

# EVERYONE GOES HOME

## FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES PROGRAM



February 2006

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## NFFF PRESENTS HEALTH AND WELLNESS MINI SUMMIT AT FIREHOUSE WORLD

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation presented the fifth of its six scheduled Mini Summits on the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives at Firehouse World in San Diego in February. More than 50 committed fire service leaders participated in this successful interactive session, which yielded significant dialogue on creating a healthier fire service to stem the tide of line-of-duty heart attack deaths and increase firefighter longevity.

Extending the concept of the original national Life Safety Summit, held in Tampa, Florida, in 2004, the purpose of the mini summits is to explore in greater depth and generate national dialogue in the six critical "domain" areas of vehicle operations, wildland firefighting, structural firefighting, reduction of emergency incidents and risk, training and research, and health/wellness.

Health and Wellness Mini Summit participants were split into four groups to identify priorities, develop strategies, and make implementation recommendations in four key areas;

- medical standards and health monitoring;
- physical fitness and operational issues;
- Wellness issues; and
- behavioral and psychological factors.

Within these areas, group dialogue and recommendations focused on the categories of education and training; codes/standards/regulations; policies and procedures; attitude or behavioral change; research; new technology or technology transfer. At the end

of the seven-hour session, group facilitators presented results to the entire assembly and each participant voted on what they considered were the recommendations that would have the most impact on reducing line of duty deaths.

As voted by the participants, the top three recommendations were:

- Conduct a landmark study demonstrating the value of a health and wellness program in preventing injuries and illness, the costs associated with line of duty injuries and illnesses, and so forth. It was believed that such a study will provide a strong case, in terms of cost vs. benefit, for influencing city managers to support and adopt a strong health and wellness program for the fire department.

- Develop a medical standards awareness program for fire departments. Many departments in the United States are unaware that national medical standards for firefighters exist, much less institute medical standards as a matter of policy.

- Explore fitness-for-duty program issues and promote its implementation whenever possible. Participants identified that most fire departments do not have a policy or program that periodically tests firefighters for duty fitness after their entry level physical. Numerous obstacles to such a policy were discussed. Four of the approximately 50 participants said their fire department had successful fitness-for-duty programs. The group concluded that the fire service needs to actively identify such fitness-for-duty programs. The group concluded that the fire service needs to actively identify such departments and learn the lessons

on how to overcome the obstacles and design such programs.

Numerous other critical health and wellness issues were discussed in this important full-day session, among them mental health screening and substance abuse concerns; a "near miss" reporting system for health testing; how "macho" attitudes often make it difficult for firefighters to address emotional and psychological problems; and advocacy of fitness/wellness education for firefighters nationwide.

The Health and Wellness Mini Summit was a great success. A more detailed report will be posted on the Everyone Goes Home website in March.

### "Playing It Safe"

**The Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Team has identified five root causes of firefighter line-of-duty deaths.**

**Take some time now to think about and list what you believe are the root causes, and why.**

**Remember, all possible attributable causes of preventable firefighter line-of-duty deaths must fit within your five root causes.**

**Send your list of five root causes to us at our website:**

**[everyonegoeshome@firehero.org](mailto:everyonegoeshome@firehero.org)**

**Those who identify the five root causes will receive the Everyone Goes Home bracelet, helmet sticker, patch, and pin, and we'll publish your results in the next EGH newsletter.**



**Homeland Security**

The *Everyone Goes Home* Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program is made possible through the efforts of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, with funding provided by the Department of Homeland Security, Assistance to Firefighters Grant and the generosity of Fireman's Fund Insurance.

**What are you doing to assure  
EVERYONE GOES HOME?**

We're looking for those who have initiated a personal, department, organizational or community program that includes and endorses the 16 FIRE-FIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES.

*The purpose of this program is to recognize those who have taken the Fire  
Fighter Life Safety Initiative Program's 16 Initiatives and the slogan,  
"EVERYONE GOES HOME," to the next level - that of implementation.*

If you, or a department you know, has incorporated the Firefighter Life Safety Initiative Program's 16 Initiatives and the slogan, "EVERYONE GOES HOME," we want to hear from you.

