

# EVERYONE GOES HOME

FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES PROGRAM



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# NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2005

## HUNDREDS OF REASONS TO IMPLEMENT THE EVERYONE GOES HOME PROGRAM: NFFF MEMORIAL WEEKEND

On October 8 and 9, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the fire service paid tribute to the 107 fallen firefighters who died in the line of duty in 2004 and honored and comforted their survivors. It was a moving weekend of great beauty, solemnity, and shared loss.

Services were held at the National Emergency Training Center/National Fire Academy campus, The Basilica of The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, and Mount St. Mary's college campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Thousands of firefighters, including honor guard and pipe-and-drum ensembles from around the country, were in attendance. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff provided the keynote address at the Sunday morning ceremony, offering words of consolation and DHS/USFA commitment to firefighters across America

and the Everyone Goes Home program. For the first time, services were broadcast live to digital cable customers on the Comcast Network.

Firefighters in 2005 have more than 107 reasons to do everything in their power to make sure that Everyone Goes Home—they have hundreds



of reasons. That was plainly apparent in the eyes of every family member who grieved at the National Fallen Firefighter Monument, who left Emmitsburg with a red rose and a folded American flag.

Firefighters across America: Look deeply into the eyes of your loved ones, your children, your parents, your spouses every day, and when you do, make a promise that you won't let those eyes well up with tears at the monument in Emmitsburg. Make a promise that you'll do everything you possibly can to come home after the incident or after the shift. Make a promise to make the Everyone Goes Home program a reality.

## **CORONA (CA) FIRE DEPARTMENT STRONGLY PROMOTES EVERYONE GOES HOME PROGRAM**



For years now, I've been telling my firefighters that our number one objective is that we all go home at the end of the shift. To hear and see the national effort of *Everyone Goes Home* is very exciting. We placed the slogan on every apparatus as a daily reminder to all of our firefighters that safety is number one and in everything we do. We have also found that the public will ask what it means and this gives us the opportunity to explain the importance and significance of safety. In addition, we have the slogan on every piece of stationery, both internal and external.

We share a training facility with our police department. It is a public safety training facility where most training is geared towards safety. We are in the process of placing the slogan on the side of the training tower, so every firefighter and police officer will see the slogan every time they come into the training center. I firmly believe, as does our police chief, the slogan applies to police as well.

Chief Mike Warren  
Corona (CA) Fire Department

## **NEAR MISSES**

BY DENNIS MITTERER, M.S., NREMT-P, CSP, ARM  
VFIS EMERGENCY SERVICES SAFETY AND HEALTH AUDITOR

The concept and understanding of a "near miss" are as varied as the number of personalities who work in emergency services. Two recent incidents that I am personally familiar with illustrate this point.

The first incident began on a clear Sunday afternoon. We received a call from someone reporting chest pain, and I was driving our medic unit. Civilian drivers were actually doing what we would like every driver to do when approached by an emergency vehicle —slowing down and moving to the right, allowing us to continue on to the emergency. We were heading south down a two-lane highway with a posted speed limit of 55 mph. I approached an intersection controlled by a traffic light.

At this point, the road changed from two lanes into a three with the far left lane a turning lane. Traffic was backed up in both of the other lanes. The turn lane was open, so I proceeded past the traffic that was stopped for the light. Because it is a one-way road, I had no concern about oncoming traffic.

At the light, a sizable hill sat to my left and obstructed my view of traffic

going east to west. Since the light was red, of course, I came to a complete stop. As we know, or at least do not want to admit, some drivers would have proceeded right through the red signal without stopping. Fortunately, it was good that I came to a complete stop, because as I was slowing down to see if the traffic was clear, a car blew through the intersection from left to right. That driver did have the right of way (his speed was, by my estimation, excessive), but he did not see me and did not attempt to brake for me, even as my lights and sirens were activated. Had I driven through the light, someone would have been seriously hurt, as he would have hit me at the driver's door.

My point on this — I went back to the hospital and was talking about this "near miss". One of my co-workers stated, rather smartly, "You probably were going too fast and were just lucky anyway." Wouldn't it have been nice to hear, "Good job for taking your job seriously and stopping to avoid an accident"? The fact remains that this was a near miss incident.

