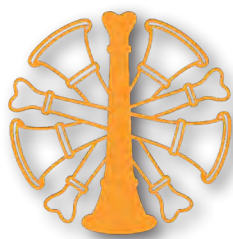


Spring 2021



# CHIEFS

The Official Magazine of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



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An [Uncomfortable] Conversation About Caring Too Much Page 06



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# CHIEFS



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# Membership Matters



**GREETINGS, AND THANK YOU** for being a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC).

It gives me great pleasure to communicate with the membership. We revived and rebranded the *iCHIEFS* magazine to get you relevant and timely information in 2019, and it continues to be an indispensable carrier of the knowledge, experience, and insight into the many challenges facing the fire and emergency service.

During the last 148 years of its existence, the IAFC remained steadfast and responsive to your needs. In addition to this *iCHIEFS* magazine and a digital e-newsletter, our website offers many resources from current topics related to today's fire service, to *KnowledgeNet*, a forum for members to learn and share experiences, to position statements, and more.

Here are a few examples of how the IAFC serves, leads, and educates the first responder community.

**Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS)** offers fire departments turnkey solutions focused on volunteer and combination systems' recruitment and retention efforts. Through partnerships on the local, state, and national level, VWS works directly with fire departments to address department recruitment and retention challenges by providing program and grant management services, marketing materials, training, and staff support. Visit them at [www.iafc.org/vws](http://www.iafc.org/vws).

**IAFC's Wildland Fire Programs (WFP)** provides local solutions that have a focused, national impact. Guided by subject-matter experts involved in state, national and international platforms, our free resources, training opportunities, and direct assistance programs are geared to help the local fire service and the communities they serve. All of this is intended to reduce the threat of wildfire and improve education, mitigation, response, and resiliency efforts. For more information on IAFC's WFP and to access free resources, visit [iafc.org/wildland](http://iafc.org/wildland).

As part of the **International Fellowship Program (IFP)**, international firefighters are placed in leading U.S. fire departments for six months to learn best practices and internalize the U.S. fire service culture. The fellowship is punctuated with targeted leader-development training and culminates in a capstone project on a topic of their choosing that addresses current or emerging issues in their department.

The IAFC's **Fire Service Executive Development Institute (FSEDI)** and **Chief's Edge** programs provide executive education and development with extensive peer-to-peer education that nurtures leadership principles in challenging situations.

The IAFC can strengthen your ability to lead and make the best command decisions for your department. Simultaneously, the organization provides professional development access and resources to your command staff as members or new members.

As we all continue to face this pandemic, we will remain united by providing current communication to assist you in your daily leadership decisions.

Your IAFC is committed and will continue to deliver the premium product that made us a great association. Even though HQ is working with a reduced staff, your needs will be met. I can assure you of that.

If you are not yet a member, check out our member page for more information – [www.iafc.org/membership](http://www.iafc.org/membership). Stay safe.

**STEVEN ILCHISHIN**

*IAFC's Director of Communications*

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By Frederick L. Kauser, PhD., Mifflin Township – Division of Fire

**A**n invisible force has found its way into the American fire services. It influences the way our firefighters behave and perform, and ultimately, it's impacting the services we deliver every day. Once you know how to recognize it, you will immediately see the evidence in your own department and the damage it is likely causing.

Lucky for us, it seems to impact only a few members of a department at a time. The bad news is that we all know how much damage a single firefighter can inflict. Indicators include independent thinking, risk-taking, and what appears to be an obsession with hands-on tasks. Those who become afflicted seem to reject authority and are often so passionate about their work that they become confrontational when others are not as attentive.

As a fellow chief officer, I implore you to examine your own organization and act before it is too late.

You may recognize them inside your own organization as the silently aggressive ones. They are the risk-takers on the fire ground and inside the station. They are the ones who embrace the "first-in and last-out mantra." They push boundaries, stretch limits, and expect more from their peers and especially their supervisors. They are self-appointed and hold others accountable

for their firefighting knowledge and skills. They favor action over talk. They learn by doing and not from books. They tend to be quiet observers who believe average isn't good enough. They openly shame any firefighter or officer who cannot keep up. They tend to ask for forgiveness instead of permission. Their confidence level is borderline brash.