*Send a description (samples, pictures, and program) of your implementation  
to:*

[everyonegoeshome@firehero.org](mailto:everyonegoeshome@firehero.org)

**SEAL OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS  
PRESENTED AT FIREHOUSE WORLD IN  
SAN DIEGO**

The Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program Team officially launched its Seal of Excellence Award Program at Firehouse World in San Diego. The purpose of this program is to recognize individuals, fire departments, and other organizations who have taken the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives/Everyone Goes Home Program to the next level-that of implementation.

Chief Ron Siarnicki, Executive Director of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, presented the awards in appreciation and recognition of support shown to the Everyone Goes Home campaign. "We want to recognize those who have taken the program from talking to walking, from showing to telling, and from hearing about it to implementing it," said Siarnicki.

Fireman's Fund Insurance and its Heritage Program received the first Seal of Excellence Award for providing critical financial support for the Everyone Goes Home program at the outset. "We are honored to present our Seal of Excellence Award to a corporate sponsor who stepped up to the plate, who in the very beginning had the courage and the belief in what we were doing and provided the matching funds needed to make us eligible for the Fire Act Grant that has allowed us to move forward with the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program, working on the campaign so that Everyone Goes Home." Danielle Cogan, director of community relations for Fireman's Fund Insurance, accepted the award.

A Seal of Excellence Award was also presented to Harvey Eisner, editor in chief of *Firehouse* magazine, of the Cygnus Public Safety Group, who has consistently demonstrated the highest commitment to the Everyone Goes Home Program. Harvey has provided personal assistance to the project, engaging the support of Firehouse and Cygnus to market, campaign share, and endorse the program.

Congratulations and many thanks to Fireman's Fund Insurance, Harvey Eisner, and all the people who advocate and implement the Everyone Goes Home Program and the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.

**WHY IS YOUR  
INPUT  
IMPORTANT?**

HERE'S AN  
IMPORTANT ITEM  
FROM JOHN SACHEN,  
HAZ-MAT OFFICER/  
INSTRUCTOR, DELTA  
(MO) FIRE  
PROTECTION  
DISTRICT

Recently several law enforcement agencies in Southeast Missouri issued a recommendation that officers contact the closest fire agency when they have an incident involving hybrid vehicles, whether or not fire and extrication are involved.

Hybrid vehicles (HV) are not often encountered outside of the larger metropolitan areas, and even then firefighters may not be aware of the special hazards involved. HV electrical systems on the newest vehicles include 300-Volt DC battery packs and 165-horsepower electric motors operating on 650 volts. AC.

To address this situation, a **Hybrid Vehicle—Awareness Level** PowerPoint presentation has been developed by the University of Missouri—Fire and Rescue Training Institute. The HV-PPT has 23 slides with instructor notes and introduces the Hybrid Vehicles to Fire/EMS/Law Enforcement agencies, city/district officials, and community groups.

*Response agencies may  
download the presentation free  
of charge at:*

[http://www.mufrti.org/  
download/  
Hybrid\\_Vehicles.zip](http://www.mufrti.org/download/Hybrid_Vehicles.zip)

*Send your input/feedback/  
information on firefighter life  
safety issues to :*

[everyonegoeshome@firehero.org](mailto:everyonegoeshome@firehero.org)



# A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

BY DENNIS COMPTON

The fire service has significantly increased the emphasis on the health and safety of firefighters over the past fifteen years. We are training more effectively, providing strong Incident Command, relying on Standard Operating Procedures, using better equipment, and monitoring compliance with regulations and standards. In addition, health evaluations, emphasizing psychological, emotional, and physical wellness, tracking chemical and medical exposures, and using safety officers, have also contributed to improving the health and safety of firefighters. The fire service mission, by its very nature, involves risk to our members in a variety of situations. Therefore, those who occupy positions of leadership must accept and act out their responsibilities in ways that impact health and safety in positive, practical, and effective terms. Leadership and supervisory practices of fire officers make a difference in the safety and survival of firefighters.

