

# FIRE LINK

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## The Cost of Safety

by Mark S. Wessel, President

As we enter into a new era regarding the ICC and residential sprinklers, we find ourselves entrenched in another battle. As usual, what appears to be for the good and safety of our citizens has become a posturing of the powers that be.

Most of us understand through our educations and experience that the vast majority of fire-related deaths occur in the residential setting. I could only guess that the ICC, through statistics has recognized the same and taken a proactive approach in regards to personal safety. The use of residential sprinklers will most probably provide the greatest safety margin for families in recent history. With this thought in mind, I will proceed.

In February, at the MVD Board meeting, we were enlightened by the fact that North Dakota had succumbed to the builders and contractors association's desperate pleas for the legislature to

omit the residential sprinkler codes from the standard. I believe the builders and contractors have also succeeded in the State of Minnesota. Today, I listened to the news to find out that the same associations are arguing that it would cost too much to build "Safe Rooms" for trailer parks, apartment complexes, condominiums and townhouses. The argument is it would add about 12 percent to the project cost. Seems a little odd that for a number of years now residential housing costs have escalated tremendously.

Why is a contractor or developer willing to suggest high-end finish components such as Marble, Granite, 20-foot ceilings in the Great Rooms, Kitchens with more equipment than the space shuttle and so on. I could go on and on as to the extra expenses recommended. Most probably much of this mindset has contributed to the housing crisis today. The most important aspect of this is the

builders tend to utilize the cheapest, lightest weight construction methods known to man in order to increase profitability, yet continually disregarding the safety of the occupants of these structures. I haven't even mentioned the safety of the fire service as we respond to emergencies in these structures.

As we continue to fight the good fight, remember what is "right." If we in the fire service truly want change, do your homework. Do not cower to the hollow excuses of anyone who is willing to disregard safety components in our homes. Stand up for Sprinkler Systems, Alarm Systems and Quality Construction Methods utilizing quality and substantial components that afford our citizens the protection they need. As quality is compromised our jobs become substantially more dangerous. Stay safe! □

## Fire/EMS Safety, Health, and Survival Week

by Chief Jerry Rhodes

June is coming soon my friends. Is your agency prepared for Fire/EMS Safety, Health, and Survival Week? There are a lot of resources available from the IAFC website, and thesecretlist@firefighterclosecalls.com.

If your agency is putting together a unique training program for your personnel, would you share it with other fire departments that may not have your same resources. Please send your

Fire/EMS Safety, Health, and Survival Week curriculum to merwick1@aol.com or jrhodes@cfpd.org .

Watch the Fire Link and the Missouri Valley Division website for more information <http://www.mvafc.org/> .

Keep watching [www.iafc.org/safety-week](http://www.iafc.org/safety-week) for more information on this year's program and planning resources developed by the IAFC Safety, Health and Survival Section. □



### Calendar of Events

#### Commission on Fire Accreditation Workshop

June, 2009

Pueblo, CO

For more information

719.553.2826

#### Annual Conference

Overland Park, KS

July 9-11, 2009

#### IAFC-FRI Conference

Dallas, TX

August 25-29, 2009

# *New Realities for Infection Control in the Fire Service*

by Chief Jerry Rhodes

In September, 2008, the Colorado Front Range Fire Academy began their Fall Academy with recruits from six different departments stretching from Laramie, Wyoming to Boulder, Colorado. In the first few weeks of the academy, five major training sites and two different dorm facilities were used by the recruits. On the 16th day of the Academy, one recruit found that he had a swollen, red rash on his arm and solicited the help of a fellow classmate to apply ointment to that rash. Within two days, another recruit had developed a fever and was hospitalized requiring two surgeries with deep tissue and muscle debridement.

Despite the immediate intervention

and counseling by the local health department, state public health officials and a state epidemiology doctor, ten additional recruits out of 15 required evaluation and treatment by Occupational Health within a four-week period. Five of those recruits were diagnosed with MRSA (methicillin resistant staph aureus) from three different strains.

MRSA is an antibiotic resistant bacteria that is carried by 20-30 percent of the public in their nasal passages or on the skin. The transmission through open wounds or use of poor hygiene practices makes this infection control issue especially pertinent to the fire service where communal living conditions are common.