During the second incident, I was the crew chief going to a respiratory arrest call, and my driver was doing a good job negotiating the traffic on a two-lane highway, which separated traffic by a double yellow line. As we approached a narrow bridge, he noticed a delivery truck approaching from the opposite direction. Here is the dilemma — two large vehicles were approaching the same bridge, which is just barely large enough to allow two cars to pass. Both of us were traveling at about the same speed of 45 mph. My driver made a split-second decision to accelerate and attempt to get over the bridge and onto a wider part of the roadway that allows a larger distance between the vehicles.

Unfortunately, not everything goes as planned. Both vehicles passed on the bridge, and there was probably less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an inch between both vehicles. As they say, luck is simply a matter of inches or seconds. Another close call — you bet! The difference between the first scenario and the second was ATTITUDE.

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## NEAR MISSES

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On the first call, my instincts and training told me to slow down and evaluate the situation. This experience dictated that I stop at the intersection because the light was red, I had an obstructed view, and the 55 mph speed limit of the highway suggested I exercise caution. In the second situation, the attitude of "I can go faster and beat the other guy," or "I am an emergency vehicle, I have the right of way, and he MUST stop for me," dictated the driver's response. Either way, these examples were close calls.

As drivers, we should be evaluated on the "close calls" or "near misses." It is in this evaluation process that an organization can determine how close "statistically" they are to having a serious or fatal crash.

The theory depicted below illustrates this point, but a bit of an explanation is necessary. Looking at the pyramid, you see the top number is one. This represents a death or major property loss.

For every one death that occurs, there are roughly 100 serious injuries or significant property loss. For every one death that occurs, there are roughly 1,000 treatable injuries or minor property loss. For every one death, there are roughly 10,000 near misses. Most organizations wait until a death or serious injury occurs, and then decide to look at their program to avoid that specific event from ever re-occurring. The fact is, THIS event will probably never occur again, but the circumstances that caused the event will. Organizations

need to be proactive and look at the near misses or close calls. By reducing the number of near misses, the statistical chance of having a serious or fatal event decreases. Why? Because by looking at the near misses, you begin to see the reason for both the near miss and potentially fatal incidents. ATTITUDE and education can begin to change these behaviors. It is in this change of behavior that drivers will begin to value their role, and understand that it is completely within their grasp to arrive safely—or not.

*Reprinted with permission from VFIS newsletter, October 2005.*

## SEAT BELTS ARE NOT OPTIONAL!

For those who may have missed it, Dr. Burton Clark of the National Fire Academy wrote a powerful piece on seatbelt policies, using the death of Firefighter Brian Hunton in early 2005 to drive home the need for accountability and responsibility to each other. Clark wrote:

"If you do not wear your seatbelt when riding on the fire truck, if you do not make your partner put his or her seatbelt on, if you drive the fire truck and all passengers are not buckled up, if you are the officer and you do not enforce the seatbelt policy, if you are a chief officer and do not hold your company officers accountable, if you are the fire chief and you know that you don't have a 100% compliance 100% of the time with your seatbelt policy—you killed Brian Hunton...

"Our dysfunctional fire service seatbelt culture is the root cause of Brian's death. That culture ignores safety standards, does not use readily available equipment, flaunts SOPs, and denies responsibility at the individual, team, and organizational levels."

We stress that NOW is the time to get with the Everyone Goes Home Life Safety Initiative culture change so that never again will we say, sadly, that one of our members died because he or she was not buckled up. Dr. Clark's hard-hitting article is available at

[www.firehouse.com](http://www.firehouse.com).

## FIRE PREVENTION RIT: A CONCEPT WHOSE TIME HAS COME

By SHANE RAY, FIRE CHIEF, PLEASANT VIEW (TN) VOLUNTEER FD

Fire Prevention Rapid Intervention Team (RIT)? What? Sounds like something for the Geek Squad. "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday"! A recent risk analysis of our community indicated that 20 percent of our existing commercial occupancies had code violations similar to those found as contributing factors in National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Line-of-Duty Death reports. "Command to all companies: We are going to deploy Fire Prevention RIT companies to mitigate this issue."

