



IAFC Candidate Questions– 2018 Election

Chief Otto Drozd, Orange County (Florida) Fire and Rescue

1. What should be done to increase/encourage collaboration between career, combination and volunteer fire departments?

If the IAFC is going to continue to succeed, then collaboration between our Career, Combination and Volunteer Departments is paramount. In my estimation, the key is bringing our diverse members together by engendering a spirit of cooperation to unify the IAFC into a strong, respected voice able to get results for our fire service. The challenge toward gaining this level of cooperation is the willingness to comprehend our unique perspectives and coalesce on areas of common understanding.

By realizing that Career, Combination, and Volunteer Departments have unique identities, we can start to understand, respect, and appreciate the differences and establish a framework for true collaboration. As leaders, we must not assume we know our counterparts. We must take the time to understand why we each exist, whom we serve, our challenges, and cultural norms.

Actions – For me, this effort is not theoretical, but a way of doing business. When I arrived to El Paso, Texas in 2009, I had a meeting with staff members and asked to see our existing mutual and automatic aid agreements with the Volunteer Departments (Emergency Service Districts) surrounding our borders. I was told that these types of agreements didn't exist. When I asked why, the answer was, because the "reality of the situation" was that the volunteer fire department would always need our assistance and we wouldn't need theirs. This type of myopic view is oftentimes borne out of a lack of understanding, respect, and appreciation. If we know anything about our service, it is that even the largest departments in our industry need help (9-11) and that we are much stronger together than apart.

Based on that conversation, we began training with our Volunteer partners, established mutual and auto-aid agreements, and spirited in a new era of collaboration. These efforts would loom large in the winter of 2011 when single digit and below freezing temperatures took hold of El Paso, normally known for its mild winters. The freeze knocked out two power plants, necessitating rolling brown outs, and disrupted the city's water supply. Without adequate water pressure in the downtown area, critical infrastructure was left unprotected and hospitals had to activate their emergency plans. This became a crisis by any stretch of the imagination given that we didn't possess water tenders. The saving grace was our mutual and automatic aid agreements, that once activated saw our Volunteer partners roll a caravan of water tenders into town.

This is but one example of where we are better prepared to serve by collaboration than receding into the shelter of our own silos. As IAFC 2nd VP, I will use this same spirit to build understanding, collaboration, and cooperation. The integration of Career, Combination, and Volunteer members will be accomplished by establishing an IAFC Presidential Advisory

Taskforce, designed to breakdown barriers, create understanding, and identify opportunities, therefore enhancing the IAFC as a whole.

2. **What are your thoughts on the growing behavioral health issues in the fire service and how do you propose to deal with it?**

Stressful and traumatic events affect our IAFC members daily. Several national studies highlight that our firefighters, dispatchers, and other public safety personnel aren't immune to the effects of stress. A recent study found that 20% of all emergency service workers had signs and symptoms that were consistent with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A 2015 study found that throughout a fire fighter's career 46% will succumb to suicidal ideation, 19% will make suicide plans, and 15.5% will attempt suicide. The time for action in our fire service is upon us, and we must proactively meet the challenge.

Actions – As a member of the 2016 Urban Fire Forum, I voted along with my colleagues to endorse a position statement titled – Implementation of Comprehensive Behavioral Health Programs in the Fire Service. This document can be found at <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Membership/member-sections/Metro-Chiefs/Urban-Fire-Forum/2016/2016UFFPPositionBehavioralHealth.ashx?la=en&hash=6AEDD880A6FBFE48078F16EE3B0A6284CD46A9E2>, and highlights a model behavioral health program based on the principle that “education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation are the most effective and compassionate means of retaining valuable members” of our service.

As a result of the position paper, we augmented our own existing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and our Critical Incident Stress Management program with a Veteran Crisis Line, Chaplain Support, and Peer Support programs. We also reached out to our region's United Way that sponsors 2-1-1 to develop a Mayday system tailored for first responders in crisis. After the response to the Pulse Night Club Shooting occurring on June 12, 2016, the importance of these types programs was once again highlighted. Other initiatives included working with the University of Central Florida to facilitate access for firefighters in crisis to the UCF Restores program. This program is designed for first responders and military personnel experiencing mental health difficulties to obtain help via diverse paths i.e. virtual reality, telehealth, smartphone, and iPad technologies.

Another key initiative is supporting the Statewide Florida Firefighter Safety and Health Collaborative, that has partnered with leading fire service and medical research institutions including the IAFC's Safety Health and Survival Section. Through this collaboration additional resources are being developed to confront the challenges of behavioral health issues within our service. I believe that the IAFC is fortunate to have a very robust and committed group of individuals within our Safety Health and Survival Section, who can facilitate the development of these types of programs and make them available to our member departments. As IAFC 2nd VP, I will advocate and facilitate enhancement to member services through the recommendations of our subject matter experts.

