Land at the 2015 Virginia Fire Rescue Conference and hear the message Dave Sanderson has to share when US airways Flight 1549, or "the Miracle on the Hudson," ditched into the Hudson River on July 15, 2009. He had a "Flight Plan" do you?

Fairfax County's Virginia Task Force 1
International Urban Search and Rescue Team sent to Nepal following 7.9 magnitude earthquake see article/pictures pg. 9

Understanding The Politics Of The Budget Puzzle
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Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation Announces Annual Fund Raising Campaign

The purpose of the Foundation is to provide educational opportunities, including scholarships, to Fire and Emergency Services providers – both Volunteer and Career, develop Public Relations programs to promote and raise public awareness of Virginia’s Fire and Emergency Services; to assist other related organizations in the development and implementation of Public Education Programs; and provide grants to other Fire and Emergency Service Organizations. Fund development is through donations, corporate giving, and fund raising events, such as golf tournaments.

Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation is pleased to announce its upcoming campaign to raise funds to sustain our Mission. There are levels of sponsorship available to meet every budget. As we spread the word and maximize each support level the Foundation can realize approximately $.8 million in annual support! Please consider the most appropriate level of sponsorship that you can commit to over the next five years, or perhaps a one-time donation best suits your situation. Please indicate on the Form if you will be making a single donation or pledging a 5 year investment in the Foundation.

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Once you decide the level of sponsorship you are willing to support please complete the form below to reflect that information. You can submit your first year donation along with your completed form to VFCF, P. O. Box 699, Blackstone, VA 23824. If you are making a single donation for the entire 5 year period that should be indicated below. Because of dedicated and committed individuals such as yourself, the VFCF will remain fiscally sound in order to provide services and benefits to our Public Safety Responders and their immediate family members as well as to support the development of the future leaders of the Fire Service in the Commonwealth! As a side note, since 2003 the VFCF has awarded 188 Educational Scholarships and has trained 480 students who have graduated from the Virginia Fire Officers Academy (VFOA) since the Academy’s inception in 2007. The VFCF is a 501 © 3 recognized organization and as such your donation is tax deductible.

Thank you for your pledge of support! Your donation will make a difference!!

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Term of Support __________ Single Donation __________ Five Year Pledge __________ Other
President’s Message

Greetings, spring is finally upon us! Over the past several months the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA) has been hard at work addressing issues affecting the Fire-Rescue service throughout the Commonwealth and nation.

March 1, 2015, a letter signed by 12 Stakeholder Groups was sent to Governor Terry McAuliffe urging his support for House Bill 2204. Delegate Chris Jones was the patron of this bill, which establishes the process of reforming the Line of Duty Act (LODA). The substitute bill was prepared with input from public safety and employer stakeholder groups, and includes a reenactment clause for the 2016 General Assembly session. House Bill 2204 moves claim determination for LODA from the Department of Accounts to the Virginia Retirement System, beginning July 1, 2016. The bill also moves the administration of benefits from the Department of Accounts to the Department of Human Resources Management, with the same effective date. This bill creates a vehicle for all public safety stakeholders to work through the year to make reforms to LODA, which will benefit taxpayers and LODA recipients. While there is still work to be done to gain a full consensus, we feel that House Bill 2204 is an excellent commencement and the proper venue to accomplish this important task.

On March 11, 2015, a letter was released in response to Senator Warner’s request for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to provide clarity to Virginia firefighters, police officers, and other public safety and law enforcement personnel regarding the taxation of clothing provided to wear on duty. The IRS announced that public safety and law enforcement personnel will not be expected to pay taxes on common clothing items that they are required to wear while on duty. Upon receipt of the news, the VFCA reached out to thank Senator Warner for his support and attention in resolving this matter.

Through a partnership with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and Virginia State Firefighters Association, the VFCA developed and presented the first pilot program of the “new Chief Officer 101” on March 19-20, 2015 in Williamsburg, VA. Over 60 students throughout the state participated in this educational program focusing on information necessary to be a successful chief officer. The program will go through a series of several more pilots presented in various regions before the final edition is released.

On April 15-16, 2015, Chief Pat Dent, Chief David Hoback, and I attended the Congressional Fire Service Institute’s National Fire & EMS Symposium/27th Annual Dinner. On Wednesday April 15, 2015, the VFCA and VSFA visited Capitol Hill to meet with legislators from Virginia to garner support for issues affecting today’s fire service. These meetings focused on continued funding for the FIRE/SAFER Grant Program, sustainment funding for the National Fire Academy, federal taxation of volunteer firefighters, extending the Medicare Ambulance Add-On Program, Homeland Security Grant Reform, and other related topics.

The VFCA will host the first Fire Chiefs Summit on May 28-29, 2015 in Glen Allen, VA. The event will allow for expanded networking opportunities during the evening social, as well as educational opportunities designed specifically for fire chiefs. Attendees will learn about the state of the fire service, how to lower your ISO rating, how Virginia can play a role in the nation’s fire service now and in the future; and more importantly, the state of your Association’s VFCA, and what its continued representation means to your department.

The VFCA is also making plans to host a Community Risk Reduction/PIO Summit in the September 2015 time frame in Roanoke, VA. More information will be forthcoming as specific details become available. Until next time, STAY SAFE.
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The Politics of Fire Service Finances

By: Harry R. Carter, Ph.D., MIFireE, Fire Protection Consultant

My friends I believe that it is once again time to take a look at the world of budgets and finance. Money is the fuel which runs the machine of our operations and the oil which lubricates the engine as we move forward to protect our communities. It is important to remember, that no matter what government administrators wish to do, the people can still have a voice. We hear this voice through the approval of those representatives directly elected by the populace. It is up to us to insure that these people hear us.

What may seem like a reasonable expenditure to provide municipal fire protection may fail to meet the needs of the election promises of elected government officials in their quest to remain in power. You will soon discover that very few politicians will ever jeopardize their political careers for the good of the fire service. They will pat you on the back and gush over you with praise, but they will frequently keep their municipal checkbook in their pocket.

Fire administrators or would-be administrators must remember that political expediency frequently takes the place of a viable government policy. Taxation is not different. The matter of public finance is frequently the target of partisan bickering. It is important to remember that politics will always be a part of the manner in which government raises its operating capital; it would be wise to gather three elements in any battle for fiscal resources which must be fought with politicians. Facts-Figures-Friends.

Figures must prove the fire department need and create rock-solid arguments which can withstand the glare of the public spotlight. It is difficult for a politician to argue against a reasonable presentation supported by facts. Figures are essential to the fire administrator in search of organizational improvements. Funds which come from the public’s treasury must be justified by figures which show exact costs. Better yet, they should show how much will be saved by their expenditure. The shrewd fire administrator will gain friends throughout the community who can fight the political battle when he should avoid such fights.

It has been said that the setting and collection of user-based fees and charges is an extremely efficient way for local government to bring in the funds necessary to provide governmental services to any jurisdiction. When taxing capacity in an area is exhausted, government frequently turns to specific user fees to fill in the revenue gaps. But are these not taxes with a new name?

This was frequently the case in California following the effects of Proposition-13 fever in the late 70’s and early 80’s. Fees were assessed for many of the services normally provided as part of governmental tax collection. In some instances they were overturned in court for being too vague in their justifiable expense of doing business. There are still a number of jurisdictions that charge separate fees for services such as fire inspections, code and plan reviews and extinguisher charging.

I can recall the time that one innovative fire department in Texas even developed a program to rent Wet-Vacs for dewatering purposes in their community. While the funds raised by such efforts are often too low to cover the cost of providing the service, they can create additional income and a bit of good will by providing these extra services.

