



2008 Fire/EMS Safety, Health & Survival Week

Chiefs' Guide & FAQs

The International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International Association of Fire Fighters are pleased to sponsor the 2008 Fire/EMS Safety, Health & Survival Week.

This year's event will be held June 22–28, 2008, scheduled to give maximum flexibility and support to all types of departments—career, combination and volunteer—and both fire and EMS personnel.

The theme this year is “Committed to Long-Term Results,” which encourages long-term investments by chiefs and fire fighters to enhance their health and safety. The ultimate goal is to institute a strong culture of health and safety within the fire/EMS service.

This year's theme reflects the need for organizational action that supports and encourages a safety culture. Recommended activities and materials will incorporate three key areas where standard operating procedures, policies and initiatives—along with the training and enforcement that support them—can limit fire/EMS personnel's risk of injury or death:

1. Fully implement NFPA 1500, especially sections addressing PPE:
 - Provide compliant PPE.
 - Train and enforce use of PPE, including respiratory protection.
2. Fully implement the IAFF/IAFC Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI):
 - Provide annual medical and physical evaluations.
 - Provide equipment and time for exercise.
 - Provide nutrition information.
3. Initiate an emergency vehicle policy, to include:
 - Always buckle up.
 - Always stop at red lights and stop signs.
 - Always drive at speed limits and defensively.

Who is doing this?

Fire/EMS Safety, Health & Survival Week is sponsored by:

International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters

and supported by the following partners:

Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
Congressional Fire Service Institute
Fire Apparatus Manufacturers Association
Fire & Emergency Manufacturers Services Association
Fire Department Safety Officers' Association
IFSTA/Fire Protection Publications
International Association of Arson Investigators
International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters

International Association of Women in Fire and Emergency Services
National Association of Hispanic Firefighters
National Association of State Fire Marshals
National Association of State Foresters
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
National Fire Protection Association
National Native American Fire Chiefs Association
National Volunteer Fire Council
National Wildfire Coordinating Group
NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program
North American Fire Training Directors
United States Fire Administration

Safety, Health & Survival Week activities, resources and sample daily schedules are coordinated by:

IAFC Safety, Health and Survival Section
IAFF Division of Occupational Health, Safety and Medicine

We have a lot we do during the day; how are we suppose to do this too?

Easy—don't do your normal operations outside of responding to emergency calls. The point of Safety, Health & Survival Week is to stop normal operations and focus on the issue of health and safety. The focus of the day should be health and safety-related activities, responding to emergency calls and nothing else.

Why focus on “Committed to Long-Term Results?” What does that mean?

“Committed to Long-Term Results” was selected to highlight the need to encourage long-term investments by chiefs and fire fighters to enhance their health and safety. The ultimate goal is to institute a strong culture of health and safety within the fire/EMS service.

This year's theme reflects the need for organizational action that supports and encourages a safety culture. Recommended activities and materials will incorporate three key areas where standard operating procedures, policies and initiatives—along with the training and enforcement that support them—can limit fire/EMS personnel's risk of injury or death:

1. Fully implement NFPA 1500, especially sections addressing PPE:
 - a. Provide compliant PPE.
 - b. Train and enforce use of PPE, including respiratory protection.
2. Fully implement the IAFF/IAFC Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI):
 - a. Provide annual medical and physical evaluations.
 - b. Provide equipment and time for exercise.
 - c. Provide nutrition information.
3. Initiate an emergency vehicle policy, to include:
 - a. Always buckle up.
 - b. Always stop at red lights and stop signs.
 - c. Always drive at speed limits and defensively.

Personal health/wellness and driver safety are still highlighted; didn't we do those already?

Yes we did. As part of "Committed to Long-Term Results," the previous year's themes of personal health/wellness and driver safety are still a part of the tools for you to use during this Safety, Health & Survival Week. Those two areas still account for approximately 75 percent of the annual fire/EMS service LODDs and cannot be ignored. You can still focus on an area of importance to your department, but with such a high percentage of LODDs coming from those two topics, it was decided to keep them available as resources.

Is this intended only for career fire fighters?

No, this is intended for all fire fighters and EMTs. This includes career and volunteer, airports, wildland, EMS, federal and military and industrial, to name a few.

We have four platoons; should we do this for all four or just pick one day?

Repeat the Safety, Health & Survival Week activities on each shift or duty crew. Even if your drill night is not during Safety, Health & Survival Week, still perform the activities on your regular drill night in June. It is understood that not everyone works on any given day or has a training drill during this week, so don't feel that if you don't have department activities on one day or during this week, you shouldn't take part. Use the same schedule for each platoon until everyone has taken part. You don't need to move your drill night, even if it's earlier or later than the week of June 22, take part on a schedule that makes sense for your department. And also don't forget the most important lesson of all: health and safety should not be focused on for just one day or just one week. Health and safety should be a focus every day!

But the suggested schedule is for an all day shift, and we don't work shifts.

The suggested schedule is merely a guideline to give some ideas of activities that can be accomplished in a structure of a complete work day, but there are parts that apply to everyone. In the case of EMS, wildland and airport operations, some of the standards, requirements and equipment may be very different than the ones suggested for a structural department.

For volunteers, focus on one of the "Committed to Long-Term Results" drills that would fit nicely in a two- or three-hour monthly drill; but just because you don't go to the gym as a company doesn't mean you can't go over healthy eating and exercise information with your members. For your drill night, host a heart-healthy meal before the drill. There are lots of ways to make the maximum impact within the scope of your normal operations.

Also don't forget the suggested schedule and topics are just that: a suggestion. There may be something that has come up in your department or a neighboring department that you feel is more important to review than one of the suggestions, and that is what you should focus on.

OK, I'm sold; now where do I find information to help plan the day?

All of the Safety, Health & Survival Week resources are located at www.iafc.org/safetyweek. From that page, you can sign up that you're taking part, obtain a recommended schedule of activities and find examples of various resources and examples from fire departments around the country. They include accident reports, near-miss reports, standard operating procedures, drills and articles for you to use as you prepare for the day's activities.