Fortunately, many of us have already taken steps to neutralize the risks associated with radical thinking and behaviors inside our departments. We write more detailed policies and procedures, and narrowly define acceptable behavior and performance. We decree safety and require risk aversion above all else. Mistakes are unacceptable in our culture, so we promote personal accountability through shaming. We embrace online and classroom training as the primary way to advance fire service knowledge and understanding since hands-on training is both costly and dangerous. We prefer promotions and opportunities be based on credentials and obedience instead of experience and actual performance. Confrontation, disagreement, and competition are strictly prohibited inside the firehouse.

To date, these kinds of proactive policies and practices have helped us maintain control. Yet, despite our best efforts, we are seeing a rise in the number of firefighters who are pushing back. I think it's time for us to explore what

underlies this errant behavior and quickly devise a plan of action to contain it.

By now, some of you should be sensing the mockery in my tone as I tease out the relationships between undesirable firefighter behaviors and our efforts to control them.

Now for the truth. The symptoms we are observing in some of our staff are curiously like workers in the craft and trade industries from the early 1900s. This period yielded a movement that impacted how work would be accomplished and instilled a new belief system in those who practiced it. It was a renaissance for the American worker, who became masters of their own learning and work production. Craft workers were considered self-motivated, focused, and accountable. They believed in mastery through focused and repetitive practical experience and favored a hands-on approach where learning was mentored by trusted and

# A Return to the Craft:

## An [Uncomfortable] Conversation About Caring Too Much



experienced masters in their chosen field.

Do the similarities seen in the early craft and trade worker mimic some of our firefighter's behaviors that we discussed earlier? If so, is there an opportunity to consider the reasons behind the behaviors that we might classify as negative or destructive. Can we shift the way we view our own staff who have adopted these same tenets, especially when looking at the ones who are so passionate about their work that they become agitated when working with anyone who does not share their same love of the job? Can we change our perspectives of those who act out in frustration because they are not happy with mediocre, or worse, being held back by underperforming peers or officers?

If we're willing to do this, then we must ask ourselves if some of the negative behaviors we are observing are the result of unrecognized or unacknowledged positive firefighter qualities.

Awareness of a craft mindset operating within the fire services is not new. Many within our ranks have reported similar observations, and some have even promoted it. This implies that adopting or supporting a craft approach may be a useful tool for fire chiefs who are working to shift their department's culture or improve performance. Having a craft mindset is one of focus and persistence. It is grounded in the practical. It aligns with our fire service culture.

Fire administrators recognize the critical importance of precision when performing firefighting work. We recognize and reward continuous learning and understand that trusted and experienced mentors are a necessary part of our industry. Fire chiefs are risk aware; we know that the case for safety is also made in competence. We know that competence is a product of mindset interacting with sound policy, access to authentic training and drilling, and applied through practical experiences. The price for achieving competency at the highest levels is linked to engagement. Engagement is linked to motivation and motivation to mindset. I am sure many of us can relate to the frustrations that are felt when someone in our ranks fails to express a similar

"I wonder what the long-term effects are when individuals are perceived to be negative because they have such a deep pride and passion for the work of firefighting. Imagine how unsupported they must feel?"

mindset of respect and commitment to the profession as we do.

As I think about those officers and firefighters who have found themselves in trouble for "*caring too much*," I cannot help but wonder what message we are sending. What is the impact on a department and our industry for failing to recognize a deep personal passion and a love of the work? I wonder what the long-term effects are when individuals are perceived to be negative because they have such a deep pride and passion for the work of firefighting. Imagine how unsupported they must feel?

When I think about the ones I know personally, those who care too much, I see another side. These are the firefighters who are usually on the bay floor, have something in their hands, are rarely talking – but are always listening. These are our go-to firefighters. You can count on them when the work needs to be done accurately and/or immediately. And these are the firefighters who produce creative solutions when things go sideways. They are focused, internally driven, and can be very intense when it's time to work.

Could caring too much account for some of the negative behaviors we observed? Or, is it possible that these behaviors might not be negative after all?