One good example comes from New Jersey’s Uniform Fire Code. It establishes a system where fees are set by various local, county and state inspection programs. Fees are collected by the level of government which performs the service and forwarded to the Bureau of Fire Safety for processing. The state retains 20 percent of the fees for agency expense and fire code administration. Local and county enforcement agencies receive the other 80 percent to fund their operations. The program has allowed most fire prevention bureaus in New Jersey to increase their size and improve the delivery of fire prevention and inspection services.

Fire administrators who seek to gain funds from a dedicated user-oriented fee schedule must seek both political and legal advice before proceeding with such a program. This may speed success and eliminate opposition. An additional funding source for local fire protection programs once came from the transfer funds available through federal revenue-sharing programs. Community Block Grants frequently bought the land and built fire stations now used in many cities, towns and villages across America. This is typified by loans available from the Farmers Home Administration (FHA) and various urban development grants.

Harry R. Carter, Ph.D., a Firehouse® contributing editor since 1990, is a municipal fire protection consultant based in Adelphia, New Jersey, and a veteran of 51 years in the fire and emergency service world. He is Chairman of the Board of Commissioners in Howell Township Fire District #2 and retired from the Newark, NJ Fire Department in 1999 as a battalion commander. Carter has also been a member of the Adelphia Fire Company since 1971, serving as Chief in 1991. Carter is a Life Member and Past President of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors, as well as a Life Member of the National Fire Protection Association. He is the Immediate Past President of the United States Branch of the Institution of Fire Engineers. Carter holds six college and university degrees with his terminal degree being a Ph.D. in organization and management, with a specialization in leadership, from Capella University in Minneapolis, MN.
Intergovernmental transfers of funds are still quite prevalent in such areas of government service such as health and educational programs. In these cases, state and federal programs mandate the delivery of certain programs. If monies are not forwarded to accomplish these tasks, they would be underfunded and would probably miss most of the targeted user population.

It has been a proud part of my career to have been one of the early supporters of what developed into the FIRE Act and SAFER Act programs. I can recall our many meetings back in the late 1990’s and the early 2000’s when we came together as a national fire service to support the important work of Congressman Bill Pascrell of New Jersey. He and a number of his fire service associates crafted the programs which has been providing needed funding to our fire service for more than a decade now.

Let me assure you that politics played a great part of bringing all parties to the table to make these vital programs happen. I also want you to know that the battle to keep them alive and properly funded is one that is still being fought. There are still those who think that fire and the problems it causes are a local issue. You and I know the depth and breadth of the problem. My Road Trip back in 2006 confirmed for me that great good had been done in a wide variety of places by the funding which came to communities big and small through the FIRE Act. The battle is ongoing. Please remember that.

Getting back to your local battle, please try to remember that in far too many cases insufficient capital is available to do what the politicians and administrators desire. Borrowing money to pay for the daily expenses of governmental programs and services is a poor practice. One needs to look no further than the federal deficit to understand how widespread this practice is. While the federal deficit may seem to indicate that borrowing for governmental purposes is a poor practice, the converse may be accurate.

However, when borrowing is done in reasonable amounts, at reasonable interest rates for necessary capital improvements, capital financing is an excellent way to spread the cost of high-priced, large-scale projects over a number of years. This practice will lessen their impact on any one budgetary year.

You need to take a look back at our fire service history for some examples that can stimulate your thought processes for future planning. An excellent example can be put forward in favor of creative capital financing come from St. Lewis, Missouri. Many years ago this fire department put together a large-scale bond proposition which replaced every piece of fire department apparatus and refurbished most of the fire stations. The same issue also paid for a new communications center and a modern training facility.

While the cost was high, every segment of the community benefited and the cost was extended over a number of years to bring it within reach. A strong word of warning is in order at this time. Please do not consider borrowing long-term capital funds to pay for your current expenses. This helped to create the financial problems faced by New York City in 1975. Only the most stringent financial controls, personnel layoffs and program reductions were able to stave off municipal bankruptcy.

Remember that there is always a cost involved in using borrowed money. The debt service on long-term capital financing can eat up the funds necessary for meeting current expenses. It is, therefore, essential to maintain a proper debt-to-capital ratio so that current and long-term financial obligations can be met. It may be wise to seek professional financial assistance before embarking on large-scale borrowing and spending programs.

Harried taxpayers often ask quite simply, “Where does all the money (that you collect in the form of taxes) go?” Whether spending authority is vested in an independent fire company, a fire district, or a tax supported fire department reporting directly to an arm of government, the question remains the same. The consequence which impacts the authority which is receiving the money also remains the same. Responsible jurisdictions expect a fair and accurate accounting of how the funds are spent. It is the astute fire administrator who constantly reinforces this concept of fiscal accountability to those who provide the tax dollars, as well as those who allocate the resources in local government.

No study of local government expenditures would be complete without a look at the ratio of short-range current expenses to the longer and larger periphery of the bonded capital debt. The distinct areas of expense make up the local spending arena. Things paid for on a day to day basis, through the current expense funding mechanism take up the immediate attention of the fire administrator. Projects whose cost is spread over a number of years require the fire administrator’s talents at planning.

The reason for varying levels of local expenditures goes well beyond those things which local government can directly control. However, the trends must be monitored and local operations and expenditures tailored to meet the newly emerging protective service needs dictated by these trends. An example of this would stress that those charged with providing fire protection in an area of explosive suburban growth are powerless to influence the influx of new citizens to their community.

Various factors have combined to make semi-rural and suburban areas very attractive to urban dwellers within easy commuting distance. The fire administrator cannot wish the people away, but must adjust financial resource commitments to provide everyone with a reasonable level of fire protection.

It would also be wise for him to meet with developers in an effort to share some of the cost of new fire stations and make a case for residential sprinklers in new construction. You must be responsive to factors which have historically impacted the delivery of services. Population shifts have been referred to previously, but there are other elements which combine to determine the level of local government expenditures.

The national economy will continue to have an impact upon decisions as to how money will be spent. When the economy is good, people are more willing to commit funds than during a downturn. Economic downturns must be monitored for their effect at the local level. Any change in the amount of income flowing into a community will spell change for the jurisdiction. As a nation we are still recovering from the fiscal problems we have faced for the past several years.

Cost of delivery is another area of concern for local government financial people. This may mean more to the person charged with sanitation or municipal recreation than the firefighter, because there are few alternatives to calling the fire department when your home is burning. However, a long-term swing may occur if the private sector can begin to provide fire protection at a lower cost than local government.

The issue of private contracting for fire protection comes up every few years in the literature of the fire service. Its popularity seems to ebb and flow with the winds of economic change. It may be that someday all of our fire protection will come from the lowest bidder. It is the wise fire service administrator who will seek to become customer responsive now, before the push to convert comes.

Let me suggest that you have to become politically active if you are going to remain competitive for local fiscal resources. Remember to gather facts and figures to support your case. You must always be working to gain and maintain friends who can help you in your battle for better budgets.

**Good luck and stay active.**
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VA Task Force 1  
- USA 1 Sent To Nepal Following Earthquakes

The Fairfax County International Urban Search & Rescue resource, sponsored by the Fairfax County, Virginia Fire and Rescue Department is capable of both domestic and international disaster response.

In total, there are approximately 210 trained and equipped members on the Task Force. When activated, the Task Force is comprised of 75 members for a heavy team and 54 members for a medium team. When the team deploys, it is made up of firefighters and paramedics, hazardous materials specialists, technical search specialists, communications experts, heavy rigging specialists, and logistics specialists from the Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department (both career and volunteer). The team also employs highly trained civilians including physicians, canine handlers, and structural engineers. When activated by either federal partner, all related expenses are fully reimbursed by either, resulting in no cost to the citizens of Fairfax County, Virginia.