Leadership and supervision tend to regulate the effectiveness of safety efforts and guide attitudes towards safety. Positive leadership and skillful supervision can improve the odds of firefighters surviving the emergency situations we send them to. No matter what formal positions of rank we hold, leaders demonstrate their commitment to safety through their behaviors and actions. These actions send a stronger message than anything they might simply "say" to those they lead.

There are many things that leaders should stress on a regular basis, and that must include an emphasis on actions and events that get firefighters injured or killed. Data from the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) clearly identifies the most common contributing factors to firefighter injuries and fatalities. Although all injuries and fatalities can't be prevented, following are some intervention strategies that can be emphasized to significantly lower our risk.

- Firefighters and fire officers must stay mentally alert to the many ways the we can be injured at the station, in training, during response, or at the scene of an emergency call. Inattentiveness or complacency affect our actions or decision. There is no such thing as a routine call or task. Remember, minor injuries are usually just a matter of good luck...often, the injury could have been more serious than it was...maybe even fatal.

- Many firefighter tasks involve hard, strenuous work performed with little time for warm-up. Lots of firefighters die of heart attacks and strokes, or experience other career ending injuries during training or while working at emergency scenes, or shortly afterwards. Maintaining a reasonable level of fitness, physical strength, and flexibility, combined with an emphasis on psychological and emotional fitness, will significantly improve a firefighter's odds of survival. If we add to this an active and effective rehab component to emergency scene management, firefighters will have a better chance of

survival.

- Fire vehicle crashes that occur during emergency response and non-emergency travel are a major cause of firefighter injuries and deaths each year. Members must always take special care while driving or riding to (and from) calls. They must stay seated and wear seat belts...period. If we follow this edict, and also take appropriate steps to protect firefighters from traffic while they work at emergency scenes, firefighters will have a better chance of survival.

- Fire Officers need to stop putting firefighters in offensive positions on what are obviously defensive fires. If firefighters are improperly positioned, and things happen that compromise the structural integrity, increase the extent of the fire, change the ventilation profile, or a number of other factors, the result could be tragic for firefighters. The incident commander is in place to determine the strategy (offensive or defensive) based on an ongoing evaluation of critical fire-ground factors, command and control, and through the management of an incident action plan. The building should not decide the strategy by running firefighters out at the last minute or by seducing leaders to take risks with firefighters' lives that are not worth what they're trying to accomplish tactically. If the appropriate strategy is offensive...then get with it. Half-hearted offensive attacks are dangerous to firefighters. However, if the appropriate strategy is defensive, get our firefighters out of, off of, and away from the structure...and the leader needs to be willing to take the heat for those decisions if needed.

- The risk vs. gain assessment is ongoing, and must be standard practice by the leaders at all types of emergency incidents. Leaders must ask themselves initially, and again periodically throughout the incident, "Is the risk I'm taking with my people worth what we're trying to accomplish here?" If the answer is yes, then keep going...but if the answer is no, then stop doing what you're doing. Keep the following risk model in mind...it's been around for several years:

*We will risk ourselves a lot, within a structured plan, to save a savable life.*

*We will risk ourselves a little, within a structured plan, to save savable property.*

*However, we will not risk ourselves at all to save lives or property that are already lost.*

- On the fireground, firefighters assigned to crews, companies, or teams must not get separated from each other...they must not get lost. We should always remember that if we find ourselves alone and things take a sudden turn for the worse, or if we get disoriented, we could die...alone.

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# A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

When firefighters get lost in a structure fire, there is only one good thing that can result from it.. They get found alive. Every other possible outcome is bad. Everyone must stay connected to the system and the Incident Commander, through their company, or unit, or sector/division/group. Freelancing must not be allowed at any level within the organization structure.

As leaders and supervisors, our comments and actions towards health and safety significantly impact other members' attitudes and actions regarding these issues. How we (as leaders) function, to a large extent, regulates the way our members view the importance of safety practices, and therefore, dictates how they function themselves.

Within ancient leadership concepts developed in 600 BC in China, Lao Tsu professed and taught that one leads primarily by example. The inability or unwillingness of those in leadership positions (regardless of rank) to practice this basic leadership concept in a positive way, setting the appropriate example, undermines firefighter health and safety as much as any other factor.

