



IAFC Candidate Questions– 2018 Election Chief Mark Piland, Frisco (Texas) Fire Department

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

Career departments especially those in Metropolitan areas can have more experience than some combination and volunteer organizations. It is incumbent on them to share that knowledge so others can be a part of their experiences and knowledge of the job. When volunteer departments offer local training courses career and combination departments should consider supporting and attending these classes to provide their expertise and experience to the discussions.

Holding training courses and conferences certainly help in getting members together from different organizations, however, it is incumbent on all parties to take responsibility to reach out to one another to share or gain knowledge. Volunteer departments are trying to do the same job as career or combination departments but often with less staffing and fewer resources.

Many of us, including myself, started out in the volunteer system. I was as active and dedicated as any career member at that time. I had the benefit of being in a combination system and received mentorship and guidance from career firefighters that was invaluable and made all the difference in my career.

The key is getting to know your area departments and making a connection with them so knowledge, training, and experiences can be shared.

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

This is probably one of the most pressing issues facing the Fire Service today. In the last 10 years I personally have seen a rise in behavioral issues. We as firefighters are often a reflection of society itself. The same ills that are affecting society are filtering down into the Fire Service.

Many times, the behavior of firefighters is stemming from something else other than issues or problems on the job. Family conflicts and financial burdens can create issues for some firefighters that carry onto the job. It's interesting that we often give firefighters annual physicals but only check their mental health once during the hiring process and never again.

The opioid crisis is hitting the fire service and affecting our members at epidemic proportions. Congress has just allocated 2 billion dollars to provide treatment for opioid addiction, but more can be done. Early recognition and intervention is the key.

Today, firefighters are faced with much more than fires and EMS incidents. The aftermath of

attacks and national disasters like 911, Katrina, Haiti Earthquake, and the recent hurricane Harvey are placing intense mental strain on our firefighters. Remember, we are not the first responders, we are the only responders for several days in a no notice event as we wait for state and federal help to arrive.

The IAFC needs to look and model efforts being implemented by the IAFF in terms of The Center for Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery, along with Peer Support as early adopter programs to address behavior health issues. More can be done in supporting these programs as well as expanding upon them. This will undoubtedly be an issue that we as chiefs will be dealing with for a long time to come.

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?

Addressing the media and the public must involve a national campaign as well as social media efforts. Citizens have traditionally called the fire department when they did not know who else to call. I never heard a company on the radio say, we couldn't solve the issue send someone else! We always respond, address, and solve the problem.

The campaign would make the public aware of incidents where the Fire Department is often called whether it's a medical, hazmat, Special Operations, or in support of the Police such as Active Shooter. I recently highlighted our full service programs to a group of citizens in Frisco recently at City Hall 101, a program where citizens come by the fire station to be educated on city operations. One of the participants asked after the presentation "is there anything you guys don't do."

Locally, departments can engage their citizens in programs like City Hall 101 and Citizens Fire Academy where we invite the public in and give them a behind the scenes look. It also helps to invite councilmembers as well to give them a look at our comprehensive operations. It's difficult to engage the public unless we invite them in to the firehouse which may be somewhat intimidating to the public.

A national campaign would need a slogan or phrase that would let people know we are your full-service solution to fire and medical emergencies and anything that might harm you.

"Your health and safety is our business."

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

I do believe that the IAFC has been a leader in diversity and inclusion. The IAFC's Human Dignity Statement of 2013 and their development and support of programs like the IAFC Diversity Executive Leadership Program (iDELP) demonstrate their commitment to the issues of diversity. However, like many complex issues, one solution is never the answer but a culmination of many solutions and programs are required to achieve progress and success.

I believe that many fire departments do a good job in recruiting as much effort is focused and concentrating here. However, we must ensure these efforts do not end at the recruitment or hiring phase and continue throughout the career of underrepresented identity groups. But how?

Well first, training is required for incumbents detailing the position of the organization for inclusiveness and that policies established in the department will be taken seriously. But it's more than just policy, it's creating a culture where all firefighters truly understand the importance of all members and respect their differences. It's a cultural change that must happen in the organization and achieved through education and training.

This culture must be modeled at the top of the organization, The Fire Chief must lead this effort and not delegate this responsibility to other officers to deliver the message. The message is not a threatening one but one of education.

Also, the Fire Chief must make regular contacts with our diverse groups and personally get feedback on their work experiences. The Chief cannot depend on information "trickling down" as often filters will prevent the ground truth. The Chief must have regular meetings with group leaders of diverse groups in large departments and individually meetings with members in smaller departments.

We have great traditions in the fire service, however, some cultural situations that exist in some firehouses must change if we are to be the best organization we can be we must respect those that are culturally different, want to do the job, and make a difference in the community. This inclusiveness is critical for the fire service as we strive to be the best job and organization in the world.