On May 25, 2015, Virginia Task Force One was engaged in an annual full-scale exercise when the magnitude 7.9 earthquake hit Nepal. Our team was alerted to the incident by USAID and subsequently activated as a medium team to respond to Nepal as part of the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team. VATF-1, known internationally as USA-1, was redirected from the exercise to Dover Air Force Base where we departed for Nepal aboard military transport. Our team arrived in Nepal at Tribhuvan International airport in Kathmandu and received orders for our base of operations location. Our team moved the rescue cache to the base location and began planning for immediate reconnaissance missions to reported collapsed structures with persons trapped. On Thursday April 30, 2015, our team, in conjunction with Los Angeles County (USA-2), was on a reconnaissance mission when we were asked to assist the local police force with the rescue of a 15 year old boy who had been trapped since the earthquake. Both USA-1 and USA-2 provided medical care and technical support to the rescue mission which resulted in the successful extrication of the young man. He was transported to the Israel Defense Force field hospital for further treatment.

On May 12, 2015, as USA-1 was packaging the cache and making preparations for returning to the US, a second earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 hit Nepal. The team immediately reengaged in search and rescue missions in and around the Kathmandu area. The following day, a small search group from USA-1 and USA-2 were sent via aircraft to a remote village to assess the damage. While there, the team was successful in rescuing a 41 year old woman who had been trapped for two days. The team was able to extricate her and transport her to the LZ where she was airlifted the next day to a medical facility for treatment. USA-1 was demobilized on May 14, 2015 and returned home on May 16.

Photo’s: Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department

Team members searching rubble
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Chief Officer 101 Kicks Off in Williamsburg

By: Chief David Hoback, Roanoke Fire-EMS/Past President, VFCA

The VFCA, the Virginia State Fire Fighters Association and the Virginia Department of Fire Programs hosted the first pilot Chief Officer 101 class in Williamsburg on March 19 and March 20, 2015. The one and half day class was hosted by the Williamsburg Fire Department. Over 60 firefighters from across the state were in attendance representing all ranks of Virginia’s fire service. Chief Officer 101 has been designed to orient Chief Officers or up and coming Chief Officers to the roles and responsibilities of that level of fire service leadership.

Class topics included the following:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Chief Officers
- Political and Legislative Roles of a Chief Officer
- OSHA/NFPA/Legal
- Fire Service Budgeting, Funding and Grants
- Training and Credentialing
- Operations/NFPA 1710 and 1720
- Mutual Aid/Regional Partnership
- Understanding State Agencies
- Line of Duty Act

A high level overview of each topic was discussed with the intent of future classes being held to drill down into the more detailed issues and topics (such as a 201, 301, etc.). At the conclusion of the class, the floor was opened up to comments and suggestions. We walked away with close to 60 suggestions on how the pilot program was received and what we could do to improve it overall.

On May 14, 2015 the planning team came back together and reviewed the comments gleaned from the class. The team is in the process of making recommended changes for a second pilot class to be held at the Virginia State Fire Fighters Association conference in Hampton in late July. Following the Hampton class, the Southwest Virginia Fire Fighters Association has agreed to host the third pilot class in September or October. Stay tuned for more information to follow.

2015 Fire Officer Academy sessions held at the University of Richmond

By Nick Caputo

The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA) and the Virginia Fire Chiefs Foundation, working in conjunction with the VFCA Company Officers Section, hosted the annual Virginia Fire Officer Academy (VFOA). Due to popular demand, the VFOA was held twice again this year at the University of Richmond on June 7-12 and June 14-19.

Forty fire officers were selected to participate in each academy and were selected through a competitive application process. Participants represent various geographic areas of Virginia, including metropolitan areas, rural areas, and suburban communities. Applications were nominated by their respective departments and selected by the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association Selection Committee. The students are members of career, volunteer and combination fire departments. Applications were received from 160 people representing 54 Virginia fire departments.

The theme of the VFOA is Safety through Leadership (STL) which is based upon the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program known nationally as the Everyone Goes Home (EGH) program. The STL curriculum focuses on improving leadership techniques, personal accountability, and fostering the cultural change required to improve firefighter safety by implementing the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives. Modules for the program include: team building, the impact of the leader’s attitude on safety, employee coaching techniques, conflict resolution, correcting unsafe behaviors, effective communication, and dealing with employee stress. Students deal with leadership challenges, by participating in real life role playing scenarios using actors and facilitators to guide the learning process.

Speakers included: Greg Huber of Signature Team Building (Glen Allen, VA); District Chief Randy Kein (Lealman Fire and Rescue, St. Petersburg, FL and Fully Involved Consulting, Inc.); Art Jackson of Eagles Next Performance (Woodbridge, VA); Battalion Chief Tim McKay (Chesterfield Fire and EMS, VA); Battalion Chief John Keyes (Virginia Beach Fire Department, VA); Deputy Chief David Hutcheson (Virginia Beach Fire Department, VA); Assistant Chief Matt Tobia (Loudoun County Fire and Rescue, VA); Deputy Chief John Sullivan (Worcester Fire Department, MA); Captain Frank Leto (Deputy Director of the FDNY Counseling Service Unit); Vickie Taylor (Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Prince William County, VA and Behavior Heath Specialist for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation); and Division Chief Bryan Frieders (San Gabriel Fire Department, CA and Director of Communications for the Firefighter Cancer Support Network).

The VFOA staff would like to give special thanks to the academy facilitators: Battalion Chief Bob Woods (Henrico County); Deputy Chief Jay Cullinan (Spotsylvania County); Battalion Chief Tim McKay (Chesterfield County); Division Chief Matt Embrey (Spotsylvania County); Battalion Chief Todd Lupton (City of Manassas); Battalion Chief (Retired) Joe Bailey (City of Fairfax); Captain (Retired) Wally Burris (City of Fairfax); Captain William Moreland (Fairfax County); Captain Charlie Kempton (City of Hampton); Captain Steve Morris (City of Harrisonburg) and Deputy Chief (Retired) Nick Caputo (VFCA Liaison to the VFOA).

Graduation ceremonies were held on June 12 and June 19 for each respective graduating class. A follow-up article will appear in the October issue of Commonwealth Chief.
As today’s leaders in the fire and emergency services, you are responsible for making the decisions that will have tremendous impact on the lives of your members. Don’t let them down - choose the best name in benefits.

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Insuring America’s Heroes Since 1928
First Ever “Chief’s Summit” Said To “Really Hit The Mark Perfectly”

By: Tony McDowell, Fire Chief, Henrico County Fire Department

In order to achieve its mission of providing leadership, education, and advocacy, the VFCA offers programs to diverse fire service audiences across the Commonwealth. The annual Virginia Fire Rescue Conference is targeted to fire service professionals of all ranks and specialties. The VFCA’s Virginia Fire Officer Academy is geared toward current and future company officers. The association’s various Sections serve the needs of different segments of the fire service, from fire prevention to training to administrative professionals. Ironically, the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association in recent years has not offered any programs specifically for fire chiefs . . . until now.

On May 28-29 the VFCA hosted the first ever “Chiefs Summit” at the Richmond Courtyard Marriott North, located in Henrico County. This event was open to individuals who serve as the 5-bugle chief of department (or his/her “acting” designee). The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for fire chiefs to discuss issues of common interest and concern, and to seek out areas where our collective voice can improve fire services in Virginia.

During this first Chief’s Summit, 55 fire chiefs from across the commonwealth participated. Attendees represented both career and volunteer fire departments, small and large, rural and metro. All geographical areas of the Commonwealth were represented.

The event opened with an informal social on the evening of May 28, hosted by Atlantic Emergency Equipment. During this session, Secretary of Public Safety Brian Moran met with the chiefs, led a brief presentation and then spent more than an hour speaking one-on-one with chiefs. Deputy Secretary of Public Safety Adam Thiel and Department of Fire Programs Deputy Executive Director Brooke Pittinger joined Secretary Moran and spoke at length with the attendees. The hospitality of Atlantic Emergency Equipment allowed for a relaxed and informal event where fire chiefs were able to enjoy a great evening of networking.

