congress have not passed legislation repealing the PPACA and President Obama has indicated that if such legislation were to reach his desk that he would veto it. The NVFC has no position on the PPACA generally and does not view eliminating the law as a viable option for addressing the problem of volunteers being treated as employees under the Employer Shared Responsibility Provision.

This article was drafted in late November. To find out the latest information on this issue, go to www.NVFC.org and do a website search using the keyword “PPACA.”

Source: Congressional Research Service analysis of P.L. 111-148 and P.L. 111-152

Will the Employer Pay a Penalty? beginning in 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you a large employer?</th>
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<tr>
<td>or at least 50 full-time equivalent workers</td>
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<td>or at least 30 full-time employees who receive health care coverage</td>
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<td>Do you have more than 30 full-time employees?</td>
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<td>Do you provide health insurance?</td>
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<td>Pay Monthly Penalty, issuer of:</td>
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<tr>
<td>or 1/12 x 52,000 x (Number of full-time employees - 30)</td>
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Source: Congressional Research Service analysis of P.L. 111-148 and P.L. 111-152
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“FIRE-SAFE” CIGARETTES ARE MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO 30-YEAR LOW IN SMOKING MATERIAL FIRE DEATHS

According to a report released by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in October, 540 civilian deaths in the United States were attributed to smoking material fires in 2011, a 30 year low that is well down from 1980 levels. In 2011, there were an estimated 90,000 smoking material fires resulting in $621 million in direct property damage.

The decline in smoking, the effect of standards and regulations that have made mattresses and upholstered furniture more resistant to cigarette ignition, and more recently, adoption of fire-safe cigarette requirements throughout the country, are factors the report credits with the decrease in smoking material fire deaths over the past 31 years. The long-term trend in smoking material fires is down by 73 percent from 1980 to 2011.

“Fire safe,” or reduced ignition strength cigarettes, as determined by ASTM test standards and state laws on acceptable performance, appear to be the only factor contributing to the decline in smoking material fire deaths that had not leveled off or phased out before 2003 – the last year before the fire-safe cigarette law was effective in any state.

2012 was the first year all 50 state laws were effective and all inventories of pre-standard cigarettes should have sold out. A projection linking the percentage decline in fires or fire deaths to the percentage of smokers covered suggested that when the law was fully effective across the entire country in late 2011, the reduction in fire deaths should reach 30 percent, relative to levels in 2003, and as predicted by the projection in the previous NFPA report, estimated fire deaths were 30 percent lower than in 2003.

“It is good news to see this 30 year low and fewer people dying in smoking-material fires,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president of Outreach and Advocacy. “Lives were saved and will continue to be saved as a direct result of efforts of the Fire Safe Cigarette Coalition, a group of safety advocates, the fire service and others, who in the past decade joined together to see that fire-safe cigarettes become the standard.”

Other key findings in the report show:

• One out of four fatal victims of smoking-material fires is not the smoker whose cigarette started the fire.
• Older adults are at highest risk of death or injury from home smoking material fires, even though they are less likely to smoke than younger adults.

NFPA has developed safety information, including safety tips focusing on safe behavior, storage, and disposal of smoking materials:

+ Use a deep, sturdy ashtray. Place it away from anything that can burn.
+ Before going to bed, check under furniture cushions and around places where people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.
+ Keep cigarettes, lighters, matches, and other smoking materials up high out of the reach of children, in a locked cabinet.

SYMBOLS THAT AMERICAN HEROES RECOGNIZE

The Maltese Cross represents the ideals of saving lives and property. It serves as a proud symbol of fire service throughout the country. Another recognized symbol is VFIS. Today, over 15,000 fire and emergency service organizations throughout North America have entrusted VFIS with their health and welfare. A symbol recognized for over 40 years.

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Cost of installing residential fire sprinklers averages $1.35 per square foot

New Fire Protection Research Foundation report assesses costs

The cost to install home fire sprinklers in 51 homes in 17 communities averaged $1.35 per sprinklered square foot, down from the $1.61 average in 2008, according to a report conducted by Newport Partners (Newport) and released by the Fire Protection Research Foundation (the Foundation) an affiliate of the National Fire Protection Association. (Sprinklered square feet is a measure of total area of spaces with sprinklers.) The new report, Home Fire Sprinkler Cost Assessment – 5 Year Update, provides a national perspective on the cost of installing home fire sprinklers.