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

There is probably nothing that affects and will affect the fire service now and in the future as technology. Many Fire Chiefs are somewhat apprehensive on this topic and delegate this to other younger members of the department. However, like many initiatives, technology projects and issues must be top lead; it's extremely important that Fire Chiefs embrace and understand the impact of technology on their organization.

The IAFC must lead the way and quite frankly illuminate the technology projects for Fire Chiefs who are too busy to take the deeper dive necessary to always stay on top of the latest and greatest. The recent letter by President Jenkins is spot on in regards to the responsibility that we as Fire Chiefs have in understanding the impacts of technology and how it affects the fire service. We must be early adopters and take a leadership position and support technological initiatives that are coming and will greatly impact our organizations.

The importance of FirstNet, GIS functions, and interoperable communications are crucial to our success and safety. These initiatives will affect our ability to communicate more than any program in recent history. The IAFC's commitment to technology by the creation of The Technology Council and the recent Fire IT Group are great beginnings but other solutions will be necessary in a world that revolves around technology.

The technology groups for the IAFC must do the heavy lifting and cut through the static so Fire Chiefs can embrace the concepts and understand what technology impacts lie ahead. I have always seen the IAFC as the force multiplier to provide guidance and direction to departments that do not have the resources to commit to such projects like technology. Most cities cannot afford to be on the leading edge of technology as it changes too fast, it's too expensive, and our

processes often move too slow. That is why we need the IAFC's help and guidance.

Let's face it, we are all chasing the same information, the IAFC does and will need to continue to serve as the organization that eliminates the fog and provides the details that we as Fire Chiefs and Chief Officers need to know.

The IAFC must serve as the clearing house for technology and communicate solutions so departments are not trying to solve the same concepts and issues

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?

In Frisco, we are currently applying for accreditation through CFAI and have just completed our Standards of Coverage (SOC) and Strategic Plan. In these plans are detailed measures that implement our community reduction plan for Frisco. Looking at our city and engaging an all hazards approach, has enable us to look at risk factors in structures and their classification as Low, Medium, and High, as well as the appropriate response levels to these structures.

Our community reduction efforts look a many models and data that we collect daily in order to plan the next fire station as well as the placement of strategic resources such as Medic units, Engines, Quints, and Truck Companies. Frisco is the fastest growing city in the nation and data driven solutions are necessary as we plan a community that is 65% complete and adding new structures everyday including 26 story high-rises.

Our community risk reduction model is an integral part of our strategic plan and becomes the center piece of the vison of the department. Our Fire Prevention bureau will also fashion their inspection priorities based on the community risk reduction plan.

Frankly, its risk management, not risk elimination, but our community risk reduction plan is our best defense in protecting our citizens, firefighters, and for providing the most effective and efficient emergency response in our city.

As an IAFC Officer, leading from the front and education is the key. Many cites do not know what a community risk reduction plan is much less have one. It would be my responsibility to illuminate the benefits of this and other strategic plans and ensure these plans strengthen our response matrices and enhance our ability to provide service by utilizing our resources in the most appropriate manner.

Providing specific examples and showing our members how to develop and implement these plans is necessary.

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

Frisco Fire Department is an ISO 1, all career organization made up 226 Firefighters, eight stations with Fire Station 9 beginning construction in March of 2018. We have 26 civilian support staff along with a Fire Prevention Office that preforms plans and review with 2 Fire Protection engineers and one associate. We have a community Education Division that conducts

fire safety training for all students in the Frisco Independent School District, kindergarten through 5th grade and runs Safety Town, a one of kind safety village.

We are an all hazards organization with fire-based EMS, a hazmat team, and a full special operations team. We have a health and wellness program that incorporates a 24/7 incident/Health and Safety Officer who is focused on the Incident response, and the health and welfare of all our members.

Frisco is one of the most progressive departments in Texas as well as the nation. As the fastest growing city in the nation, Frisco is a dynamic city and home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys as well as headquarters for the Dallas Stars, FC Dallas, and minor league teams for the Texas Rangers and Dallas Mavericks.

The pace in Frisco is fast and ever-changing, much like the IAFC. I have said throughout my campaign that "Experience Matters." To lead the IAFC one needs a broad range of fire service experience. I have over 35 years of fire service experience, 11 years as a Chief officer in a Metropolitan Fire Department, and 16 years as a member and leader of Virginia Task Force 2, a FEMA US&R Team, with deployments to 911, Katrina, and the earthquake in Haiti.

These positions and experiences have taught me the value of listening, and listening to our over 10,000 members is what is needed as an officer for the IAFC. I have the support of my department as well as my City Manager to run for office and dedicate the time necessary if elected. My passion for leadership and love for the fire service enables me to be poised and ready to accept the challenge for 2nd VP and beyond.