During the day-long session on Friday, May 29, attendees were briefed by state officials from the Department of Fire Programs, Office of EMS, and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. Panel discussions were held on the topics of Statewide and Inter-State Mutual Aid, Incident Management Teams, and “How to Lower your Community’s ISO rating.” VFCA Legislative Director Ed Rhodes provided an overview of fire and EMS legislation from the 2015 General Assembly, and a projection of the expected legislative activities for 2016. Finally, the chiefs wrapped up the day with a modified “shaker’s forum” to discuss hot topics.

As a result of the Chiefs Summit, there was broad agreement to form a committee to address certain community risk reduction initiatives, including advocating the need for residential fire sprinklers in the Commonwealth.

The VFCA Administrative Professionals Section supported the event with registrations and documentation, and the Central Virginia All-Hazards Incident Management Team (CVAHIMT) provided comprehensive logistics and planning. The IMT set up extensive displays of its deployable assets, including command vehicles, communications assets, and a portable incident command western shelter.

“The event really hit the mark perfectly,” said VFCA president David E. Layman, Fire Chief of Hampton Division of Fire and Rescue. “All the fire chiefs I spoke with expressed their support for the concept.” VFCA executive director Chris Eudailey echoed Chief Layman’s comments. “I think the Chief’s Summit fills an important part of our portfolio of services to provide leadership, education, and advocacy.”

Stay tuned for future sessions.
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CFSI Attendees Get Updates On Programs

Many emergency services personnel attending the annual Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) event spent Wednesday afternoon getting updates on a number of issues including fire prevention initiatives, grant funding changes and health and fitness research.

Fire officials learned that vendors or manufacturers who help them with a Assistance to Firefighters’ Grant (AFG) application are not allowed to participate or get the contract on the apparatus. They also were strongly encouraged to review the conflict of interest policies.

Equipment purchased with federal funds also must be insured at the same level as the other apparatus in the fleet. And, without FEMA approval, the rig may not be used as collateral for a loan.

To receive funding, a department has to be registered at System For Awards Management (SAM). Also, basic equipment to help firefighters achieve or maintain operations is considered the highest priority, according to Cathie Patterson, who oversees the program.

AFG funds may not be used for community projects or infrastructures, and score rating for funding vehicles is being reviewed.

Patterson said her office produces national webinars and tutorials are available to assist as firefighters fill out the applications. She also encouraged them to use the self-assessment tool and the check list before submitting the forms.

“There are good grant writers and bad grant writers,” she warned. “I’d hate to see you get bad advice because you are responsible for the grant...”

Patterson added that panic should not set in if fire officials learn they’re being audited. “Don’t be threatened or intimidated” as the inspector general’s office monitors programs.

Community Risk Reduction

Fire prevention may be getting a new name – Community Risk Reduction (CRR) – in some circles, but the concept remains the same.

Vision 20/20 officials touted the recent programs of three departments – Wilmington, N.C., Philadelphia, and Tucson, Ariz.

Wilmington firefighters truly became part of their community by doing more than handing out flyers and placing posters. They showed up to help students move into college dorms and apartments.

In addition to installing smoke alarms, they also pointed out potential hazards. The crews have become a fixture at student activities as well.

Meanwhile, firefighters in the fifth largest department in the country – Philadelphia – are boasting about visits to homes in their districts. In a month, they installed 7,000 alarms.

Some of the firefighters who originally griped about the detail wound up enjoying it as the residents were so appreciative.

Residents in Tucson may be getting new alarms installed, but it’s not the firefighters with the tools. Health officials doing home visits are the ones handling the task.

Although firefighters were not welcome in some homes due to fear, they didn’t give up on residents having the life-saving devices, and taught others how to install them.

Vision 20/20 also announced the creation of a new website where a myriad of prevention materials can be obtained.

I can hear your whisper and distant mutter, I can smell your damp on the breeze and in the sky, I can see the halo of your violence. Storm, I know you are coming.

-Robert Fanney
Anthony E. McDowell, chief of the Henrico County Division of Fire, has been chosen as the 2015 Career Fire Chief of the Year by the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs. McDowell, who has led the Division of Fire since October 2012, was selected from 15 nominees and will receive the award June 20 at the organization’s annual awards banquet in Birmingham, Ala.

“Henrico County is thrilled that Tony’s excellent public service has been recognized by his peers in the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs,” County Manager John A. Vithoulkas said. “Henrico enjoys a high quality of life in part because of the work and dedication of the men and women of the Division of Fire. As chief, Tony leads from the front and by example. He is driven by a passion for helping others and is guided by a commitment to his faith, his family and his community.”

McDowell will be the fourth recipient of the regional award since it was established in 2012. His selection also will serve as a nomination for Career Fire Chief of the Year by the International Association of Fire Chiefs. A winner will be announced at the group’s annual conference Aug. 25-29 in Atlanta.

The Division of Fire provides fire protection and prevention services and is the primary provider of emergency medical services in Henrico. The department manages 20 fire stations and a training facility, and covers an area encompassing 244 square miles. It also operates a regional hazardous materials team and provides technical rescue, ground search and water rescue. The agency has 549 employees and an annual budget of more than $51 million, and it responded to more than 43,000 calls for service in fiscal year 2013-14.

McDowell joined the Division of Fire as a firefighter in 1997 and rose to fire lieutenant and fire captain before becoming battalion chief of administration in 2011 and chief in 2012. In addition to his work for the county, McDowell has served as a member of the board of directors of the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, vice president of the Central Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and a member of the Virginia E-911 Services Board. He also is the founding director of the Virginia Fire Officer Academy, which has trained hundreds of current and aspiring fire service officers.
Tenure in the fire service

42 years of dedicated service. I began my career in the fire service in 1973 as a volunteer firefighter with the Beach Borough Volunteer Fire Department in Virginia Beach. I was hired in 1977 as a career member of the Virginia Beach Fire Department and worked there until I retired in 2005. I was selected to be the Fire Chief in College Station Texas in 2005 and worked there for 8 years until 2013 when I decided to move back to Virginia Beach to be close to family and friends. In January 2014 I was selected to be the Fire Chief in the Newport News Fire Department and I am very excited to be back home and working in this “Great” Fire Department.

Career “Journey”

While in the Virginia Beach Fire Department, my volunteer experience allowed me to begin to understand the career of firefighting and it got me excited about being in the fire service. I was probably one of the very few in my graduating class at First Colonial High School ’76 (GO PATRIOTS!) that knew what they wanted to do for a career. Once I obtained full time employment in the Virginia Beach Fire Department, I was able to work and be assigned to many different positions in the department. I held the positions of Firefighter/EMT, Master Firefighter, Fire Inspector, Lieutenant, Captain, Battalion Chief, Chief of Training and District Chief. All of these positions were critical in my professional development and helped prepare me to be a future Fire Chief. In 2005 I was selected to be Fire Chief in College Station, Texas. That department was a great full service fire department with the responsibility of providing increased service levels to meet increased demands due to major development and growth in the city. During my time in College Station we were able to design and construct (3) three new state of the art fire stations. These fire stations were recognized by Fire Chief Magazine as Award winning stations and Fire Station 5 was selected to be on the cover of Fire Chief Magazine in November 2006. It was also a Gold Award winner for combined use during that year. I was also fortunate and privileged to have the Texas Fire School, also known as (TEEX) Texas Engineering Extension Service as our own Fire Training Center for the College Station Fire Department. One of the world’s largest and most diverse training centers, it was truly an honor to work with the Best of America’s Fire Service. Instructors came from all over the world to teach at this one of a kind facility. I cherish the very special relationships and experiences that I developed as a result of that very special opportunity in Texas. In 2012 I was honored and humbled to be selected as Fire Chief of the Year for the State of Texas.