3. **How would you at a national level, educate the media and public that the fire service is now the "all-risk" response to any emergency?**

The last 40 years have seen our fire service evolve from a single service provider (fire suppression) to a service that includes at least 15 unique lines of service. The challenge becomes quantifying the scope of our service in a manner that our public can understand. I will work with fire service organizations to research how our fire services are currently reporting workload data and economic impacts. This data would be used to develop a standardized approach to reporting fire service workload and contributions to accurately represent the all-risk nature of our contributions and value to our communities' quality of life across all jurisdictions.

Actions – I believe that the current manner in which fire and emergency service providers report workload data, inadequately represents the true value that fire and emergency services provide for their communities. Therefore, I have proposed a research project to capture the true workload of fire service organizations. This comparative analysis will study fire service annual reports, data preparation, and offer recommendations on how to relay an adequate description of fire and emergency services' work efforts. This will encompass the analysis of call types, resources responding, and staffing. The study will also assess those efforts essential to having a well-trained, capable force such as training, response, unit response hours, personnel hours, system capabilities, and resiliency. Based on the collected data, a system will be devised to provide member departments with a model to report an accurate representation of their service efforts and accomplishments.

Through the development of workload data that truly quantifies the all-risk nature of our service, the IAFC can play a central role in facilitating a tool kit of marketing material, plans, and strategies to assist member departments in relaying the all-risk nature of our emergency response services. An area for potential growth that can assist in this effort is for the IAFC to facilitate a Public Information Officers (PIO) symposium designed to develop media marketing strategies. Many fire and emergency services have PIO's who would be well positioned to in coordinate with the media and public.

4. **What would you do to foster a more diverse and inclusive IAFC?**

I will work with our Human Relations Committee to develop and add best practice guidance to our member services, and develop a cadre of subject matter experts that can provide our members with direct assistance in assessing and developing locally relevant programs.

Actions – Far too often, fire chiefs across our industry struggle with recruitment, retention, and inclusion of diverse fire service candidates. The IAFC's member services should include a robust program capable of assessing local communities and tailoring programs to assist departments in meeting community diversity goals. Not addressing these issues of inclusion can impact the credibility of an organization and put our member chiefs at risk. As the son of Latino/Hispanic immigrants to the United States, and having worked in minority communities, I am well aware of the challenges and obstacles to successfully achieving diversity in our industry. As such, my background, experience, and bilingualism position me to bring unique view points and experiences to meet the challenges of diversity and inclusiveness with our service and the IAFC.

5. **What role does the IAFC play in incorporating technology into the fire service?**

I believe the IAFC can play a leading role in incorporating technology into the fire service. To this end, I will work with our Divisions, Sections, and Committees to establish a best practice guide to assist our members in identifying the technologies that would best serve the needs of their individual department.

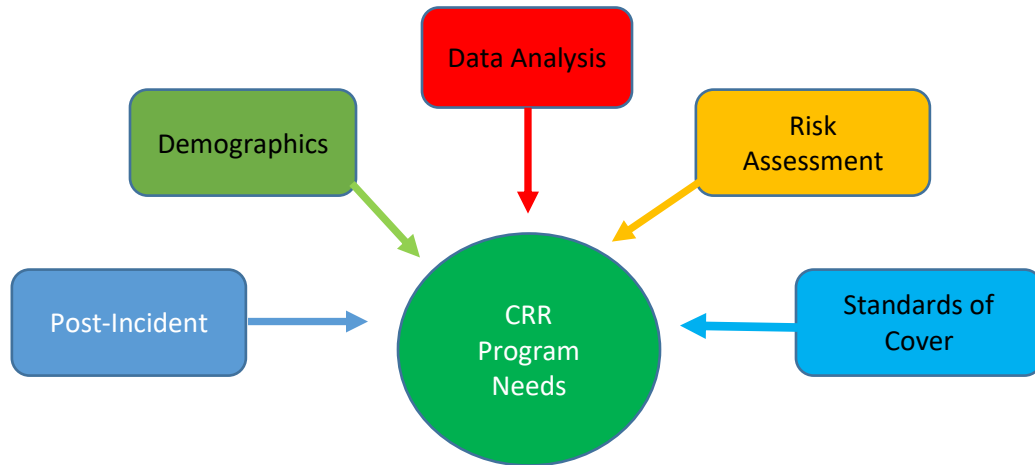
Actions –If used appropriately, technology can be a force multiplier for our service. However, the challenge is in identifying high-yield, cost-effective alternatives while truly enhancing the safety and provision of service. This is where the IAFC can be a clearing house or the research and development arm for our members. A good example is the IAFC’s UAS Task Force, which built a UAS tool kit available for members seeking to use this technology.

Another good example of the IAFC’s ability to facilitate the use of technology is through establishing partnerships that bring technological enhancement to members. During deployment to Hurricane Harvey and Irma, Urban Search and Rescue Teams had the ability collect critical search and rescue data, damage assessment data, and track resources using an application developed in partnership with the National Alliance for Public Safety GIS (NAPSG) Foundation, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and ESRI. These types of efforts along with the historic advocacy for FirstNet, well position the IAFC to facilitate, develop, promote, and provide our members with practical technological solutions.