# *Super Bowl XLIII a National Security Event*

by Chief Jerry Rhodes

The game was on in nearly every fire house and most firefighter's home. This article is about some of the new technology used by the public safety agencies taking care of residents and visitors to the Tampa Bay area and attendees of Super Bowl XLIII.

Many of you know there are a lot of observations we cannot put in a public access article. I will say that the federal, state, and local authorities had their act together. Good pre-event relationships, strong use of ICS, and putting technology to work, not letting technology work you.

Three products to keep an eye on that the locals have been using or utilized during the week long events leading up to the Super Bowl. E-Sponder is more than just an electronic ICS form system. Its intuitive system helps responders fill out the ICS 200 series forms and builds the Incident Action Plan. More information on <http://www.e-sponder.com>.

The second product uses the Microsoft Table as their platform. The Surface Solution from Infusion is an elec-

tronic table displaying photos, graphics, and stored and live data from multiple sources simultaneously. All control by touch input on the surface of the table. Better three dimensional visual understanding than a wall mounted screen and faster command input than a keyboard. More information on <http://www.infusion.com/solutions/Surface.aspx>.

The last product may be popular with your telecommunications personnel. Twist Pair, I thought it was a band playing at a Super Bowl party. The WAVE is a web based software system that unifies diverse communications technologies including radios, telephones, computers, and mobile devices across any network. More information on <http://www.twist-pair.com/>.

I want to thank Chief Ernie Rhodes and Chief Greg Brown for taking their time to observe this National Security Event and looking at some new technologies that we should check out. □

Coupled with the job requirements that cause breaks in the skin and skin irritations, fire departments and academies are now faced with the upgrading of department policies on infection control practices and developing more stringent cleaning practices while closely monitoring personnel with skin irritations and breaks.

In this particular case, departments came together for a common cause. Education was distributed to both recruits and their concerned families as well as a plan to mitigate any further break-outs in future academies was adopted. It will be implemented fully with the new Spring Academy, 2009. If your department has had similar experiences or you would like more information on how the EMS Coordinators for these departments met this challenge with a clear enforceable policy, please contact us at [NCEMSCoordinators@g.com](mailto:NCEMSCoordinators@g.com). □

## **Fighting Fires with Facts Newsletter - Are Your Fire Department's Numbers Included?**

In 2008, Virginia fire departments responded to 27,299 fires with a total fire loss of \$418,462,591. Learn about the importance of estimating dollar loss and property saved and why this is an increasingly crucial tool in fire statistics in the latest Fighting Fires with Facts newsletter; available in the Fire Chat section of the VDFP homepage and at the link below:

[http://www.vafire.com/fire\\_data\\_statistics/VFIRS%20Newsletter%20Mar%202009.pdf](http://www.vafire.com/fire_data_statistics/VFIRS%20Newsletter%20Mar%202009.pdf)

# “Two-Hatters” – What All This Fuss is About

by Chief John Bales, Colorado State Vice President

Most of the articles I have authored deal with Firefighter Safety, Leadership, Strategy or some other timely topic relating to our business. Rarely, if ever do I write about conflict between two different groups within the fire service. This month I have decided to take an exception and express a few editorial thoughts concerning an issue that is raising conflict among the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). The hot topic today is the “Two-Hatter Rule”.

A “Two-Hatter” is a firefighter that is both a career firefighter and also serves as a volunteer firefighter in his/her community or in another community. At last count I have 18 volunteers or career members that are “Two-Hatters” within my department. The IAFC recently released a statement supporting an individual’s right to serve their communities in multiple capacities. As Fire Chief’s, we are aware that an individual can not volunteer for the agency in which he/she is employed as that is a violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act. As the IAFC explains in its statement, “The IAFC encourages the entire fire and emergency service community to focus on our first priority, which is to provide for the safety and security of our citizens.”

In these difficult economic times, it has become even more important for many communities to build and sustain a thriving volunteer contingency. The fact that some career firefighters are willing to volunteer their time should be applauded, and both the community they work for and volunteer for should support this selfless gesture. Golden Fire-Rescue is a department that does just that. The City of Golden City Council and City Administration as well as the Fire Department Administration is aware of how difficult this decision is and has the utmost respect for those individuals who can find the time to do both.