Today I am very excited to be back home in Virginia. As the new Fire Chief in Newport News, I have been blessed with another outstanding fire department and I look forward to the many accomplishments that we will work together on for the future. We have developed a very dynamic strategic plan that is in alignment with our City Council’s initiatives and is setting the pathway for the future. We are focused on providing the best customer service possible and in providing mentoring and succession planning opportunities for our members each and every day. This is a very exciting time to be a member in the Newport News Fire Department.

Form of Government

Mayor/ City Council (7 members, Mayor + 6)

Sources of Funding for Your Organization

General Fund - FY 2015 = $31,624,583
Capital Improvement Project Fund – varies year to year
Grants – varies year to year.

Square Miles Covered

69 Square miles.

Department Composition

379 total personnel. Of those, 336 are in Operations. There are two Battalions, 11 Fire Stations (A,B,C, shift). There are eight personnel in Training, 14 in Fire Administration, six in Logistics, four in Fire Education and Life Safety, ten in the Fire Marshal’s Office and one Safety Officer.

Call Summary

2014: Fires = 600, Rescue/EMS = 21,763, False Alarms/ Unintentional calls = 1,366, Hazardous Materials Responses = 146, Other Hazardous responses = 370, All other responses (smoke scares , lock outs, animal rescues) = 3,598, Mutual Aid responses = 26. Total Calls = 27,869
What is the most challenging issue or issues facing your department today?

The most challenging issue and concern for the Newport News Fire Department is in the area of succession planning, mentoring and preparing our future leaders for their new leadership roles in our “Great” fire department. We currently have 379 members in the department and over 100 are eligible for retirement today. The development and preparation of our future leaders is critical and succession planning is a daily responsibility. We are emphasizing it at all levels of our department and are asking all members to set aside time each day to mentor members on their shift to help prepare them for their current job and for the future of our department. We only have a short period of time to get this done, since the majority of these members that are eligible for retirement will make that decision sometime in the next five years. We are committed to getting our members ready.

How would you describe your management style?

I would describe my Management Style as a Collaborative Management Style. During my career in the fire service I have witnessed many types of leaders in America’s Fire Service. I have worked hard to develop a spirit of working together to improve the fire service through building strong relationships with all of the people in all of the fire departments that I have worked and in the communities that I have served. I have had the honor and privilege to work with outstanding fire service mentors such as Fire Chief Harry Diezel, Deputy Fire Chief Jimmy Carter and Battalion Chief Billy Simmons of VBFD. Each of these men played a major role in helping me develop my leadership style through their actions and their constant support of my work and goals for the future. I am a firm believer that collaboration is critical in the success of a fire department.

Does your department have a formal, long-range strategic plan?

In 2014 the Newport News fire department updated our Strategic Plan. It is a five year plan that is in alignment with the City Council’s strategic initiatives established for the City. Our plan incorporates the immediate needs and future needs for the fire department. This plan will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. We are currently working with our Planning and Budget departments on the Comprehensive Plan for the city. Our Fire Department Strategic Plan will be incorporated into the Comp Plan for the future and will help us plan the development of our department and city as we look forward to 2040.

How have current economic times impacted your department?

As a result of the down turn in the economy, the Newport News Fire Department lost several key administrative positions and fell far behind on station maintenance, equipment and uniform purchases.

Are you doing things differently today because of the economy?

The economic down turn has caused our fire department to work smarter when purchasing equipment and apparatus. We have partnered with other fire departments when the opportunity presents itself to purchase off existing contracts that are in place when buying equipment and apparatus. Our department also lost several key administrative positions during the tough times. As the economic situation continues to improve we are working to get some of these positions filled again. We are hopeful that we can get these positions filled in the next several budget cycles. This will help us better distribute the work load to make our department more efficient.

What challenges do you see facing the fire service today?

The biggest challenges are succession planning, mentoring, hiring and retention, officer development, formal education, tuition reimbursement, building construction, required training and funding.

What do you look for in a new recruit?

I am looking for the “Best of the Best” I truly believe that if you hire “Great” people, “Great” things will happen. I think that putting extra emphasis on the hiring process pays big dividends for the future of the fire department. I am looking for high energy, commitment, perseverance and a desire to learn. If you have those traits, an outstanding fire service leader can be developed.

How do you view training?

Training is a career commitment in the fire service. Training is critical for customer service and employee development. All skills are perishable, it is imperative that we constantly train and prepare for any type of emergency that we may have to respond to. In the fire service we have to be the “Jack of all Trades” and “Master of All.” Our citizens are the reason we exist, they demand excellent service and they depend on us to respond and take care of them no matter what type of emergency or situation. Training is the key to success!

Do you have a close working relationship with neighboring departments?

The Hampton Roads Fire Departments are very blessed. We have outstanding relationships established with all of the fire departments in our area. We share equipment, apparatus, turnout gear, training and emergency response as needed to meet any emergency call that may come in. We are unified in our Mutual Aid agreements and the Hampton Roads Fire Chiefs, Training Officers and Safety Officers meet on a regular basis to discuss issues and concerns and to assist each other as needed. We have an outstanding network focused on outstanding customer service.

What’s in the future for the fire service as you see it?

I predict that the future of the fire service will continue to be focused on change. I believe that changes in equipment, technology, apparatus, training and funding sources will continue to come at us at lightning speed. At times the amount of change will be overwhelming. We will have to continue to plan ahead as much as we can, as the planning time is critical to success.

How has being a member of the VFCA helped you become a better Chief/leader?

My involvement and membership with the VFCA has been a critical factor in developing me and preparing me to be a fire chief and leader in America’s Fire Service. While I worked in the Virginia Beach Fire Department I had the honor and privilege to serve on the Conference Planning Committee and as an (at-large) Executive Board member. This experience allowed me to fully understand how the VFCA provides leadership, assistance and support for all fire service leaders. I am very proud to be part of such an outstanding association committed to fire service excellence.

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

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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.
IRS To Warner: Uniforms For Public Safety Officials Not Taxable...Under Certain Conditions

In response to a request from Sen. Warner, IRS provides clarity to Virginia public safety personnel that the cost of clothing provided to wear on duty may not be subject to taxation.

In a letter to U.S. Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced that public safety personnel, including firefighters, rescue and law enforcement personnel will not be expected to pay taxes on common clothing items that they are required to wear while on duty. But that clothing may not be worn off-duty.

“I am pleased that the IRS has clarified its policy on taxing police and fire department uniforms,” said Sen. Warner. “Now our firefighters and police officers can stop worrying about getting taxed for their clothing and concentrate on what they do best: keeping us safe.”

“On behalf of the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, I want to thank Sen. Warner for standing up for our members all across Virginia,” wrote Hampton Fire Chief David Layman, VFCA President in his letter to Warner. “He continues to demonstrate a clear understanding of our needs and a willingness to support the firefighters and rescue personnel who risk their lives on a daily basis, to focus on the job at hand – keeping Virginians safe.”

In January, Sen. Warner wrote to the IRS, seeking the clarification on behalf of Virginia public safety personnel concerned about the tax treatment of certain clothing items that are required as part of a uniform.

Last year, Botetourt County, VA, was audited by the IRS and found to owe $91,000 in back taxes, stemming in part from an IRS finding that the locality erred in not taxing deputies for the value of certain common clothing items that are part of their uniforms.

Many volunteer and combination fire service organizations may be familiar with the requirement to declare the value of incentives provided to volunteers, but many fire departments are unaware that the IRS considers uniforms to be a type of reportable incentive.

At the heart of the issue is a little known provision within the tax code that states that employers must report the value of clothing provided to employees if that clothing is required for work and is “suitable for everyday wear.”

While the IRS couldn’t pinpoint an exact definition, the IRS did use their stance on military uniforms as an example. In this case, the IRS contends that the military’s strict rules on which uniform components can’t be worn off-duty constitutes an assessment of those components as being unsuitable for everyday wear.