The primary purpose of the 2013 study was to review current home fire sprinkler costs against a 2008 benchmark study, Home Fire Sprinkler Cost Assessment, also commissioned by the Foundation and conducted by Newport, to better understand the relationship between adoptions, various elements of cost such as installation and materials, how efficiency in design or installation may be introduced and more.

In 2008, sprinklers were becoming more common in one- and two-family homes but adoption was not widespread. Fire sprinklers in homes have steadily increased in recent years, driven in large part by building codes, outreach and education. Two states - California and Maryland - have sprinkler requirements in place for all new one- and two-family homes with numerous other jurisdictions in the process of partial or full adoption of the provision.

The current study examines 51 homes in 17 communities throughout the U.S. selected on the basis of geography, regulations, housing types, sprinkler systems and materials, and water supply situations. The 2008 study examined 30 homes in 10 U.S. communities.

“There is concrete data that shows home fire sprinklers save lives and reduce losses from fire,” said Kathleen Almand, executive director of the Fire Protection Research Foundation. “However, objective cost information is difficult to find. Our latest research project provides these costs based on actual data.”

About the Fire Protection Research Foundation

The Fire Protection Research Foundation plans, manages, and communicates research on a broad range of fire safety issues in collaboration with scientists and laboratories around the world. The Foundation is an affiliate of NFPA.

About the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

NFPA is a worldwide leader in fire, electrical, building, and life safety. The mission of the international nonprofit organization founded in 1896 is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education. NFPA develops more than 300 codes and standards to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and other hazards. All NFPA codes and standards can be viewed at no cost at www.nfpa.org/freeaccess.

Two New Active Shooter Resources Available

More than 250 people have been killed in the United States during what has been classified as active shooter and mass casualty incidents (AS/MCIs) since the Columbine High School shootings in 1999. AS/MCIs involve one or more suspects who participate in an ongoing, random or systematic shooting spree, demonstrating the intent to harm others with the objective of mass murder.

It has become evident that these events may take place in any community impacting fire and police departments, regardless of their size or capacity. Local jurisdictions must build sufficient public safety resources to handle AS/MCI scenarios. Local fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and law enforcement (LE) must have common tactics, communications capabilities and terminology to have seamless, effective operations. They should also establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) for these very volatile and dangerous situations.

The goal is to plan, prepare and respond in a manner that will save the maximum number of lives possible.

Extraordinary efforts on the part of local fire/EMS agencies and direct pre-planned coordination with LE is required during response to these events in order to rapidly affect rescue, save lives, and enable operations with mitigated risk to personnel. It is essential that local policies be put in place before AS/MCIs happen to ensure coordinated and integrated planning, preparation, response, treatment and care.

The recognition of AS/MCIs as a reality in modern American life has led to the assembly of a number of public safety organizations representing various disciplines to share and develop strategies for combating the problem. One group, convened by the American College of Surgeons and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Hartford, Connecticut, developed a concept document for the purpose of increasing survivability in mass casualty shootings. The paper, The Hartford Consensus, describes methods to minimize loss of life in these incidents.

In the wake of the recent active shooter incident at the Washington Navy Yard, responders now have two new resources to guide their work in preparing for active shooter events.

• USFA's Fire and Emergency medical Department Operational Considerations and Guide for Active Shooter and Mass Casualty Incidents (pdf)
• Urban Fire Forum's Active Shooter and Mass Casualty Terrorist Events Position Paper (pdf)

The two resources are part of the fire service community’s ongoing work to develop consensus around response considerations and provide tools for preparing for this growing threat. The IAFC is proud to have collaborated on both resources and urges members to review and take action as appropriate.

The Urban Fire Forum, a gathering of fire chiefs responsible for protecting some of the largest urban centers in the world, including IAFC members and leaders, also approved the Fire Service Deployment: Assessing Community Vulnerability position paper at their meeting in September.
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2014 Fire Chiefs Foundation Golf Tournament Set

Over the past three years the VFCF has held an annual golf tournament to raise funds to provide scholarships to emergency responders and their immediate family members. In addition, funds have been used to support the Virginia Fire Officers Academy. This academy is a week long resident program held at the University of Richmond and is used to help develop and grow the future leadership of the fire service.