6. **How have you incorporated community risk reduction into the planning, structure and operations of your department? How would you advocate for community risk reduction as an IAFC officer?**

Community risk reduction (CRR) is an integral part of Orange County Fire Rescue Department’s existence; as such, we have made the concerted effort to continuously focus on improving our model. In order to drive this prioritization, CRR housed in the Office of the Fire Marshal, is incorporated into our strategic business plan as a unique program. The program has its own purpose statement, “The purpose of the Community Risk Reduction Service Program is to develop, coordinate, and deliver education and prevention programs to raise awareness, increase safety, and reduce risks within the community”, that is aligned with the Centers for Public Safety Excellence Fire Accreditation model and the Insurance Services Office Public Protection Classification model.

Actions - In order to constantly assess the efficacy of our CRR program, a family of measures has been devised to observe result, output, and efficiency. These measures are tracked on a monthly basis and CRR staff is responsible for reporting progress, challenges, and exceptions at our monthly staff meeting. In order to assure that our measures are meeting the community’s needs, program goals and objectives are assessed in the following manner.



Based on this process, a complete field manual was developed to assist company officers in providing CRR services within their first due response areas. Through this process, CRR is integrated into our planning, structure, and operations. Some of the initiatives covered within our Divisions include: Emergency Preparedness, Ready Set Go, Smoke Alarm Installations (5000 installed in 2016 and 2017), Drowning Prevention, Opioid Education Outreach, Hands Only CPR, Pulse Point Application, School Visits, Mock DUI's, Community Open Houses, and Age appropriate injury and hazard prevention outreach (list is not comprehensive).

As an IAFC Officer, I believe Community Risk Reduction should be one of the pillars of our organization's member services. Many areas of our IAFC are already taking this mission to heart. The strength of our organization resides within our Divisions, Sections, and Committees, where we have the breadth of knowledge to develop substantial programs and resources. My role as an IAFC Officer would be to advocate and facilitate the development of member-focused programs, such as these, that could be disseminated to our member organizations.

7. Describe your current department and explain how your role helps you serve the IAFC.

I have the personal privilege and honor of leading the Orange County Fire Rescue Department (OCFRD). OCFRD is a career department consisting of over 1300 sworn, civilian, and reserve staff protecting 722 square miles within its service area boundary. The department's resident population of 831,870 includes 12,313 people residing within the communities of Belle Isle, Edgewood, and Oakland. Combined with the daily visitor count, the total population covered is greater than 1 million.

OCFRD is one of a very few CFAI Accredited and ISO Class One Metro sized departments in the nation. We operate out of 41 Community Fire Stations geographically divided into 6 Battalions. Currently, OCFRD operates with 1 Shift Assistant Chief, 6 Battalion Chiefs, 6 EMS/Safety Captains, 36 Engine companies, 4 Quints, 4 Truck companies, 33 ALS Rescue companies, 8 Peak Activity Medic Units, 12 Wildland units, 7 Water Tender/Tankers, 3 HAZMAT/Technical Rescue Class A Squads, 1 TRT Support vehicle, 1 Air/Light Unit, 1 Rehab unit, 2 Mobile Command Units, and 10 Marine Rescue units. In 2017, we responded to over 124,000 service calls and have a total adopted budget of over \$223 Million.

Since joining OCFRD, I have progressively become more involved with the IAFC. As a member of the IAFC since 2002, I have served on the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs' Communications Committee in 2006, and have been a member of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs' Association since 2009. I served as a board member of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association prior to joining the El Paso Fire Department in 2009. While in Texas, I became a member of the Texas Fire Chiefs' Association and served on their Safety and Survival Committee in 2012. In 2014-2015, I was elected to the Board of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs' Association, and currently serve as President. I also have the honor of being President of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association.

In the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub Shooting, with the support of the IAFC, IAFF, and Metro Chiefs', I proposed the creation of a national standard and serve as a technical committee member on NFPA 3000 Standard for Response to Active Shooter/Hostile Events, and serve as a Technical committee member on NFPA 1616. I was also a member of the IAFC Unmanned Aerial Task Force, IAFC EMS Reimbursement Taskforce, and most recently was selected by the IAFC to serve as the Metro Representative - Commissioner on the Commission on Fire Accreditation International beginning in January of 2018.

In 2017, OCFRD, in partnership with the Orlando Fire Department, hosted the IAFC's 2017 Metro Section's Annual Conference. Also, in 2017, during the Hurricane Harvey response, members of our Central Florida USAR Taskforce utilized the IAFC's National Alliance for Public Safety GIS (NAPSG) application (app), designed to collect critical data to assist responders on the ground with their search and rescue and damage assessment efforts. I later advocated that the State of Florida support the use of this valuable application during the response to Hurricane Irma. In the latest partnership with the IAFC, which took place in February of 2018, OCFRD in collaboration with the Central Florida Fire Chiefs' Association, facilitated the regional delivery of the IAFC's Company Officer Leadership Symposium (COLS). In addition to the listed efforts, we were able to host a meeting of the Wildland Urban Interface Committee, I have presented at FRI, written articles for On-scene, and represented the IAFC's Metro Section at speaking engagements in India and Austria over the last two years. As IAFC 2nd VP, my previous involvement positions me to be a stalwart advocate and representative for our IAFC members.