Leadership and supervision includes modeling the behaviors and expectations we have of others. Leaders are always teaching others how to behave and perform by their own example...good or bad. Imagine the positive effect of putting emphasis on safety and survival leadership issues every day, and at every emergency incident. We could significantly impact firefighter safety in the specific areas I've mentioned, which happen to be the contributing factors in 90% of all firefighter fatalities...career and volunteer.

We should never minimize the potential risks firefighters face, but as leaders and supervisors, we can reduce the risk and improve their odds of survival. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) and the United States Fire Administration (USFA) have committed to meeting the following ambitious goals:

1. Reduce Firefighter line of duty deaths by 25% over the next five years.
2. Reduce firefighter line of duty deaths by 50% over the next 10 years.

If we made the changes to the fire service leadership, management and supervisory practices, and culture that are suggested in this article...I mean really made them...in the volunteer and career services...we would most likely achieve those goals. We can do that!

Take the time to review your department's practices and procedures relating to the safety issues I've discussed...then review your own personal safety attitude and your leadership behaviors as well. The most dangerous firefighters and fire officers I've every known have been the ones who thought they were "fully trained"...be very cautious working around them. Let's take care of each other all the time, and as leaders and supervisors, demonstrate that commitment through your own words and actions. We'll all be better off...in health and safety, as well as in many other ways. It can be a matter of life or death for our firefighters and ourselves.

## About the Author:

Chief Dennis Compton is a well-known speaker and the author of several books including the *When In Doubt, Lead!* series, *Mental Aspects of Performance For Firefighters And Fire Officers*, as well as other articles and publications. He is also the co-editor of the current edition of the ICMA's textbook titled, "Managing Fire and Rescue Services." He serves as a national advocate and executive advisor for fire service and emergency management issues and organizations.

Dennis served as the fire chief in Mesa, Arizona, for five years and as assistant fire chief in the Phoenix Fire Department, where he served for 27 years. Chief Compton is the past chair of the Congressional Fire Services Institute's National Advisory Committee, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Home Safety Council (HSC).

## EVERYONE GOES HOME FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES PROGRAM—UPDATE

The *Everyone Goes Home* Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program team is in the development stages of a very important project that will strongly affect the American Fire Service. Plans are underway to launch a program to assist U.S. fire departments in the implementation of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives by providing a packet of media tools to help departments' in their quest for safety and to help ensure that all firefighters go home at the end of the day. We sought out fire service leaders and subject matter experts to provide their expertise and recommendations on how we can build a safer fire service. Please keep checking our website for updates on this project. Thank you for your support. Stay safe.



## KENTUCKY IS FIFTH IN FIREFIGHTER DEATHS THIS YEAR

— *COURIER-JOURNAL* DECEMBER 27, 2005

Kentucky ranks fifth in the nation in firefighter deaths this year with six, a statistic that has fire officials looking for more money and better ways to train volunteer and paid firefighters.

Kentucky Fire Commission officials plan to ask the legislature for \$3 million for health, driver training and safety programs that could prevent deaths, said Ronnie Day, executive director of the commission.

"If we have even one death, we are concerned about it. These are our brothers and sisters losing their lives. If there is something we can do, we want to do it." Day said.

The funds would go toward helping train firefighters in the state's 768 volunteer fire departments, often the primary source of fire protection in rural areas.

The state was second in the nation in 2004, with seven volunteer firefighters, which make up two-thirds of Kentucky's fire departments.

The deaths fall into three categories—traffic accidents on the way to emergencies, on-duty heart attacks and strokes, and injuries sustained while fighting fires or using equipment.

The most recent death occurred Nov. 23 when a fire truck ran over West Van Lear volunteer firefighter Charles McKenzie at the scene of a house fire. McKenzie had founded West Van Lear's volunteer fire department in 1964 and continued to volunteer at 75.

According to a preliminary report from the U.S. Fire Administration, McKenzie drove a tanker to the scene of a fire. After he got out of the truck it jumped into gear while pumping and rolled forward, pinning him underneath.

