

FIRE LINK

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THE DOMINO EFFECT

by President Mark Wessel

As we march forward into a new Administration and a very complex worldwide economic downturn, the fire service should poise itself for the impact that is sure to follow. Many of us as Fire Service leaders may have already started to experience the impacts of the downturn. The big question is; How far will this go? How much will this effect the fire service? and When and where will it end? I would love to have the crystal ball that would give us the answer. The definite to all of us should be, "we will be impacted by the financial environment." The other definite is, "this will not get over soon."

So, where do we go from here? Let's start by doing what we do best, "look at the whole picture." Although our local economies can be very different, time will most probably cause each of us like experience in addressing the inevitable. We can most likely expect our budgets to become much leaner in the very near future. So, with that said, plan ahead. Be proactive in our approach to the system for which we are responsible. Do your homework in advance. If you are forced to react to the financial losses we may experience, we probably are too late. Creating a plan will most likely allow for a softer blow to our operations. While formulating your plan, utilize your resources wisely. During times like this it is impera-

tive that we empower others to assist in the plan. Many of us will most likely not see the end of the impact during our tenures as fire service leaders. Let's give our protégés the tools they need to continue providing a quality service to our respective communities.

Start by looking at the entire picture. Evaluate your local circumstances first. Move next to the region, followed by the country and then the global economy. Everyone should understand that when the economy turns down, our requirements for providing a quality service does not diminish also. The majority of the time, as economy worsens, our call load increases and with the increase, usually the nature of our everyday operation changes. We can expect situations such as preventive maintenance programs being diminished, if not eliminated altogether. As our communities experience job losses, we might expect the criminal element to increase in activity. And, of course, the old standby of alternative heating and lighting uses greatly increase.

Be proactive in the sense of educating your local elected or appointed officials of the challenges you are going to face as the emergency responder. Usually these folks tend to look our direction first when facing financial problems. Be prepared to respond to their

approach and to give alternative plans for your community to cope with the financial crisis. Educate your personnel on the problems they may be facing. And remember that the economy impacts them on a personal basis as well. So be prepared to possibly expend some resources helping the members of the department as well.

We must always remember that we have a board of dominoes all standing in a very prestigious design. Now the dominoes appear to be falling. Each one touching the next, causing the pattern to collapse. It does not take long for all of the dominoes to eventually drop. This very well could be our future. If we're lucky, it will not. But it isn't looking good. As you prepare, build in spaces to eliminate the chain reaction or domino effect. Remember, it takes much longer to build the design than it does for the collapse. And as we venture into the Holiday Season, remember to truly give thanks for the country we live in and have a Safe, Blessed and Merry Christmas Season. □

Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for a Healthy, Happy New Year!



Calendar of Events

Missouri Fire Chiefs
Big Cedar Lodge, MO
February 20-22, 2009

South Dakota Fire Chiefs
February 27, 2009

MVD Annual Conference
Overland Park, KS
July 9-11, 2009

IAFC-FRI Conference
Dallas, TX - August 25-29, 2009

News from Colorado

by Chief John Bales

Greetings from Colorado. I am honored to be the new State Vice-President from Colorado on your Missouri Valley Fire Chiefs Association Board of Directors. I look forward to the opportunity of working with many of you and continuing the great work that has been accomplished by our division of the IAFC. I am currently the Fire Chief in Golden, Colorado. Golden is the western most suburb in the Denver Metro area. We are a combination department comprised of 11 career staff and a thriving 75 volunteer membership.

Things have been busy in Colorado this past summer. As most are aware, the Metro Denver Fire Chiefs, the Colorado State Fire Chiefs Association and the Denver Fire Department hosted the IAFC at Fire Rescue International in August. It was an outstanding conference and I know many of our members in the Missouri Valley were able to attend. Shortly after FRI, the Denver Metro area was host to the Democratic National Convention. Once again, through some outstanding planning and preparation, this international event proceeded smoothly and with little disruption to the area.

Most recently I was able to attend the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) of the IAFC in Clearwater Beach, Florida along with one of our Training Officers. This is an outstanding conference for members who are from or manage combination fire departments. During the opening ceremonies, the Golden Fire Department was presented with the first "Recruitment and Retention Award" sponsored by VCOS and VFIS. This award was designed to recognize success and excellence in the retention and recruitment of emergency service organization members. This award is the cumulative effort of the Administration, the Volunteer Coordinator and the Department's Strategic Planning Team of three years of hard work and a commitment by all to ensuring that the Golden Fire Department be one of the top combination fire service agencies in the country.