As a result of these policies, the value of these uniforms should not be included when reporting a soldier, sailor or marine’s reportable income.

Similarly, the IRS responded to Senator Warner in March, stating that when a fire department has a policy “prohibiting off-duty wearing of uniforms,” the uniforms are no longer “suitable for everyday wear” and should not be “include[d] in [an] employee’s income.”

From this clarification, we can see clear guidance from the IRS: if a fire department doesn’t want to count the value of uniforms towards the overall value of a volunteer’s incentives, the department must prohibit volunteers from wearing any department-issued uniform components while off-duty, even t-shirt and baseball caps.

The off-duty wearing of uniform components can be important to volunteer and combination fire departments for a variety of reasons, including building department awareness in the community or boosting morale among members.

However, these reasons must be carefully weighed against compliance with IRS reporting procedures.

Bottom line: Fire departments wishing to avoid the reporting of these uniform components must adopt policies prohibiting members from wearing their uniforms while off duty.
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Save the date for the 2015 Virginia EMS Symposium, Nov. 11 - 15, at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott in Norfolk, Va. The largest EMS training event in the state, and one of the largest in the country, the Virginia EMS Symposium is a five-day event that offers over 250 classes and various course tracks to help providers fulfill their continuing education needs.

Course topics range from hands-on training in trauma, medical, cardiac and pediatric to operations, preparatory and health and safety. These classes are also applicable for nurses and physicians.

Registration will open in July. For more information about this event, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems/symposium.
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United States Deputy Fire Administrator and retired Fairfax County Chief Glenn Gaines died Sunday, April 12, 2015 after being stricken while working in his yard in Virginia.

A neighbor initiated CPR, and the effort was continued en route to a hospital. However, he could not be resuscitated.

“Once or twice in a lifetime, if you’re very lucky, you’ll have a great boss or a best friend like Glenn Gaines; he was both to me. Glenn was smart, funny, generous, passionate, focused, held himself and others to the highest of standards, and always had your back. Always.” National Fire Academy Superintendent Denis Onieal shared.

Onieal went on to say, “He was as talented and comfortable crawling down the hallway of a burning tenement as he was in a meeting in the Oval Office or Congress. Our Nation and our profession lost a remarkable leader and the Gaines family lost a beloved husband, father and grandfather.”

Gaines, 72, was honored during a special tribute at the annual CFSI dinner on Thursday night. “He leaves behind an incredible legacy,” said Bill Webb, CFSI executive director. “He had a gentle way about him as well as a great sense of humor.”

Gaines served with Fairfax County, Va. Fire and Rescue for 35 years, starting as a volunteer. He then rose through the ranks from firefighter to fire marshal, training chief and operations chief to take the white helmet in 1991. He retired in 1998.

During his tenure in Fairfax, he headed the urban search and rescue team that deployed to a number of incidents.

Fairfax County Fire Chief Richie Bowers said he was saddened about the loss of his friend and predecessor.

Dennis Compton, chair of the NFF board, said Gaines was unique in many ways. “He was a well-known progressive fire chief in Fairfax County. And, he was a great leader in fire organizations...”

Compton said regardless of his role, Gaines advocated for the fire service. “His leadership was strong and consistent. He could always be counted on. He loved firefighters and the fire service,” Compton added. “He was a great friend and true, true professional...”

Gaines was often referred to as the architect of the Assistance to Firefighter (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs as he was involved from their inception.

He received a number of honors including the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs’ Lifetime Achievement Award.

The author of a fire service text book, Gaines also wrote articles for publications including Firehouse Magazine.

Gaines took over as U.S. Fire Administrator when Kelvin Cochran resigned to return to Atlanta, and remained in the position until Ernie Mitchell was appointed.

Onieal Named Deputy U.S. Fire Administrator

Dr. Denis Onieal has been named deputy U.S. Fire Administrator. He replaces Glenn Gaines who died in April of a heart attack while mowing his lawn. Onieal, Superintendent of the National Fire Academy for the past 20 years, was the former acting chief in Jersey City. Deputy Superintendent Kirby Kiefer will assume Onieal’s position while a nationwide search is conducted.

Remembering his friend during a service last month, Onieal said: “Glenn changed America in ways that no one at the United States Fire Administration ever did, and probably no one ever will. Others may expand it or improve it in the future, but Glenn made it happen.” Onieal added that his friend always thought outside the box. Even though budgets were being cut, Gaines said firefighters needed to grasp the opportunity and shine.

Charlottesville’s Werner To Retire

Chief Charles Werner has announced his retirement from the Charlottesville Fire Department. According to City Manager Maurice Jones, “For almost four decades, Chief Werner has been an outstanding leader for our community, our state and our nation. I have the utmost respect for Chief Werner’s commitment to the safety of our residents and his firefighters.” Chief Werner will be stepping down from his position sometime this summer. This will allow the City time to conduct a nationwide search for a new chief, which will begin in mid-April.

Chief Werner’s personal accolades are too many to list here but a couple of highlights from his career include: leading our department’s Free Smoke Alarm program, helping to secure a $6 million grant for the regional public safety radio system, receiving four Virginia Governor’s Awards for Fire Service Excellence and being named the National Career Fire Chief of the Year by Fire Chief Magazine in 2008. Werner served as President of the VFCA during 2011.

Tal Luton To Retire As James City Fire Chief

James City Fire Chief Tal Luton announced he will retire July 1. By the time Luton retires, he will have spent more than 35 years with James City and what he called “the greatest fire department I have ever known.”

Matt Rickman Named Salem Fire And EMS Deputy Chief

Salem Fire and EMS Chief John Prillaman has announced that Capt. Matt Rickman has been named the department’s new deputy chief, effective March 15. Prillaman vacated the deputy chief position Jan. 1 when he replaced Chief Pat Counts, who retired after 40 years of service to the city.
2016
LEGISLATIVE ISSUES
At The National Level

IAFC’S LEGISLATIVE HOT SHEET
A Guide for Talking with Members of Congress

The 114th Congress

Funding for the FIRE/SAFER Grant Programs

The Problem: Many fire departments across the country cannot afford the equipment, training, and staffing necessary to meet a baseline level of readiness. This situation puts firefighters and their communities in danger.

The Solution: The FIRE and SAFER grant programs augment local funding and provide much needed assistance to meet these needs. To date, the programs are working well to improve preparedness and response capabilities, but much more needs to be done. Congress authorized $750 million for each program as part of the reauthorization bill that passed in 2012. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, Congress appropriated $340 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs, and extended the waivers to the SAFER grant program’s requirements for an extra year to allow for the retention and re-hiring of firefighters. For FY 2016, the Obama Administration requested $335 million for each program.

The Explanation: If you have received a grant under the FIRE or SAFER grant programs, explain how you used the money and how it has improved your ability to serve your community. If you have not received a grant under these programs, explain how you could use that grant money. Give a specific example of how a FIRE or SAFER grant has helped or could help you serve your community.

The “Ask:” Ask your representatives and senators to support the FY 2011 level of $405 million each for the FIRE and SAFER grant programs in FY 2016.

Funding for the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and National Fire Academy (NFA)

The Problem: Many fire service leaders have been concerned about the level of funding that the USFA and NFA receive, and whether they will be able to fulfill their missions and respond to emerging challenges. In 2012, Congress passed legislation authorizing $76.4 million for the USFA. For FY 2015, USFA was funded at $44 million. For FY 2016, President Obama requested $41.582 million.

The Solution: Because America’s fire service is critically important to national preparedness and response, the fire service needs to have a strong voice within DHS. Also, fire programs need a consistent and high level of funding.

The Explanation: Explain the importance of receiving training through the NFA. If you have taken NFA courses on campus or online, explain what you learned and how it has helped you to do your job better. Also, discuss why your community needs up-to-date information from the National Fire Incident Reporting System.