"One of the concerns we have is whether the equipment was sound," said McKenzie's son-in-law, Kenneth Williamson, who is a Winchester city battalion chief. "Most volunteer departments buy equipment that other departments want to get rid of."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has issued reports on several of the Kentucky fatalities that point out deficiencies and recommend how to minimize risks with better training and policies.

Heart attacks were listed as the cause of five of the eight on-duty firefighter deaths in Kentucky last year and three of this year's deaths.

The deaths occurred soon after the men responded to emergency or fire calls. They were

attributed to stress and overexertion, according to U.S. Fire Administration documents.

Day said the problem is occurring nationwide because a lot of volunteer fire departments are staffed by people older than 35 who might not be in the best shape and most departments do not have physical fitness requirements.

The occupational safety agency has suggested providing screenings and annual medical evaluations to all firefighters, along with other medical tests. The State Fire Commission agrees with the federal recommendations.

"It's all well and good to be dedicated, but volunteer firefighters should always make sure they are healthy enough to fight fires," Day said.

Day said the commission is asking for \$1 million to pay for physicals for each firefighter.

Many volunteer departments don't realize that the National Fire Protection Association requires annual physicals for all firefighters and requires all new firefighters to pass a physical before joining, Day said.

Mike Kurtsinger, a division director at the Kentucky Fire Commission, said the commission will ask the legislature to spend \$1 million on simulators to help teach driving safety for firefighters.

It's a move aimed at curbing the number of traffic fatalities, Kurtsinger said.

At least seven Kentucky volunteer firefighters have died since 1994 in on-duty traffic accidents in which they were not wearing seat belts, according to reports from the occupational safety agency.

Nationally, 117 firefighters died in 2004, with the majority being volunteers. The U.S. Fire Administration is seeking to reduce firefighter fatalities by 25 percent in 5 years and by 50 percent within 10 years.

Day said he thinks most volunteer departments provide excellent fire protection, but they can still use better equipment and training.

It takes a special person to be a volunteer firefighter," Day said. "They have hearts as big as buckets. They are heroes."

## COURAGE TO BE SAFE PROGRAM PRESENTED IN MONTOUR FALLS, NY

Robert Colameta, consultant/instructor for Public Safety Education Network, presented the Courage to Be Safe program at the New York State Frederick L. Warder Academy of Fire Science in Montour Falls, New York, on February 10. The program was attended and enthusiastically received by 35 New York State fire instructors who plan to take what they have learned and spread the word in their departments. A PowerPoint presentation was supplied by the Public Safety Education Network and was distributed on disk to attendees to assist them in presenting this program.

Plans are currently underway to launch the presentation of this program in Albany and then in Syracuse.

We thank Jim Burns, state fire administrator, for his strong support and vision for the program, Tom Wutz, chief, fire services bureau, for his hospitality and leadership example; and to Dan McDonough, New York Liaison for National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and FDNY Rescue 3 (Ret.) for his commitment to firefighter safety and promoting program in New York.

Would you like one of Everyone Goes Home Speakers Bureau members to present on the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives at your department or your conference? Please contact us at:

[everyonehome@firehero.org](mailto:everyonehome@firehero.org)

If you have an article or news item related to firefighter safety that you would like to share with our readers, please submit to Bill Manning at: [williamamanning@comcast.net](mailto:williamamanning@comcast.net)



## Firefighter Life Safety Initiative Advocates Program Launched

On February 22, 2006, the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program Team launched its Regional/State Advocates program by conducting a telephone conference with 10 fire service leaders who expressed a desire to do more to prevent firefighter line of duty deaths in their states. The Advocates program takes a grassroots outreach approach to develop networks of advocates to help broaden awareness of the 16 Life Safety Initiatives and help fire departments develop ways to implement them. The advocates serve as a critical communications conduit from the local fire departments back to the Foundation regarding the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program direction and implementation.

Among the numerous topics and ideas discussed were:

- organizing advocates regionally and by state—one advocate for each state and one for each of the 10 regions outlined by FEMA;
- making plans to present the Courage To Be Safe program train-the-trainer course in all 50 states.
- creating a forum on the Everyone Goes Home website for better communication of ideas, advocacy, and implementation, listing advocates on the site with click-on links;

- developing intrastate email networks to keep the message alive and stay connected;
- using advocates for feedback/input regarding program priorities and specific state needs;
- presenting the Courage to Be Safe program at the Florida Chiefs Conference in April;
- how to make use of advocate's time and provide them with the tools for promoting the cause in their states.