In September 2005 the City of Golden was contacted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for a review of all 1099s. During the visit the IRS requested more information on why volunteers are issued 1099s instead of W-2s in relation to the "pay per call" payments. The "pay per call" stipend was \$8. The Golden Fire Department provided, and paid the premiums for, workers' compensation insurance, and life and disability insurance of \$150,000 per volunteer firefighter. Each volunteer firefighter participated in the Golden Fire Department's volunteer firefighter pension fund, which is administered in Colorado by the Fire and Police Pension Association (FPPA).

As Fire Chief, I notified the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) requesting any assistance available. VCOS was extremely helpful but also did not have a lot of solutions as this IRS "courtesy review" was something relatively new but a growing concern for departments throughout the country with volunteer members. VCOS became alerted and we kept them informed of all the possible scenarios. As a summary and upon review with legal council of the applicable FLSA and IRS laws it was determined for Golden, CO that:

- The FLSA and IRS regulations are in conflict. However, the IRS regulations would prevail over the FLSA regulations.
- Issuing W-2s to volunteer firefighters of the Golden Fire Department would void their status as bona fide volunteers and make them employees of the City.
- If volunteers became employees, several active volunteer firefighters would be forced to resign due to their work assignments with other career fire agencies.
- An accountable reimbursement should be put into place to reimburse actual expenses incurred by volunteers.
- Most importantly, if volunteers became employees of the City of

Golden they would not be eligible for the Fire and Police Pension Association (FPPA) volunteer pension plan.

As of December 31, 2005 the "pay per call" program was ceased and an accountable reimbursement plan has been put in place for accountable business expenses. The disability and life insurance plans as well as workers' compensation remain in place but is funded through the pension funds. The insurance remains a 24/7 on or off duty AD&D plan through VFIS at no cost to the volunteer and remains in compliance with the IRS rules. On May 11, 2006 the City Council of the City of Golden approved a length of service award program compliant with IRS regulations and Code Section 457 to recognize services provided by the volunteer firefighters.

At this point with a growing population, increased call volume, IRS issues and a desire by the City Council to maintain a strong volunteer force and not create part-time or full-time employees, the challenges for recruiting and retention of volunteer firefighters expanded beyond conception. The department's volunteer strength, which needed to be expanded, was in serious jeopardy of being diminished.

Total strength of volunteer personnel declined from 52 members in 2000 to 38 in 2006. This was due to retirements and various personnel moving out of the area due to the extreme high cost of housing in the City of Golden and the fact that the pay per call was eliminated. The problem was an increase in call volume and a decrease in volunteer firefighters, which has diminished the department's requirement to meet NFPA 1720 on structural responses at various times of the day and night.

A needs assessment was conducted by the Command Officers of the Golden Fire Department and it was determined that a strategic plan was needed. The first aspect of this was to develop a Strategic Planning Team comprised of both career and volunteer members. This team was formed in January 2006. Their initial goal was to establish a mission as to the role of the volunteer firefighter and what the mission of the vol-

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IAFC Member Continues Values Development

by Chief Richard R. Carrizzo, Missouri Valley International Director

The IAFC Board of Directors, in early 2007 began to develop a set of values to help govern and lead the decisions of the Directors. Later in that year the Board adopted those values. As the Board began to implement those values, it was quickly determined that those values probably were not the same set of values that the Association would have adopted if asked. Thus began the task of developing Association and membership values.

In the spring of 2008 a letter was sent to each division, section, and committee asking for two to three persons to represent their subgroup, in forming a focus group to assist with the process of developing membership values. Missouri Valley was well represented with over six members, representing the Division, its members and a few committees as well.

The focus group of approximately 60 met at Fire-Rescue International '08 in Denver and began discussions. The group was broken down into smaller groups and asked the following questions:

1. What do you like about being an IAFC member?
2. What do you appreciate about the IAFC?
3. Are there any persistent or unresolved problems in the organization?
4. How would you like the Association to improve?
5. Can you relate a story about how your association with the IAFC has been a benefit to you personally and professionally?

During their discussions it was hoped that the members would do "story telling" to help bring forward some of the underlining values. Following their presentations they met again and were asked to suggest associational values

based on their "storytelling." The focus group suggested a total of 29 values. Due to the time limitations at the meeting the remaining work was done via email.