The “Ask:” Ask your representatives and senators to support the FY 2011 level of $45.6 million for the USFA and NFA in FY 2016.

Federal Taxation of Volunteer Incentives

The Problem: State and local governments use property tax rebates and other incentives to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. The Internal Revenue Service views these incentives as income. A previous federal law excluded any property tax benefit and up to $360 per year of all other state and local benefits to volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel from taxable income. This law expired at the end of 2010.

The Solution: Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA, S. 609) to reinstate the tax benefit and raise the $360 cap to $600 through the end of the 2018 tax year. Representative John Larson (D-CT) is planning to introduce an identical bill in the House.

The Explanation: Explain that taxing such incentives makes them ineffective, and may hinder recruitment and retention of volunteer emergency responders. Further, point out that the number of volunteer firefighters nationwide has decreased from 880,000 in 1984 to 786,150 in 2013 according to the NFPA’s U.S. Fire Department Profile. State and local incentives are important when recruiting and retaining volunteers who must struggle to balance their careers and the obligations of today’s two-income families.

The “Ask:” Ask your representatives and senators to protect state and local benefits for volunteer firefighters by cosponsoring the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (S. 609) and including this bill in any potential tax reform legislation.

Extending the Medicare Ambulance Add-On Payments

The Problem: The Medicare ambulance fee schedule continues to
inadequately reimburse fire departments for care they provide to Medicare beneficiaries. Fire departments are forced to use agency funds to cover large amounts of unreimbursed medical bills. Congress established the Medicare Ambulance Add-On Payments which provide additional funds for EMS agencies transporting Medicare beneficiaries from pre-determined urban, rural, and super-rural zip codes. These add-on payments will be eliminated on April 1, unless they are reauthorized by Congress.

The Solution: Representative Greg Walden (R-OR) and Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) introduced the Medicare Ambulance Access, Fraud Prevention, and Reform Act of 2015 (H.R. 745/S. 377) which would permanently reauthorize the ambulance add-on payments and require preauthorization of non-emergent transport of patients with end-stage renal disease.

The Explanation: Discuss how Medicare fails to reimburse fire departments for medications they administer or procedures they perform. Explain that the add-on payments are a helpful way to cover some of these unreimbursed costs and that long-term budgeting is difficult when the add-on payments are continuously reauthorized for periods of one year or less.

The “Ask:” Ask your senators and representatives to include reauthorization of the Medicare Ambulance Add-On Payments in any legislation related to the Medicare sustainable growth rate. Also ask your members of Congress to cosponsor S. 377 and H.R. 745 which would provide a long-term authorization for these payments.

Requirement to Give Back Public Safety Communications Spectrum in the T-Band

The Problem: On February 22, 2012, President Obama signed Public Law 112-96. The law requires that the Federal Communications Commission begin auctioning the public safety T-Band spectrum by February 2021 and clear all public safety operations from the band within two years of auction close (i.e., by early 2023). The T-Band (470-512 MHz) is a key spectrum resource allocated for land mobile communications operations in 11 major urban areas of the United States. While the law provides that auction revenues can be used toward the cost of relocating public safety operations out of the band, the law is silent on identifying a new spectrum home.

The Solution: Ultimately, the best solution is to change the law and allow the 11 urban areas to remain in the T-Band spectrum until the nationwide public safety broadband network being developed by the FirstNet Board can support mission-critical voice communications as part of its interoperable network.

The Explanation: On March 15, 2013, the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC) issued a report concluding that the T-Band legislation is not feasible, provides no public interest benefit, and that the matter should be re-examined by Congress. In addition, NPSTC found no suitable alternative spectrum for public safety agencies in at least five of the areas to migrate, which would cause major disruptions to the operations of public safety agencies in those areas. NPSTC also estimated that the cost of the migration to other spectrum for the other areas would be more than $5.9 billion. The Land Mobile Communications Council also issued a report supporting the NPSTC findings as to public safety and also raised the negative impact of the auctioning of the T-Band for commercial users who use T-Band.

The “Ask:” Ask your representatives and senators to re-examine the requirement that public safety agencies vacate the T-Band spectrum and consider the findings of NPSTC.

Preventing Post-Wildland Fire Flooding

The Problem: The growth of wildland fires is an emerging problem for communities across the country. In 2013, there were nearly 47,500 wildland fires, which burned 4.3 million acres. In the aftermath of wildland fires, the vegetation and land are badly scarred. If it rains after a fire, flash flooding may occur. FEMA’s Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program helps communities control and extinguish fires. However, these funds only cover fire suppression and not post-wildland fire mitigation. States and localities must pay to install erosion and flood barriers, re-seed burned ground, and re-plant trees.

The Solution: The FY 2015 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act allows FMAG recipients to receive post-wildland fire mitigation assistance in accordance with FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) in FY 2015. Representative Raul Ruiz (D-CA) introduced legislation (H.R. 1009) that permanently would allow FMAG recipients to receive HMGP funding. H.R. 1009 has 16 cosponsors.

The Explanation: This legislation would allow FMAG recipients to receive up to 15% of the FMAG amount for post-wildland fire mitigation projects, such as flood prevention and land re-seeding.

The “Ask:” Ask your representatives to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 1009.
Improve Hazardous Materials Response Training for First Responders

The Problem: The national energy boom has focused attention on the importance of safely transporting crude oil and other hazardous materials across the country. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), the overall volume of crude oil moving by rail has quadrupled in less than a decade. Recent incidents in the transport of crude oil have demonstrated the need for local fire and emergency services to be prepared for hazmat incidents.

The Solution: PHMSA administers a Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant program, which is supposed to allow states to fund hazmat training. The IAFC is urging Congress to allow for the use of HMEP grant funds to develop web-based training to supplement in-person training about hazmat response issues in order to help volunteer fire departments and other departments that cannot afford to send their personnel to in-person training.

The Explanation: Many rural and volunteer fire departments do not have the necessary training to respond to a major hazmat incident. In addition, they do not have the funding to pay for in-person training, and their firefighters do not have the time to go away to a class. Web-based training allows volunteer fire departments and rural fire departments to learn the basics of hazmat response in a manner that is cost-effective and convenient for them. Any HMEP-funded training would have to be consistent with the Operations level of NFPA 472 and OSHA 1910.120. The competitive process should give a priority to organizations that focus on improving planning and training for rural and volunteer fire departments, and include the use of blended training, including web-based training to complement in-person training.

The “Ask”: Ask your representatives and senators to reform the HMEP program to expand training beyond the classroom and to provide blended training that would include web-based training as a supplement to in-person training.

Homeland Security Grant Reform

The Problem: In his FY 2016 budget request, President Obama proposed consolidating the 16 homeland security grant programs administered by FEMA, including the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), into a single $1.043 billion National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP) that would be administered by the states. This proposal will reduce transparency into how FEMA’s homeland security grants are allocated and limit local jurisdictions’ ability to influence how these grants are used.

The Solution: President Obama has proposed FEMA grant consolidation and the NPGP in the past. As part of the FY 2015 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, Congress prohibited FEMA from implementing the NPGP proposal without express congressional authorization. It also appropriated $467 million for SHSGP and $600 million for UASI in FY 2015.

The Explanation: Explain how FEMA’s homeland security grant programs, like the SHSGP and UASI program, help your department train and prepare to respond to a potential terrorist attack. Also explain the importance of ensuring that local public safety agencies remain partners with the states in the allocation of FEMA homeland security grants.

The “Ask”: Ask your representatives and senators to ensure that local public safety agencies are equal partners with the states in deciding how homeland security grant funding is spent as Congress begins to consider reforming FEMA’s homeland security grant programs.