Those who participated in the first advocates meeting include: Heather Burford, Battalion Chief, Manchester (CT) Fire-Rescue-EMS; Rob Dahl, Deputy Chief, Boring (OR) Fire District, Rob Franklin, Captain/Training Officer, Lancaster (TX) Fire Department, Leigh Hollins, Battalion Chief, Cedar Hammock (FL) Fire Department, Rich Marinucci, Chief, Farmington Hills (MI) Fire Department, Scott McCullom, Fire Chief, Swift Creek (NC) Fire Department, Ken McMahon, Chairman, Delaware Fire Commission; Mike McNamee, District Chief, Worcester (MA) Fire Department (represented by Paul Rogatz); and William Mora, Captain, San Antonio (TX) Fire Department.

We're off to a great start.

## Become an Advocate for the Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program—Make a Difference!

The Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Advocates (FLSIA) will play a key role in helping to bring about awareness of the Initiatives and act as a conduit for resources to enable departments to implement and advocate them.

Following are the expectations and responsibilities for this important position:

### **Expectations:**

Advocates will be expected to represent their state in the promotion, presentation, and awareness of Firefighters Life Safety Initiatives. They will serve as the eyes and ears of the FFLSI Program for their state.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Monitor and review programs presented within your region that are relative to Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.
- Attend, represent, or arrange to have a designate attend or participate in activities, events, programs, and training where there is an opportunity to promote Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives or assist in their implementation.
- Develop a reporting and sharing plan between you and the State/Local Advocates as well as with the FFLSIP team.

- Share with the FFLSIP team awareness and knowledge of activity within your region.
- Keep abreast of new developments and trends; make recommendation to FFLSIP team on desirable additions or suggested changes to enhance program and/or process.
- Participate in periodic teleconferences with Regional representatives.
- Identify and report on best practices within your state.
- Submit stories or provide input to the FLSI newsletter. Make recommendations for Seal of Excellence recipients.
- Assist in Coordination, oversight of performance/delivery of FLSI programs and presentations.
- Keep abreast of new developments and trends in the region; make recommendations to Regional Advocates on desirable additions or suggested changes to enhance the program and/or process.



# SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NIST RECOMMENDATIONS NOW: AN OPINION

BY AZARANG (OZZIE) MIRKHAH, P.E., EFO, CBO  
LAS VEGAS (NV) FIRE & RESCUE

***Editors Note:** The following is offered in light of the critical role that enhanced active and passive fire protection systems and building construction play in firefighter safety in high-rise operations. Generally speaking, the model code groups are the genesis for important enhancements such as those recommended by the National Institute of Standards and Technology following its World Trade Center Collapse investigation. There is no doubt whatsoever that the fire service has not invested enough of itself in the very code enhancements that would increase the chances of every firefighter going home. With that in mind, we offer this editorial commentary on a most critical subject.*

After three years of investigations conducted under the National Construction Safety Team Act, at a Congressional Hearing on October 26, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) released their final report of the World Trade Center Collapse investigation. As emergency responders first on scene to all types of emergencies at high-rise buildings, it is of utmost importance that we recognize that the NIST recommendations have direct relevance to firefighter life safety and the safety of the public. NIST is not a regulatory agency and does not have any enforcement authority, thus their recommendations would not be implemented until they are incorporated into the body of the building codes. It is only logical, then, that all fire service organizations put their support and influence toward implementing these recommendations and incorporate them into the body of the building codes developed by both of the national model code groups, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the International Code Council (ICC).

A quick glance at the NIST report reveals that even though these recommendations came in the aftermath of a horrific terrorist event, none of these recommendations are solely based on terrorist threats; rather, they have multi-hazard response applications. These enhancements recommended by NIST have a direct impact on protecting both the building occupants and the emergency responders from all types of incidents that require full building evacuation and interior emergency operations. This is precisely the reason that all fire service organizations should support implementation of these recommendations. NIST's recommendations are not futuristic and were developed based on the available

technologies and the standard operating procedures and capabilities of the fire service in responding to the high-rise emergencies.