Each of the participants was asked to identify their top five membership values and definitions, not what their personal values were, but what should the IAFC's values be. It was suggested to get assistance from the division, section, or committee they were representing, if needed. This list was then compared with each of the other participants to achieve the following IAFC Values:

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*Integrity
Professionalism
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Diversity/Inclusiveness
Safety Culture*

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- Diversity/Inclusiveness
- Safety Culture

During the IAFC Strategic Planning and Leadership Forum, this past October all of the 170 participants were placed into breakout sessions to review the values and develop or refine the definition for each of the values. One of the major tasks of the groups was to not change the values, but with the development of the definitions show that they were association values and not personal values.

Once the breakout groups reported out to everyone else, the IAFC recorded the information. In the next few months the staff will review the data and collaborate each of the definitions. The values and final definitions, along with a rollout plan that will be presented to the Board of Directors for approval and adoption at their January board meeting. This will finalize the inclusiveness of the foundation of the IAFC's values. □

New Members A Big Welcome to our Newest Members

- AC Paul Mercurio—Clayton, MO
- MO Gerald Regan—Raymore, MO
- BC Salavatore Scarpa—KC, MO
- BC David Pennington—Springfield, MO
- Director JR Mueller—Mayetta, KS
- AC Mark Ervin—Omaha, NE
- BC Dan Mullin—Centennial, CO
- Chief Lark McDonald—Franktown, CO
- Chief Perry Otero—Morrison, CO
- Chief Jack Rauer—Peyton, CO
- Chief West Park Fire—Pueblo, CO
- Chief South Fork Fire—South Fork, CO
- Craig Fire & Safety—Craig, CO
- Chief Yampa Fire—Hayden, CO
- AC Michael Schmidt—Lake Ozark, MO
- AC Matt Birdsley—Olathe, KS
- BC Julie Harper—Overland Park, KS
- BC Jeff Bybee—Northglenn, CO
- DC Creswell Brewer—Golden, CO
- Inv Lee Whetner—Henderson, CO
- DC Tim Cortez—Casper, WY
- BC Hubert Albandt—Longmont, CO
- DC Randy Larson—Bayfield, CO
- AC Scott Rogers—Lakewood, CO
- BC Brad Eden—Springfield, MO
- EMS Chief Jamie Larson—Arkansas City, KS
- AC James Toone—Grandview, MO
- Capt. Jason Honderick—Raymore, MO
- Capt Eric Smith—Raymore, MO
- Chief Larry Sanders—Cedar Rapids, IA

Managing the Risk

Please visit the web site below to view the 2008 Commission on Emergency Planning and Response "Managing the Risk" publication: <http://www.kansas.gov/kdem/EMSWeb/pdf/library/2008%20Managing%20the%20Risk.pdf> □

News from Missouri

by Chief Greg A. Pottberg, State Vice President

Missouri Fire Chiefs Winter Seminar - February 20 - 22

This year's winter seminar will be held again at the Big Cedar Lodge in Ridgedale, MO. Attendees will be greeted with moving into the new conference center.

Chief Rick Lasky will be presenting the programs of; Firefighter Safety and Survival, Managing the Mayday and Five Alarm Leadership. Chief Lasky presented last year and was invited back to the overwhelming support from those that attended. Further information at: www.mofirechiefs.org

MU FRTI Winter Fire School - February 6-8, 2009

The brochure is on the street and available on our website! Due to the many requests, we have released the Winter Fire School brochure early this year to allow more time for participants to plan and attend the conference. This year we will again offer three featured workshops as webcast opportunities from nationally recognized speakers:

- Saturday 8:00 am-12:00 noon - Engineered Disasters, John Sachen, MU FRTI Training Coordinator and Delta Fire Protection District
- Saturday 1:30-5:30 pm - Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service, Alan Brunacini, Retired Fire Chief of the Phoenix Fire Department
- Sunday 8:00 am-12:00 noon—Fire Officer Coaching: Strategies & Skills, Dr. Riley Harvill, The HarBeck Company

These presentations will also be available to a live audience at the fire school. In addition to these featured speakers

and topics the fire school planning team has put together an aggressive agenda with 32 courses and workshops that are new to the event. For access to the 2009 Winter Fire School online, go to <http://www.mufrti.org/> and select the Fire School Link. From there you will be able to view the entire brochure online or download a PDF copy of the brochure. We hope to see you there...or maybe even online for the webcast!