If you think Fire Prevention RIT companies are a fictional exaggeration, then we're probably not thinking and being creative enough to address a serious problem. Why shouldn't we be out in our first-due areas conducting

inspections? Will this save lives in the future, both firefighters and citizens? I propose to you it will save lives. But to make it happen, we must look at the problems and solutions from a different perspective—otherwise, the concept never will become widely acceptable in our profession.

Across the country, our leadership teaches proactive RIT tactics for the fireground, such as creating secondary means of egress and ingress, lighting, trackable relay teams, and so forth. However, the truth is we can't get more proactive than removing potential deadly hazards in existing structures. Performing inspections that remove the unapproved hardware from the back door of the local business that traps and ultimately kills firefighters is an

issue that jumps immediately to mind. If we want to be proactive leaders in the fire service, especially company officers, we should be conducting strategic pre-incident surveys and tactical inspections in our first-due areas.

Getting our fire companies into the commercial occupancies and target hazard risk areas *before the fire* is critical to preventing firefighter line-of-duty deaths. You're correct: It isn't "macho," it isn't "sexy." However, after hearing Chief Dennis Compton speak on leadership and firefighter safety at the recent Minnesota Fire Chief's meeting, the consensus in that room was that being "macho" was killing firefighters. Do we really want to be macho? At our own and our families' tragic expense?

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# FIRE PREVENTION RIT: A CONCEPT WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Cont'd. from p. 3

A question was recently imposed upon a group of fire service professionals concerning the interest level of firefighters in fire inspection issues, such as panic hardware, unapproved locking devices, illegal interior modifications, excessive travel distances, fire sprinklers, etc. The overwhelming and almost immediate answer was that most firefighters cared absolutely nothing about such issues.

While as “macho” firefighters we tend to express little interest in fire prevention activities, especially when it comes to inspections, we

should review the incidents where we are losing firefighters in building fires. Even in departments where fire companies are performing inspections, are we sharing that information with the other shifts? If we aren't, we need to move to the next level and make sure all our personnel understand the circumstances, because the lives of our brothers and sisters may depend on it.

Our history is littered with examples where prevention and protection failures factored prominently in firefighter deaths. These examples must

be our wakeup call. Why not? Too many times, we operate no differently than the citizen who believes “it will never happen to me.” We, as firefighters, fall victim to the same circumstances; we say that it will never be us, it will never be us trapped in a burning building. Many fallen firefighters thought the same thing.

Are we ready to learn from history? Are we ready to change the paradigm, the culture? Are we willing to train and learn and be prepared? It's time for the leadership at all levels within our fire departments to get serious about fire

prevention, fire protection, and fire inspections. It's time to establish Fire Prevention RIT programs and get a handle on dangerous situations before tragedy pays a visit to our neighborhood.

Shane Ray currently serves as Chief of the Pleasant View, TN Volunteer Fire Department and Lieutenant with the Brentwood, TN Fire Department. Shane served six years as the mayor of Pleasant View and represents the fire service politically to state organizations. Chief Ray was recognized as *Fire Chief* magazine's Volunteer Fire Chief of the year in 2005.

## “DIAMOND TIME” FIREFIGHTING

Chief Ronny J. Coleman, former fire chief, California State Fire Marshal, and well-known author, has advanced a useful tool regarding initial fire attack as it relates to safety and risk analysis. Recognizing that the first minutes of the operation are the critical moments on which effectiveness—and safety—depend, Chief Coleman has developed a simple mental tool that could assist your fireground assessments, which he calls “diamond time.”

The “diamond time” model stresses the criticality of time in relationship to the primary fireground objectives of rescue and fire control. It assumes that incident effectiveness and safety turn on the first 10 minutes of interior operations. The clock starts ticking once crews enter the fire building; it's a race against

time. Every minute that passes wherein rescue and/or fire control are not accomplished brings the interior crews closer to a point where abandoning the building is necessitated.

Chief Coleman writes, “Recently, we have really managed to make the fire service pay a lot of attention to the cascade of events that has an effect our companies getting to the scene. Now let us concentrate on that first burning period after arrival. We need to simplify the science of firefighting into that period when we can make the most difference — Diamond Time.”

We recommend your reading Chief Coleman's article on *Fire Chief* magazine's website at [www.firechief.com](http://www.firechief.com).