NIST'S recommendations are focused on:

- increasing the structural integrity of the high-rise buildings to avoid progressive collapse and total structural failure enhancing the fire resistance of the structures protecting the structural members to prolong burnout and structural soundness;
  - requiring active fire protection systems enhancing tenability and providing fire safety for the building occupants;
  - improving the means of egress providing for full building evacuation and allowing for rapid occupant egress;
- and improving communication technologies and procedures for emergency responders.

Of course, these recommendations have great relevance for the fire service. And one prominent commonality is time. Structural improvements and passive fire resistive enhancements provide for additional time prior to structural failure. Active fire protection systems provide occupants additional time before tenability is compromised. Means of egress enhancements decrease the time to evacuate the building, and by reducing counterflow problems it also decreases our time to stage our interior operations. And similarly, modifications to the elevators would also save us time in getting the firefighters and equipment to the staging floor. Enhancements to the fire communication systems provide us real time information for all our fire command and control purposes.

Our risk analysis and decision making at high-rise operations are measured

against time. Critical suppression/mitigation and evacuation/rescue functions, with their extraordinary logistical and resource demands, are measured against time and incident severity. Whether that window of time enlarges or shrinks depends in large part on the performance of building construction and built-in passive and active fire protection/life safety systems. To some degree, we as firefighters are at the mercy of the architects and engineers designing these high-rise buildings, and at the crux of it, we are relying on the strength of the building codes under which these structures were built.

Not surprisingly though, the design criteria for the design professional are not necessarily identical to the fire service needs, and cost plays a major role in their designs and the levels of built-in life safety and fire protection they provided in the high-rise buildings. In addition to the building officials and the fire service representatives in the national code development processes, developers, building owners, manufacturers, engineers, architects, etc. all play a major role in the development of the building codes. The construction industry exerts a heavy influence in the code adoption process, and at times its interests are in opposition to those of the fire service.

The old adage "time is money" applies in our case; our need to expand the tenability/survivability in high-rise buildings translates to increased construction costs to the developers and the building owners, and thus to the design professionals. Everyone likes a good barbecue, but no one wants to have their "ox gored," if you will. The costs associated with implementing the NIST recommendations into

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## SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NIST RECOMMENDATIONS NOW: AN OPINION (CONTINUED FROM P. 7)

the building codes and requiring a higher degree of fire and life safety in high-rise buildings has put the interests of the owners and the design professionals in opposition to ours.

In general, the construction industry and the design professionals representing them oppose incorporating the NIST recommendations into the body of the building codes. And this was quite evident in a recent model code development committee meeting, where their board showed the least of interest in incorporating the NIST recommendations into the building code. The board believed that the cost impact of implementing the NIST recommendations into the building codes was too prohibitive. The board believed that, based on the historical safety records of the high-rise buildings and the fact that the majority of our fire losses and firefighter fatalities occurred in the other types of occupancies and structures than high-rise buildings, there was not enough justification to implement the NIST recommendations. The board believed that the high-rise buildings could not be designed to take the impact of an airplane as it was done in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The board believed that to make changes in the building codes, scientific data must be presented and “probabilistic analysis” must be performed proving the need for implementation of the NIST recommendations.

These views are very different from the fire service’s perspective. Whereas the opposition argues about cost, we seek adequate time to evacuate the building and perform our interior operations to mitigate the hazard. The fire service is not naïve or inconsiderate as to the cost issues that would result from implementing the NIST recommendations. What’s required are cost-effective solutions to provide for our desired level of fire and life safety—not disregarding our need for increased safety altogether. Bottom line is we don’t want our brothers and sisters, in addition to the occupants of these high-rise buildings, paying the ultimate price as they did on September 11, 2001.

We are also astute in evaluating risks in our own ways of course, and are not naive about the concept of “probabilistic analysis.” After all, we utilize this risk-based approach in our daily operations, in our daily decision making. That being said, since we are responsible for responding to virtually every type of high-rise emergency in high rises, we know quite well that the concept of “probabilistic analysis” should not only be limited to the fire response, but must be viewed from the multi-hazard or all-hazards perspective, as well.