Worker Visibility Final Rule

On November 21, 2008, the FHWA issued an interim final rule revising the Worker Visibility rule (23CFR 634) to create an exemption for the firefighting community. This interim Final rule allows firefighters or other emergency responders working within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway and engaged in emergency operations that directly expose them to flame, fire, heat, and/or hazardous materials to wear retro-reflective turn-out gear that is specified and regulated by other organizations, such as the National Fire Protection Association. Firefighters or other emergency responders working within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway and engaged in any other types of operations shall wear high-visibility safety apparel as defined in this rule. The FHWA decided to issue this interim final rule to address safety concerns raised by fire fighting community. The interim final rule was published in the Federal Register today and goes in effect on November 24, 2008. This rule can be accessed at the following link:

<http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-27671.pdf> □

Greg Pottberg, Candidate for 2nd Vice President Missouri Valley Division, IAFC

Greg Pottberg would like to announce his candidacy for 2nd Vice President of the Missouri Valley Division of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Pottberg has 32 years of experience in the fire service (six years as chief). He is an Executive Fire Officer graduate and Certified Fire Officer.

Greg has his Associate's Degree in Fire Protection and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, and has held the following elected positions:

- Missouri Association of Fire Chiefs: Secretary (2002-2003)
Vice President (2003-2004)
President (2004-2006)
Past President (2006-present)
- Board Member - Missouri State Fire Safety Advisory Board (2006-present)
- Board Member - Missouri Fire & Ambulance Districts Trust (2002-present)
- Board Member - MO Valley Division as MO State Vice President (2007-present)

He is endorsed by the Western Missouri Fire Chiefs; Heart of America Fire Chiefs Council; Richard "Smokey" Dyer, Fire Chief, Kansas City MO; Steve P. Westermann, IAFC President 07-08; Missouri Association of Fire Chiefs Board of Directors; Greater St. Louis Area Fire Chiefs Association; Kansas State Fire Chiefs; and the Kansas Professional Fire Chiefs.

- Pottberg's commitment to the IAFC:
- Support the Division in being a leading voice in fire-based emergency services
 - Support the Division's Strategic Plan in conjunction with the IAFC Strategic Plan
 - Enhance Communications between the IAFC-Division-State Chiefs
 - Promote the development of safety and training issues for the protection of our fire fighters. □

New CO State Vice President

by Chief John Mullin, Littleton Fire Rescue

On Friday, September 5, the Colorado State Fire Chiefs Association named Chief John Bales as the Colorado Vice President, Missouri Valley Division. Chief Bales heads the Golden Fire Department, Golden, CO. He has been very active with the State Chiefs Association and recently served as the President of the Metro Denver Chiefs Association. He has contributed much to the betterment of Colorado Fire Services and was instrumental in making the 2008 Fire Rescue Conference a success. □

Online Training

by Chief Rick Roe, Clive, IA Fire Department

The Mason City Fire Department recently implemented the use of Online Computer Based training from CentreLearn/24-7 EMS. We recently made changes in our training delivery because of our call volume by shifting those duties to our Battalion Officers so we needed a tool to assist with that process. One of our firefighters came across some information regarding CentreLearn/24-7 EMS so we took a closer look. As a Chief, the most important thing to me was providing quality training that would meet the needs of our members as well as assisting the Officers by giving them a quality product and having consistency throughout the department. Our department is both fire and EMS based and as any of you that provide both services the ability to put together two to three hours to provide training is difficult. The features that really drew my attention to this product was:

1. The number of EMS, Fire and OSHA classes that were available.
2. The fact that we can add department specific information to the training.
3. Every EMS Class carries CECBEMS accreditation and is recognized by the National Registry through testing for each class
4. The system takes care of my training records management.
5. If someone misses a class they can pick it up online, which leads to consistency department wide.
6. It was only \$60 per firefighter.

So far the training has been well received from our firefighters. I know of one other department in Iowa that uses this system and I have included that below. I have also included a section of the CentreLearn/24-7 EMS website to help better explain the product.

"CentreLearn is extremely valuable product for the Clive Fire Department, primarily with EMS training. This is the 2nd on-line system we have used. We prefer this one because of the streaming video and customization options.

Our department is a "paid-on-shift" combination department, using 45 POC

and 7 career staff. The heavy use of POC creates a challenge for delivering and monitoring training assignments. CentreLearn has been a great product to solve the delivery and monitoring needs. Staff can access the training at a time that fits into their scheduled shift in station, or, they can access from any Internet connection if they didn't complete the training while on shift.