## 2004 LODDs: Can There Be a More Urgent Reason to Adopt the Everyone Goes Home Culture Change?

- In 2004, 30 firefighters died while working at fire scenes. More firefighters die at fire scenes than any other type of duty performed.
- In 2004, 22 firefighter died in the line of duty responding to and returning from incidents. More than 50 percent of these deaths were in vehicle crashes.
- 2004 saw the highest level of stress or overexertion-related firefighter deaths in more than a decade; 66 firefighter LODDs were attributed to heart attacks and strokes.

The 16 Life Safety Initiatives include a greater focus and effort on wildland firefighting safety. Chief Robert Winston has written a two-part article entitled "Firefighter Behavioral Actions at Wildland/Urban Interface Fires: The Line of Duty Death and Injury Trend Must Be Reversed."

In it, Winston writes:

"Firefighters often times experience an adrenaline rush during fire operations especially as the observed dangers increase. This is also part of the 'fight or flight syndrome.' This can correlate directly to the increasing amounts of observed flame and smoke.

The adrenaline rush can give firefighters a sense of increased strength, over confidence and the enhanced desire to achieve the perceived goal of fire control (fight). This comes as a doubled-edged sword that can have a positive or negative conclusion. In other firefighters the adrenaline rush can produce the opposite effect and they can opt to be overly cautious (flight.)

"The firefighter's 'culture,' 'peer pressure' and their 'machismo' can and do play an important role that dictates how firefighters conduct themselves at fire incidents. A group of firefighters that fights fire aggressively, with caution, as a cohesive unit is obviously a good thing. An effective fire-

fighter wants to be an integral player within the group or unit and the firefighter's 'culture' demands it. There are some factors that can mold an individual and a unit or group of firefighters into an efficient and effective fire suppression team. They are training together, working together at incidents, trusting each other and developing the camaraderie that is the firefighter's 'culture.' Machismo is more of a male thing and as long as it does not cloud the decision-making process it is still an acceptable part of the firefighter's world.

**The complete text of Robert Winston's articles soon will be up on the Everyone Goes Home website at: [www.everyonegoeshome.com](http://www.everyonegoeshome.com)**

"Alan K. Beaver, a science & planning supervisor for the Canadian government's Yukon Wildland Fire Management, recently wrote a white paper entitled, "Applying Reward Versus Punishment Psychology to the Wildland Fire Suppression Culture." Here are some interesting excerpts from that paper:

"Safety psychologists are

in general agreement that it is high-risk behavior that leads to the majority of accidents and *near-hits*. This behavior evolves from a reward versus punishment relationship where high-risk behavior is seldom by an accident or injury and may well produce a reward. In such situations these rewards can serve to reinforce this behavior as both safe and acceptable. Thus the manner in which high-risk behavior is rewarded or punished contributes extensively to the resulting safe or unsafe culture....Where human behavior factors have been identified as contributing to accidents to at least some degree, it is frequently referenced as the much maligned Can Do Attitude....Can Do can produce disastrous consequences if not tempered by a strong measure of reality.'

"Braun (1995) defines a near-hit from a behavioral perspective as an accident without consequences....To individuals who thrive on the "adrenaline rush," a near-miss (or near-hit) may go unrecognized as a punishment and could actually be valued as an exhilaration reward. He writes, "It is the ability to control wildland fires...that produces the fire control rewards that (firefighting) agencies hold in such high regard. This has not come without a price,

however. The manner in which agencies define reward, success and failure has a major influence on attitudes and behavior of its [firefighters] and hence its safe or unsafe business culture.

## LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES

### NOVEMBER

11/2/05, Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center, Manheim, PA, 6:30 pm

11/17/05, Greensburg Fire Department, Greensburg, PA, 6:30 pm

11/18-19/05, Maryland Fire & Rescue Inst., College Park, MD, 8:30 am

11/21/05, Pennsylvania Fire & Emergency Services Institute, Radisson hotel, Camp Hill, PA

## Critical Injury at Live Fire Training

A veteran Pennsylvania instructor recently conducting live fire training was critically burned, receiving second and third degree burns over a large portion of his body, including respiratory and facial injuries. The injuries were sustained during the last burn of the day. While the exact circumstances surrounding this terrible injury are pending investigation, we're compelled to remind training officers and instructors to review all plans and procedures for conducting live fire training and ensure that national recommended standards are followed, that appropriate communications are in place, that appropriate scene safety and personnel assignments are followed, and that complacency never takes hold at the scene. It's important that the fire service trains as realistically as possible, but not at the expense of the health and safety of our members.