For years the career fire departments have benefited from the training their new employees received as a vol-

unteer – now we are seeing a trend for this to go the other direction. But if we are going to get an effort like this to work and be sustainable, both sides need to realize that there are sacrifices that will need to be made and concerns that must be addressed. A common complaint from the career department is who covers the member if they get hurt while volunteering. We have witnessed this first hand that the City of Golden’s workman’s compensation plan is solid and pays out very well. That is why we make it a priority for life and disability insurance to be provided to each volunteer in addition to the City’s workman’s compensation plan. The health, safety and welfare of each of our members is paramount.

As a retired IAFF member, I do not agree with the position of always keeping the two entities separate. The future of the fire service is not career versus volunteer. In fact the highest percentage of fire service agencies in this country are combination with both career and volunteer personnel.

Both the IAFC and the IAFF must find a common ground of protecting our communities nationwide, but we need to go back to our early years in kindergarten and possibly re-learn how to play well together. I am not sure that we will ever see the IAFC and IAFF agree on every issue presented to them, but efforts put out by the IAFC regarding the “Two-Hatter” is certainly a step in the right direction. Fire is the same, no matter if the engine and/or truck company has career, volunteer, or a combination of both as the crew. Being a professional firefighter is not reflected by salaries but means providing the best service possible to the public and taking the ownership in ensuring that your training and the department’s technology are kept up to date. The IAFC has made a great step toward a united professional fire service; now it is up to each of us as career, volunteer or combination to take the next step. □

## New Members A Big Welcome to our Newest Members

- Chief Dennis McMullin—Keystone, SD
- Fire Marshal Mark Boehle—Cottleville, MO
- Chief Darren White—Ozark, MO
- Eldon Radda—Wellsville, KS
- Chief Tim Gibbs—Overland Park, KS
- DC Kim Nemitz—Overland Park, KS
- Chief Troy Hughes—Grand Island, NE
- Fire Marshal Curtis Kauffman—Colorado Springs, CO
- Chief Scott Hannum—Rawlins, WY
- Chief Dennis Jenkerson—St. Louis, MO
- Chief Michael Daesing—St. Joseph, MO
- DC Kevin Shirley—Kansas City, KS
- Joe Sellens—Auburn, KS
- Chief Dave Meeks—Topeka, KS
- BC Bernard Kanger—Elkhorn, NE
- DC Jeff Strawn—Papillion, NE
- Chief Thomas Everett—Sioux City, IA
- Chief Mike Shepherd—Wayland, IA
- DC Jason Hoevelmann—Sullivan, MO
- AC Michael Jenkins—N Kansas City, MO
- Chief Leo Huff—Clinton, MO
- TO Darrell Sooter—Wichita, KS
- Chief Mike Butler—Longmont, CO
- Chief John Eeten—Cheyenne, WY
- Chief John Mulligan—Fort Collins, CO
- BC Larry Schwartz—Colorado Springs, CO
- AC Dale Izatt—Gillette, WY

*A Tool to help Fire Service Delivery Systems, in the Current Financial Crisis Facing the United States of America's Fire Service—*  
**Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment & Accreditation!**

by Gary Curmode, CFO, President- Kansas Professional Fire Chiefs Association

The impacts of the economy on local jurisdictions and the public safety agencies are critical to all public safety and DOD facilities. All of us must be very deliberate in our evaluation of current conditions, setting service priorities, and identifying and selecting among options that will impact our organizations and the communities we serve. In the magazine, Fire Chief, please review a statement that was in Janet Wilmoth's blog:

*"At the Center for Public Safety Excellence, we are beginning to receive daily contacts from agencies and chief fire and medical officers who are concerned about the impacts of the current economic crisis. Many are just beginning to realize the full extent of local impacts. Our major industry associations, the IAFC, IAFF, and CPSE, are preparing leadership statements and materials to help their members and the industry respond.*