For further information about federal legislative issues, please feel free to contact the IAFC’s Government Relations and Policy department at (703) 273-0911 or go to www.iafc.org/gr. In addition, you can Follow @IAFC on Twitter for real-time updates and information!
As the VFCA looks ahead to the 2016 legislative session, we must first look back at the 2015 session for a moment. During this session, there were some bills that the VFCA supported that were defeated, bills that passed and those we had requested amendments to. A brief summary of those bills are below.

**HB 1660 and SB 877 - The Recognition of EMS Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact**

These two bills were identical and were introduced in the House and Senate. The brief summary is to set up a nationwide compact so that Virginia’s EMS providers could answer calls or handle transports in other states without having to obtain licensure in that state.

There are many other aspects to the bill. For more information, you may review the bill at http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?1S1+Hu+HB1660+pdf

The outcome of both bills was that they were tabled in a subcommittee of the House Health, Welfare, and Institutions, by one delegate who does not like compacts.

**HB 1570 and SB 1168 - Daycare Centers**

Both of these bills incorporated numerous other bills dealing with daycare, both licensed and unlicensed. Both bills passed and the Governor attempted to add some amendments and these failed. Ultimately the bills passed. They take effect in 2016 and 2017. The VFCA attempted to add an amendment which required fire and life safety inspections, but neither patron was amenable to this during the closing days of the session.

**HB 2204 - Line of Duty Act**

Once again, we have been faced with another LODA piece of legislation. The difference in this one is that the patron has involved the stakeholders in developing the bill. The crux of the measure is that determination of eligibility for LODA will be moved from the Department of Accounts to the VA Retirement System and benefits will be handled by the Department of Human Resource Management. The bill was passed and signed by the Governor, but it has to be voted on again in the 2016 session. The stakeholders have been meeting since January to work with the patron on developing this bill. We continue to meet and will do so through September. VFCA’s President, Immediate Past President, Executive Director and lobbyist have been in attendance at these meetings. The bill is the result of a JLARC study from 2014, which you may review at http://jlarc.virginia.gov/VaLODA.shtml

Now, looking ahead to the 2016 session, you now see where some of our efforts will be placed.

**The Recognition of EMS Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact** has been placed as the number one priority for the Office of EMS and the EMS Advisory Board. As members of the VFCA, the first thing we can do is contact our local legislators in their district offices and discuss this bill with them.

The bill was included earlier and you can see how this will affect providers - crossing state lines touches on malpractice if you are not certified in that state. It also affects med-evac operations, and so forth. The Executive Director of VFCA has speaking points that can be sent upon request. Those attending the VFCA Chief’s Summit have already received that information.

**Daycare Centers -** The VFCA position is that fire and life safety inspections inherently reduce fires through the inspection process, looking at smoke detectors, electrical panel boxes, etc. But also the educational aspect that our inspectors can provide to the operators of the centers is a benefit. We will be working on this proposal over the next six months or so.

**Line of Duty Act.** We continue to work on this legislation and move forward to developing legislation that will provide funding for the LODA so that at some point in the future, the program does not go broke. As we discuss the LODA, we find that many departments do not provide the LODA training that is required of all individuals and families, by code. It is already mandatory; we are now looking at how often it should be provided.

A revision and update in the EMS terminology was passed by both houses and signed into law by the Governor. One question that we have received is because the terms rescue squad, first aid crew, life saving crew, etc were changed to emergency medical services agency. There is nothing in the bill that requires your agency to change its name. This is for continuity in the Code of Virginia and it is already in the EMS regulations.

This information will provide you with a brief overview of what is coming in 2016 and of course your assistance will be beneficial.

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**Nearly 1 million Virginians participated in the Statewide Tornado Drill**

Nearly 1 million Virginians indicated they practiced or planned to practice their tornado safety procedures as part of the annual Statewide Tornado Drill held March 17. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service sponsored the drill to encourage businesses, organizations, schools, colleges, families and individuals to focus on tornado safety and learn where to seek shelter during a tornado warning. Registrant data showed that schools and private homes were the leading groups of participants in the drill. The localities with the highest number of registered participants were Fairfax and Loudon counties, and the cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Richmond.

When it comes to tornadoes, there’s no such thing as a "tornado season." Tornadoes can strike anywhere, anytime and you need to know the drill.

Tornadoes are nature’s most violent storms. They can appear suddenly without warning and can be invisible until dust and debris are picked up or a funnel cloud appears. Be prepared to act quickly.

**Know the Signs**

- Strong, persistent rotation in the base of a cloud.
- Whirling dust or debris on the ground under a cloud base – tornadoes sometimes have no visible funnel.
- Hail or heavy rain followed by dead calm or a fast, intense wind shift. Many tornadoes, especially in Virginia, are wrapped in heavy participation and can’t be seen.
- Loud, continuous roar or rumble, which doesn’t fade in a few seconds like thunder does.
- If it’s night, look for small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level (as opposed to silvery lightning up in the clouds). These lights are power lines being snapped by very strong wind, perhaps a tornado.
- Persistent lowering of the cloud base.
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NFPA announces the theme for Fire Prevention Week, October 4-10, 2015,

“Hear the Beep Where You Sleep: Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm”

Every bedroom needs a working smoke alarm. If you didn’t know that, you’re not alone. An online questionnaire distributed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) showed that less than half (42 percent) of approximately 36,000 respondents did not know that a smoke alarm should be installed in each bedroom of the home.

In an effort to better educate the public about this “sleepy” smoke alarm requirement, NFPA – the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 90 years – today announced “Hear the Beep Where You Sleep: Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm” as the theme for this year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign, October 4-10, 2015. NFPA 72, National Fire Alarm Code®, requires a smoke alarm in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

Sparky video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrUWFQ7ePB0

Sparky the Fire Dog® announces “Hear the Beep Where You Sleep: Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm” as theme for Fire Prevention Week, October 4-10, 2015

“While we’ve long suspected that many people don’t know they need a smoke alarm in each bedroom, the questionnaire we posted last year confirmed those suspicions,” said Lorraine Carli, NFPA’s vice president of Outreach and Advocacy. “Fire Prevention Week presents the perfect opportunity to better educate the public about this potentially life-saving message.”

According to NFPA statistics, half of all U.S. home fire deaths occur at night between the hours of 11:00 pm and 7:00 am, when people are most likely to be sleeping. Having a working smoke alarm in the home cuts the risk of dying in a fire in half. These facts underscore the extreme importance of having working smoke alarms in all bedrooms.

“Because fires can happen when people are sleeping, having working smoke alarms in bedrooms is a critical element of home fire safety,” said Carli, who notes that three out of every five U.S. home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. “Smoke alarms can make the difference between life and death in a fire by alerting people in time to escape safely, but they need to be installed in all the required locations, including all bedrooms, and they need to be working.”

NFPA will be teaming up with its Fire Prevention Week partners – the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), Domino’s, The Home Depot, CVS Health, LEGOLAND® Florida and LEGOLAND® California – to promote “Hear the Beep Where You Sleep: Every Bedroom Needs a Working Smoke Alarm” through a series of fun, engaging events and activities this fall. For more information about smoke alarms and this year’s Fire Prevention Week campaign, visit www.firepreventionweek.org.

Don’t forget to start preparing early for Fire Prevention Week… it will be here before you know it!!!
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&SYM)
The premier fire and emergency services conference offering a mix of association business, networking and over 40 educational sessions during the event. The MAE&SYM 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 hand on a quarterly basis.

Exhibitor Trade Show
The exhibit show, held in conjunction with the Annual Conference, presents 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 and current issues – as well as all you need to know about your association – in your hand on a quarterly basis.

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 699 • Blackstone, VA • 23824

Name: ______________________________________ Fire Dept/Organization: ___________________________ FDID#__________________________
Rank/Title: ___________________________________ Chief Officer: □ Yes □ No Retired: □ Yes □ No
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Phone: __________________________ Fax: __________________________ Email: __________________________

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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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