## Do You Have an Automatic External Defibrillator At the Ready?

A recent incident involving the severe electrical shock of a Los Angeles City Fire Department captain when an aerial ladder came into contact with power lines not only reminds us, generally, of the importance of scene safety procedures and continuous risk assessments but also of having an AED at the ready for immediate use on our injured members. While the incident is under investigation, after the captain's being removed from the ladder without a pulse and not breathing, an AED was successfully used at the scene to bring him back. Members trained in the use of AEDs are yet another way we can ensure that Everyone Goes Home.

## IN SHORT.....

The recent civil disturbances in Toledo, Ohio, in which **emergency personnel, including firefighters, were attacked by rioters**, should remind every fire department of the urgent need to develop plans and procedures to protect our membership in such circumstances. It's part of the Life Safety Initiatives....The State of Florida has approved the **Volunteer Fire Insurance Services' Driver Training Program** to be included as part of the Florida Administrative Code for firefighter training. The Florida State Fire College also has approved the VFIS program as part of its state instructor recertification program.... California has joined New York and Vermont in passing a **fire-safe cigarette bill**. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently signed a bill requiring that all cigarettes sold and manufactured in California after January 1, 2007 comply with standards demonstrating that they have a reduced likelihood to burn when left unattended. Each year, smoking-related fires kill hundreds of people across the country and put our firefighters at great risk. New York has reported that the number of deaths caused by cigarette-ignited fires has dropped by one-third since its state-mandated fire-safe cigarette law went into effect—with the additional critical benefit of reducing the number of potential fires to which firefighters respond....Recently, an Indiana firefighter driving an apparatus to an emergency was thrown from the vehicle and trapped underneath it when he lost control of the rig and it flipped over. The firefighter was

not wearing a seatbelt. **Wearing seatbelts during response in any vehicle is NOT optional or debatable!**...We're reminded of recent events in which firefighters operating inside burning buildings have been driven out of windows by spreading fire conditions. It's imperative that interior crews have two means of egress, and know where they are. **Are you ladder-ing your buildings, for life?**...Reports of firefighters being struck by passing motorists while operating at vehicle incidents continue. **Are you operating on the roadways by taking every possible precaution to stay safe?**...The International Code Council's telephone seminars includes a 90-minute presentation on **"fire risks of interior finishes"** at 10 a.m. on November 16....The building lobby is gearing up for a fight against the sprinkler requirements for new one- and two-family homes in the next edition of the NFPA Life Safety Code. It's essential that the fire service at the local, state, and national levels **promote adoption of the code**, with this critical requirement, on behalf of residents and firefighters....The Everyone Goes Home team congratulates **Chief David Paulison for being named Acting FEMA Director**. Having someone of his caliber in this key position can only help the federal response apparatus and firefighters across America....The United Administration and National Volunteer Fire Council have announced that their collaborative educational program **"Emergency Vehicle Safe Operations for Volunteer and Small Combination Emergency Service Organizations"** is now available online at:

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/research/safety/vehicle.html> or

<http://www.nvfc.org/evsp/index.html>

USFA Deputy Administrator Charlie Dickinson said, "This [program] will support the National Fallen Firefighters Life Safety Initiatives to reduce on-duty firefighter fatalities, and further ensure that Everyone Goes Home."

### Are you advancing the Life Safety Initiatives in your department?

Please tell us how, so we can share your successes with your brothers and sisters across the country. And don't forget: We're accepting **nominations for the Seal of Excellence** recognition program. Just send us a maximum two-page description of the Initiative(s) you're implementing, why you're implementing it, and how you're implementing it, as well as the individuals (or department) involved. Be sure to include all your contact information. Send your nomination to : [everyonegoeshome@firehero.org](mailto:everyonegoeshome@firehero.org).