*We advise our contacts that anecdotal responses, while providing illustrative examples of resource reduction outcomes, are inadequate when their governing bodies or agencies are faced with major budget shortfalls. Fire, EMS, and rescue industry leaders must be prepared for their defense by arming themselves with information. Hazard and Risk Evaluation, Critical Tasking, Standards of Cover, and measuring baseline performance and outcomes become their lifelines. They must be able to clearly articulate what the potential hazards and risks are*

*that exist in their communities, as well as provide very specific and current information about demands for service.. They must have evaluated their current deployment model for programs, stations, apparatus, and personnel, verifying the model with their actual community risk matrix.*

*and behaviors presented here as part of their agencies routine management practices. An accredited agency led by a credentialed chief officer will have earned credibility with their mayors, managers, and governing bodies through their day-to-day operations and over time, putting them in a stronger position during crisis."*

*As budgets are frozen, decreased in small fractions or large percentages, it is imperative now more than ever, to an agency is considering going through this process, to maintain and continue vigorously towards not only maintaining the minimum requirements, but, try to "raise the bar."*

*They must have researched and evaluated what changes in outcomes to expect from changes in their resource deployment model, as there surely will be changes in outcomes.*

*The same intimate knowledge of their communities risk profile may be the Chief Officer's lifeline when faced with un-escapable decisions to reduce resources. The information should provide the basis for setting priorities in service delivery based upon risk and service demand, and help the leader avoid some arbitrary, unformed reduction.*

*The chief officer who will be most successful in an economic crisis will be the one who has practiced the skills*

Other national organizations such as IAFC and IAFF are strongly encouraging communities to maintain or seek out accredited agency status because of the behaviors learned and data collected in the process of self assessment.

As budgets are frozen, decreased in small fractions or large percentages, it is imperative now more than ever, to maintain Accredited Agency Status, or if an agency is considering going through this process, to maintain and continue vigorously

towards not only maintaining the minimum requirements, but, try to "raise the bar." If an agency drops out of this process or decides not to, they are depriving their department, governmental bodies, and their citizens of extremely valuable tools they need most to defend or prioritize programs.

CPSE does not set a single acceptable service level in any program, but, within reasonable and credible ranges, allows for the jurisdiction to set its own service levels. For example: a department that has had one SOC as an example, but finds it can no longer meet that SOC (Standard of Coverage) due to reductions, cuts, etc., may certainly change and reevaluate its hazards & risk

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# News From Missouri

by Chief Greg A. Pottberg,  
Missouri State Vice President

Missouri Association of Fire Chiefs held their Winter Conference and annual business meeting at the newly opened conference center at Big Cedar Lodge on Table Rock Lake in southern Missouri.

The conference speaker was Chief Rick Lasky from Lewistown, Texas and he provided valuable information on fire ground safety and Leadership. The conference was attended by 105 Chiefs and Board members from across the state and Kansas.

The business meeting covered reports from our Missouri State Fire Marshal Randy Cole, Dave Hedrick, Director of MU Fire and Rescue Training, along with Jack Taylor 1st Vice President of Missouri Valley Chiefs and International Director Richard Carrizzo.

Missouri Chiefs completed the table-top exercise on the revised state mutual plan, which was reviewed by IAFC representatives. The exercise after action report is being reviewed and anticipated changes will be discussed in the near future.

As with most states during this time of the year, legislative items are a major concern and Missouri is not different. We have the following bills that are specific interest to the fire service; 9-1-1 surcharge on cellular phones, fire safe cigarette, emergency disaster response fund, property tax reform, federal reimbursement allocation for ground and air bases ambulances and line-of-duty death benefit. □

*"It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on would save one-half the wars of the world."*  
~Thomas Jefferson~

## Body Art, Piercings, and the Fire Department

by Chief Jerry Rhodes

Body art and body piercing have been around for hundreds, if not thousands of years. There are a lot of different points of view on the subject of body art, tattoos, and piercings. It is always good to see what the current thought is on this subject for our industry. In the past, opinions spans from a big deal to no big deal at all.

Soon you will receive an electronic survey in your email. This survey will go to the over 1,100 members in the

Missouri Valley Division. We ask you to take a few minutes to give us your opinion and request that you ask other members of your agency to take the survey and share their opinions.

