



## **IAFC Candidate Questions– 2018 Election Chief Michael O’Brian, Brighton Area (Michigan) Fire Authority**

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

The fire service has seen greater appreciation for each style of organization over the years. It is clear that the fire service is continuing to break down barriers between organizations through open communication, joint training, and opportunities for collaboration. Providing atmospheres like remote COLS programs, FRI and Connections are just some of the great opportunities for networking and realizing the role of the service is far beyond what my organizational makeup is. For instance there are career organizations that are now struggling to fill their full-time positions and are looking for new ways to recruit firefighters. Many of our combination and volunteer organizations have great experiences and many lessons learned in recruiting new talent. The IAFC providing opportunities for that networking will continue to add to the fire service as a whole in this area.

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

Our staff is working at the highest call volume with some of the most intense scenes and repeat customers that can create a heavy weight on our staff’s shoulders that goes beyond the shift or call. As an association we must continue to develop resources that can be implemented in our organizations to aid in changing culture to allow staff to speak up, aid organizations in identifying our staff who might be struggling as well as work to make sure there are resources for our government structure to provide our contract EAP services to understand the role our public safety plays and the things they take on. A goal would be to develop a resource guide for EAP providers to understand the first responder and know their struggles that go far beyond a non-public safety worker.

Finally providing our staff with a means for physical exercise to aid in management of stress from daily work load. We need to continue to educate our leaders on the importance and roll of functional fitness with our workforce and its benefits beyond performance on a fire ground.

- 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?**

This is a continual effort and is evolving far beyond what we have scoped as traditional all-risk response. Utilizing interactions with the IAFC in media interviews, and public service announcements on the critical role our organizations play. As stated this must go beyond fire, EMS, and technical response. Community Risk reduction efforts must be included and the role our staff is playing on a daily basis of reducing the impact of fire on our communities through education efforts, inspection, and emergency management.

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

There are so many efforts of the IAFC and my role would be to continue to utilize programs at FRI such as IdELP and the Diversity Breakfast. Although I feel our actions must go beyond these baseline programs. We must find ways to diversify in our appointments as well as learn from our committees on actions we can take as an organization to be as inclusive as possible. The role of leadership within the IAFC is also to encourage our members to get engaged within the IAFC. Utilizing our various platforms and relationships we must continue to advocate for new members of the IAFC as well as encouraging our members to get engaged within the IAFC.

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

The IAFC must be the leader of technology in the fire service. The start of the capabilities is beginning with the IAFC leadership on sample GIS programs as it related to recent disasters in the South. The IAFC must continue to connect or vendor partners with the fire service and ensure that technology is meeting what our departments need. With FirstNet coming into full bloom we will need to focus our member talent in working with the correct vendors in developing solutions that will work and are beneficial to the fire service, not those that are just "cool to have." It is a never ending effort by our IAFC staff to continue to share the resources that are available to member organizations right now and how they can aid in enhancing response at the local level.

**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 is in everyone's job description in our organization. We have put all hands on deck to work to reduce the impact of fire on our communities. The term "fire" is all inclusive to us and we work every day to reduce preventable fires, injuries and death. For us this journey started over 8 years ago as we worked to change the culture of our organization and developing beyond a "Fire Prevention Division" which began with training our leadership, existing staff and even included in our fire academies each year (far beyond that found in IFSTA or state requirements). Our crews have installed thousands of smoke alarms through multiple FEMA grants, we have incorporated residential fire sprinkler demonstrations at our multiple public events, and it is lead by our Fire Marshal and Community Risk Reduction Specialists. We have continued to focus our efforts through our strategic community risk reduction plan and have seen tremendous benefits to our citizens through countless saves over the years. We are uncertain the total reach as there are many non-events that we will never know about.

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

The Brighton Area Fire Authority is a combination fire department located in Southeast Michigan. As one of the first fire authorities in Michigan we serve the residents of Genoa Township, City of Brighton, and Brighton Township with five fire stations, 13 Full-time Staff and 83 paid on call firefighters. The Fire Authority staff is the backbone to our organization and many of us are active with the IAFC. We have truly found that our involvement in the IAFC keeps us current in our positions, provides us with resources to do our job, and is truly an asset to us each day. Because of what the IAFC has done for us and helped shape our organization, it is our

duty to give back to the IAFC. This includes working on committees, aiding in development of resources and most importantly working and helping other members. As a true member driven organization we must give back to our peers through mentoring, listening, sharing of resources and practices as well as supporting our fellow members. This position has granted me that great opportunity to give back beyond our borders and help all across the globe.