Over the past couple of years you have either been a faithful supporter through sponsorship or attended this event and played. I wanted to get this notice out early so you can save the date and hopefully consider how you may continue to partner with the VFCF in 2014. Can the VFCF count on your assistance?

1. Share this email with at least 10 friends (hopefully more), family or possible sponsors - by sharing this information we can cast a wider net and hopefully increase the participation in sponsorships and attendance.
2. Are you willing to sponsor a hole or something related to the event?
3. Are you a golfer that will come and play? If you do not play golf I bet you know someone who does.

The goal for 2014 is to max out the course with 144 golfers and to raise $30,000 for the VFCF. Please see the attached flyer and let me know if you have any questions regarding this event.

Thanks in advance for your help— It is greatly appreciated!!!!

Retired Martinsville Fire Chief Mourned; Called Mentor, Inspiration

Retired Martinsville Fire Chief Jerry Brock died Tuesday, but his legacy of community service will continue in Martinsville. Brock was found lying on asphalt at his mother's home on Myrtle Road around dark Tuesday, according to Kris Shrader, deputy fire chief with Martinsville Fire & EMS. A ladder, leaf blower and other tools were nearby, but officials were not sure whether there had been an accident or a medical emergency. Shrader said Wednesday, Brock was taken to Memorial Hospital in Martinsville and airlifted to Roanoke Memorial Hospital, where he died Tuesday night, Shrader said. Brock's body was taken to the medical examiner's office for determination of what happened. "It's a tragic accident at this point," Shrader said, adding that today officials hope to learn the cause of Brock's death.Brock, 65, began his association with the Martinsville Fire Department by spending five years as a volunteer firefighter before he was hired as a career firefighter on Jan. 1, 1975. Working his way up in the ranks, Brock was named lieutenant in 1987; assistant chief in 1988; and fire chief in 1996. He assumed that office in January 1997 and retired in 2006.

Time Flies…

Cindy Marshall, APS President 2013

It's hard to believe how fast this year has gone by and we will be installing new officers in February. It has been a pleasure to serve as the president of the Administrative Professional's Section. It makes me proud to work with the folks that are so dedicated to the fire service and the passion they have to move it forward.

Thank you to all the allies I have had through these past two years serving as an officer. I look forward to continuing to work with our incoming president, Sherri Laffoon. I learned a lot from the Board as well as the Section members. The networking is really the most invaluable part of this great organization. I look forward to the training opportunity at the newly named Virginia Fire Rescue Conference at the beach!

Good luck to all the incoming officers and I will continue to be very involved with the Section and always offer my help and support to any of the members.

Smoke alarms save lives!

NIOSH Respirators User Notice: Chemical Warfare Agents

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has issued a Respirators User Notice stating that an error was made during recent testing of SCBA that calls into question the ability of some SCBA to meet NIOSH and NFPA standards for protection against chemical warfare agents.

The NIOSH notice states that agents used in testing from July 2012 through October 2013 were less than that required by NIOSH test procedures and therefore SCBA cannot be validated as in compliance with the CBRN standards until retesting is completed.

NIOSH is working with both SCBA manufactures and NFPA to address the issue. The VFCA recommends that its members review the NIOSH Respirators User Notice found at http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/usernotices/notices/notice11272013.html
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May 16, 2014

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All proceeds benefit the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation which provides educational opportunities to fire and emergency services professionals.

Sponsorship Opportunities

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- Includes full registration for 4 Players
- Corporate banner placement on site and at awards ceremony
- Signage at designated hole
- Title Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

**Gold Sponsor** - $1,000
- Includes full registration for 4 Players
- Opportunity to provide company promotional items
- Signage at designated hole
- Gold Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

**Beverage Cart Sponsor** - $250
- 3 company sponsor signs placed onto beverage cart
- Opportunity to provide company promotional items
- Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

**Driving Range Sponsor** - $300
- Opportunity to provide company promotional items
- Signage on driving range during event
- Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

**Cart Sponsor** - $500
- Company Signage placed in each golf cart
- Opportunity to provide company promotional items
- Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

**Putting Green Sponsor** - $300
- Opportunity to provide company promotional items
- Signage on putting green during event
- Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

**Hole Sponsor** - $125
- Custom signage placed on hole
- Sponsor acknowledgment in tournament program

Please send the below form with your check for your sponsorship and players to:
6520 Prospect Street Fredericksburg, VA 22407
(S40) 891-7226 or dewdrinkers@verizon.net
$80 per player - Make check payable to: VFCF