The result of this survey will be presented in the Fire Link and on the MVD website. Hose & Helmets are important to us and so are your thoughts. Be safe out there.

Watch for the survey coming soon to your computer. □

## HAZMAT IQ

by Chief Bob Platts

I was recently given the opportunity to attend another HAZMAT Class for Firefighters. As many of you, I have been through the "Chemistry of Hazardous Materials" offered by the National Fire Academy. At the time I found that course very beneficial in giving me insight and knowledge to deal with a Haz Mat situation, but as we all know, if you are not continually using those skills, they are quickly lost. So as I was driving to this class I was actually thinking that I am going to another Chemistry class.

Well, that was quickly changed within 15 minutes of the beginning of class. This system that Cris Aguirre and Joe Gorman have developed has taken the complicated "Periodic Table" and made it a valuable tool that will allow firefighters the chance to make a "Line of Sight Rescue" using basic tools to protect our firefighters using Bunker Gear and Breathing Apparatus.

Cris has over 30 years with the Miami/Dade Fire Department and Joe has over 20 years with the Fairfax County, VA, Fire Department. Both are assigned to Haz Mat response on their departments and worked well together to make the class not only informative but fun.

The system is called "Above the Line/Below the Line" and looks at solids, liquids and gases to determine a rapid system to identify our chance of rescue.

When getting into the Haz Mat response back in the mid '90s we had to make the jump from rapid entry into a waiting period of sometimes hours before entry could be made. Although that may be needed in some instances, this system allows a more rapid and safe approach to a problem that the fire service has been wrestling with for years and that is making a viable save of a victim.

Another change of thought is approaching the victim from downwind so our monitors can detect if we are actually getting our responders into trouble and giving them the opportunity to get out before it is too late. You can get some more information on their website HAZMATIQ.com.

I also googled HAZMATIQ and found some interesting articles from others who have attended one of their classes. I would highly recommend taking the time to attend one of their classes to have a better understanding of how simple the process can be. □

## Missouri Valley Division

P.O. Box 80003  
Lincoln, NE 68501

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The Missouri Valley Division of Fire Chiefs is dedicated to supporting professional development of its members through educational, leadership, and networking opportunities, while serving as a liaison between State Chiefs' organizations and the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

## North Platte, Nebraska Receives Truck Grant

Chief Paul Pedersen said the North Platte Fire Department has officially been awarded \$682,560 from the US Department of Homeland Security to purchase a new Fire Truck. The grant requires a cash match of \$78,840 from the City.

The North Platte Fire Department has one year from the date of the award to use these funds. The current aerial fire truck is 29 years old, the Chief said, and is coming very close to the end of its service life.

Nationwide, Assistance to Firefighters Grants will provide about \$560 million to fire departments and nonaffiliated medical service organizations. □

## Fire & Emergency Service

(continued from page 4)

and establish new, but still credible objectives. A department may be able to maintain the same response time, but have to reduce the fractal measure from 90 percent to 80 percent as an example. They may not have the same crew sizes, but can maintain the full effective initial response force by added additional units to a response, maybe even through mutual aid. This would likely impact the overall time assessable the force needed and that should be reflected in the overall time standard. Any change in an SOC must be accompanied with an evaluation to determine and properly state the impacts, especially if that would result in a reduction of service and possible increase in loss.

Within the process, there are steps that allow an agency time to evaluate drastic events and impacts on services. The ACR process is an annual one, so any agency may have to report in an ARC that there has been a problem with meeting the SOC. That report should

include an improvement or action plan to restore service levels or adjust to the communities new expectations for outcomes. The ACR (annual compliance report) process actually provide for several steps over several years before an agency would actually lose their accredited agency status, if the service levels were not longer deemed credible. There is a warning giving, based upon the first ACR reporting non-compliance with CCs (core competencies). The second year the agency is placed on probation, and it would be the third year before the agency could lose their status.

Concerned Fire Chiefs, regardless whether you are an Accredited Agency already, or, are thinking of embarking on the process, please go to the IAFC website for some useful resources, including a guide to weathering the economic storm, discussion groups, and other tools and help. The web link is: [www.iafc.org/economy](http://www.iafc.org/economy). □