We can customize a curriculum with a series of different topics. As an example, OSHA required training can be easily assembled into one training curriculum.

Accountability is improved with easily generated reports that download into a spreadsheet showing who has completed training and who hasn't. It is easy

to manage each training assignment with a one quick report. We don't have to merge files or complete hand tabulations to find out who didn't complete the required training.

We have the ability to make specific assignments to specific groups (paramedics versus basics). The courses are approved online formal training hours.

There is a learning curve on the front end for making assignments. A department Training Officer needs to spend front-end time learning the system. Internet speed and cost need to be considered for each department's situation. We have 50 users and spend about \$60 annually for each user.

Overall, we are very pleased and believe this is a quality product that other departments may find as a valuable tool. □

What Online Learning Can Do for Your Organization

by Chief Bob Platts, Mason City Fire Department, Mason City, IA

As an instructor or training officer for an emergency organization, you're no doubt painfully familiar with ever-tightening budgets and scheduling conflicts.

Like any education tool, online learning is one piece of a larger system that includes classroom sessions, group exercises, hands-on practice and more. That's why the truest measure of an online education system stems from its ability to *integrate with* traditional learning elements, rather than merely supplementing them.

That's where CentreLearn comes in. We're professional educators, just like you. We pioneered the concept of learning in a blended environment, where online learning and classroom activities come together. And since 1998, our in-house team of instructional designers and technical experts has partnered with EMS, fire service, public health and other organizations to make online education and maintaining professional certifications easier than ever – and helped countless educators make the most of their precious classroom time.

Rather than simply providing a channel for delivery of text-only reading assignments, the CentreLearn Learning Management System helps instructors bring the online learning environment to life, through interactive materials such as:

1. Multimedia lectures
2. Video demonstrations of clinical, firefighting or rescue skills
3. Learning games
4. Website links
5. Reference library materials
6. Written and audio slideshow case studies
7. Group discussions
8. Self-assessment quizzes
9. Opinion surveys
10. And more

Academic experts and professional organizations alike support the practice of online education. In fact, researchers who compared more than 355 studies found no significant differences between online learning and other education methods.

If this looks interesting to you go to centrelearn.com and check it out. □

Missouri Valley Division

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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.

News from Colorado (continued from page 2)

unteer would look like over the next five years. The Strategic Planning Team determined that without the volunteers, the City could not provide the quality fire services to the citizens and property within its jurisdiction. It became the goal of the team to create one unified Fire Department of career employees and volunteers working together to meet the needs of the community. There were three major objectives developed by the team:

1. Plan and develop a shift response program for the volunteer firefighters
2. Revise the current volunteer bylaws
3. Develop a Volunteer Membership Manual

While the Strategic Planning Team was hard at work, the Fire Chief and his staff were in pursuit of a Department of Homeland Security Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant in the area of Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters. In 2006 the Golden Fire Department received a SAFER Grant for \$193,922. This grant allowed the department to hire a full-time position of

Volunteer Coordinator/Recruiter including salary and fringe benefits and provide funding for a marketing program to recruit new volunteer firefighters.

SUCCESSFUL OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

- Involvement by both career and volunteer members in the formation, implementation and success of a Strategic Planning Team
- Procurement of a DHS SAFER Grant for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters
- Development of a new and improved marketing and recruitment program for volunteer firefighter candidates
- Changes and major revisions of the Volunteer Bylaws allowing for non-resident membership and reduction of the age requirement
- Development, implementation and management of a Volunteer Shift Program
- Development and implementation of a Volunteer Firefighter Membership Manual

- **INCREASED THE VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTING FORCE FROM 38 IN 2006 TO 78 IN EARLY 2008 WHICH IS AN INCREASE OF 105%**

The Golden Fire Department, as a result of declining membership, a "courtesy visit" by the IRS and increased difficulty in the recruitment of residents could have rolled over and died as a volunteer organization leaving the City of Golden with some hard choices to make concerning the future of fire protection.

However, with the creation and appointment of the Strategic Planning Team and a never give up attitude from the Administration in the pursuit of DHS SAFER Grants, the Golden Fire Department serves as an example for all combination fire agencies to continue to pursue enhancements to your combination system and share those experiences with others through the Missouri Valley Fire Chiefs Association.

Best wishes from the Colorado State Fire Chiefs Association for a happy and safe holiday season. ☐