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<th>Please check off your level of sponsorship</th>
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<td>Official Title Sponsor – $1,500</td>
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<td>Gold Sponsor – $1,000</td>
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<td>Hole Sponsor – $125/ea.</td>
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<td>Driving Range Sponsor – $300</td>
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<td>No Sponsorship – Golf Only – $</td>
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**TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED** $__________

Sponsor / Contact Name: ____________________________________________

Sponsor Company Name: ____________________________________________

Phone: __________________ Fax: __________________ Email: ______________

Address: ________________________________________________________

Player 1: ___________________ Player 2: ___________________

Player 3: ___________________ Player 4: ___________________
The fire problem in the United States is an ongoing and continuous battle for the fire service and the public alike. According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), 81 percent of all fire deaths and 76 percent of all fire injuries occurred in residential buildings. Each year there is an estimated:

- 365,500 residential building fires reported to U.S. fire departments
- 2,560 deaths
- 13,275 injuries
- $6.6 billion in property loss

This is a call to action for USFA, fire and life safety partner organizations and the American public. We must join together to help reduce the number of home fires, and the resulting deaths, injuries and loss of property. We rely on the fire service to fight fires once they occur; however, the prevention of fires is up to all of us ... Fire is Everyone’s Fight™.

Fire is Everyone’s Fight public service announcement

Fire is Everyone’s Fight is designed to unite the fire service and many others in a collaborative effort to reduce home fire injuries, deaths and property loss. It invites fire departments, safety advocates, community groups, schools and others to rally behind a common and compelling theme. USFA and its partners will communicate and reinforce key lessons across many proven fire safety and prevention initiatives and programs.

Download

- Action Plan and Talking Points: Fire Is Everyone’s Fight (PDF, 433 Kb)

Partners across the Nation – the motivating force

USFA recognizes the power of partnership as a critical means of marketing and delivering accurate and consistent safety messages into the community. Fire is Everyone’s Fight is based on social marketing research commissioned by the grassroots Vision 20/20 fire safety consortium with funding from an Assistance to Firefighters Grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. USFA is asking partners to use the Fire is Everyone’s Fight tagline with existing or new materials. Based on partner resources, they may implement a number of strategies, such as sharing information with staff, member organizations, community groups, and other stakeholders. By leveraging Fire is Everyone’s Fight resources, supporting dissemination or advertising efforts and encouraging state and local chapters to join in the initiative, the fire safety community can present a consistent, repetitive message that helps diverse members of our society take action to reduce their risk of fire. This includes support for public service announcement (PSA) placements, educational outreach to community organizations, local media relations activities and other activities.

Partners may:

- Incorporate the theme Fire is Everyone’s Fight into their existing fire prevention materials or create new fire prevention and safety materials with the theme.
- Provide a list of the audiences to which the partners reach out on a regular basis (older adults, parents, teachers, local businesses, etc.)
- Provide a list of communications tools that the partners have resources and access to produce (radio PSAs, TV PSAs, newsletters, websites, blogs, etc.)
- Help identify new tools and resources to fill gaps and strengthen outreach efforts.
- Identify barriers and challenges to address collaboratively.

Fire is Everyone’s Fight resources

USFA will lead an effort to determine what resources are already available to the public as well as fire and life safety organizations, highlighting those that have been evaluated for effectiveness. Once this inventory of the materials is completed, USFA will work with its partners to identify the gaps. Where possible, USFA will develop new resources to meet key needs. Partners will be asked to use their resources as well to assist in filling these gaps and providing new information, products and/or materials to the public.

USFA will include a Fire is Everyone’s Fight web page and a range of trademarked graphics for use on partner materials. Other resources for partner discussion and sharing will be available via the “Fire is Everyone’s Fight” web page.

How you can support Fire is Everyone’s Fight

Fire is Everyone’s Fight is a national effort led by the U.S. Fire Administration. The fire safety and prevention network will grow as momentum builds with the support of many different organizations, communities and the public at large. This network will use a wide range of fire safety and prevention resources to communicate the importance of taking action to protect ourselves and the people we love from fire.

Learn how your organization can support the development of this exciting initiative and share your ideas with USFA about ways to help it grow in communities across America. For more information, contact: Teresa Neal at (301) 447-1024 or FEMA-FireisEveryonesFight@fema.dhs.gov
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