To support our perspective in rebutting our opposition’s arguments regarding this issue, it should be explained that to all of us, as Americans, the September 11, 2001, events were a paradigm shift that should have alerted us to abandon our naiveté and recognize that “we are not in Kansas anymore.” Merely applying the “probabilistic analysis” approach in a reality vacuum would prove that since hundreds of thousands of flights take place and millions of people travel by air around the world every year, logically, air transportation is actually the safest mode of travel. But 19 terrorists and four airplanes changed the history of our country and the entire world.

Based on the views of the proponents of the “probabilistic analysis” approach, there should be absolutely no reason to have spent hundreds of millions of dollars upgrading security arrangements in the airports, since after all, the probability of such occurrences were astronomically low. But again, September 11, 2001, was a paradigm shift, and despite the miniscule odds, our government correctly decided to take corrective measures and spend hundreds of millions of dollars to enhance the security in our airports to reduce the possibility of such attacks in the future. Do the model code boards believe that these measures were too cost prohibitive and a waste of our resources? The proponents of the “probabilistic analysis” approach are quite aware of the more stringent security checks at the airports and the fact that even their nail clippers are confiscated by the TSA at the metal detector gates. Yet, they fail to apply that logic to our high-rise buildings and acknowledge that even miniscule probabilities could prompt tremendous societal concerns and costly preventive measures.

The façade of scientific “probabilistic analysis” is a strategic tool to drag the implementation process, which would effectively kill the NIST recommendations. The pronounced cause of death? “Analysis paralysis.”

Considering that the code proposal submittal process for the 2009 edition of the building code developed by one of the major building code groups is scheduled for March 2006, there is not much time left, and the opposition’s delay strategy could prove to be effective. As a non regulatory agency, NIST’s recommendations would not automatically translate into the building code language, and will not be implemented. Not unless we put all our efforts in getting them implemented. The federal government has done all they could. It is now up to us to take a stance.

Unfortunately, we are in a two-minute drill and must snap the ball without a huddle. We can’t afford to run the clock and let time run out, and wait for the next code adoption in 2012. We should direct our representatives in the code development and technical committees to take a strong stance in support of adopting the NIST recommendations into the model building codes. All fire service organizations must stand unified in their support of implementing the NIST recommendations. After all, as emergency responders, we are all impacted and are all in it together. Surely, we owe it to our brothers who fell in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to work towards improving the construction and fire and life safety features of future high-rise buildings so that our children won’t have to face what they did that terrible day.



## FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES PROGRAM - CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### Courage to Be Safe—State of Pennsylvania

The program is scheduled at various venues throughout the state of Pennsylvania

Check website for locations: [www.everyonegoeshome.com](http://www.everyonegoeshome.com)—Coming Events

### FDIC Indianapolis—April 28, 2006

Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program Forum

### Firehouse Expo 2006 —Baltimore, MD

Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives Program Seal of Excellence Award Presentation

### Fire Rescue International—September 11, 2006

Courage to Be Safe Program

## WILDLAND FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION TO WORK WITH NFFF IN PROMOTING EVERYONE GOES HOME PROGRAM AND PROMOTION OF 16 FIREFIGHTER LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVES.

Depending on the year, approximately 25 percent of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's constituents are wildland firefighters. This constituency directly overlaps that of the Wildland Firefighters Foundation (WFF). The WFF has proposed to assist the NFFF in the development and delivery of the Everyone Goes Home program and the 16 Life Safety Initiatives.

The WFF will modify these programs and develop them to address the needs of wildland firefighters. Through research and input from the wildland firefighting community, federal agencies, the National Wildland

Coordinating Group, training organizations, and others, the key for firefighter life safety messages will address the wildland fire group, using their nomenclature, graphics, and management hierarchy.

The WFF is the broadest voice for the wildland community and its mission is closely aligned with the NFFF. Recognizing this, the US Forest Service has issued a "Grant of General Authority" that provides the WFF full and free access to all U.S. forest service Fire Camps. The Foundation looks forward to its advocacy work with the WFF.