The fire service is gifted with many who have "lost the ability" to contain their passion and love of their work. Gordan Graham, a 33-year veteran of law enforcement, co-founder of Lexipol, and a craftsman in his own right, is

among these and has been asking us to focus on our craft for decades. He has asked us to care about risk management, the way we approach structural firefighting, and the way we articulate expectations. He expects us to develop a level of understanding and competency that significantly reduces the chances of injuring or killing one of our own. He has asked us to care for safety's sake.

The late Fire Chief Alan Brunicini, a highly respected fire service pioneer, taught us that we needed to care about customer service. He believed that customer service meant more than showing up and satisfying our own needs to perform work. He thought we should see our work in the eyes of those we serve, and he asked us to care for them as if they were a member of our own family. He reminded us to appreciate everyone we interacted with, and each other.

More recently, Chief Rick Lasky, an emergency services consultant, author, motivational speaker, and former chief of the Lewisville, Texas Fire Department, gave us permission to take pride in the work we do. Chief Lasky reminds us that we should care about our beliefs and how they impact the way we take care of the business. He says that we should honor the roles we are privileged to fill as American firefighters and that we should care deeply about ourselves, our departments, and our greater community of firefighters.

These individuals, and thousands of others like them, are unashamed about their passion and love of our business.

I believe that a fire chief's passion and level of care sets the tone for their own department. As chiefs, I believe we should be supporting and nurturing a passion for the job, otherwise we might smother and extinguish it.

Did we misdiagnose the behaviors of those who have a genuine passion for the work of firefighting? What else might we have misdiagnosed? Our work is intense, physically demanding, dangerous, and profoundly complex. Yet, I reject the notion that our best firefighters are thrill seekers, have a death wish, or are suffering from a



hero complex. These assertions are destructive and dangerous to our profession.

It's a disgrace to think that men and women in your fire department may have been shamed into believing that caring too much about the job is unhealthy, or that their impatience is disruptive, and that their obsession with excellence will be met with resistance or punishment. If we are trying to solve safety, service, and other problems that have their basis in core competence and experience, shouldn't we instead shift

our attention to those who lack focus, personal accountability, motivation, or who don't seem to care.

How do we create a craft mindset in our fire departments? I would argue that it occurs naturally when an organization is supporting those who *care too much*. I bet that it's already present in your department and, if nurtured correctly, will spread on its own.

Chiefs, you must be careful not to suppress someone's passion. You must be patient with frustrated firefighters who lack awareness that they care too

much. These firefighters do not work for awards, accolades, or trophies – but a little validation does go a long way.

These men and women are focused and driven because they know the personal rewards of work done well. They keep score of their own performance. Their personal best is never good enough and they will push themselves – and anyone around them – to do better. They are intolerant of complacency, inconsistency, lack of competence, and lack of care. It's so engrained into their practices that they have no awareness nor ability to accept anything less of themselves and of others. Sometimes it gets the best of them.

I believe that the craft movement is an invisible force impacting the American fire services. I invite your conversations. Please reach out. 🔥

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*Frederick L. Kauser, PhD. is Fire Chief of Mifflin Township – Division of Fire, Gahanna, Ohio. If you'd like to discuss this article, please contact Chief Kauser at 614-471-0542 / [kauserf@mifflin-oh.gov](mailto:kauserf@mifflin-oh.gov).*

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# The Next Generation and Joyful Leadership

By Lindsay Judah, DPA, CTO

When you joined the fire service, did you aspire to earn the title of emergency manager, emotional wellness administrator, health and safety officer, management analyst, personal trainer, risk manager, robotics expert, and/or yoga instructor? Were these positions listed on the organizational chart for your agency? The positional landscape in the fire service industry is ever evolving, much like other industries. Personnel can anticipate organizational shifts and prepare themselves for advancement in areas they are passionate about.

Civilians may choose to join the fire service too, based on the diverse professional opportunities an organization offers. Organizations should endeavor to be early adopters and innovators, creating these new positions.

One fire service title I've yet to see on a job posting or organizational chart is "Chief Joy Officer." Richard Sheridan, the author of *Chief Joy Officer: How Great Leaders Elevate Human Energy and Eliminate Fear*,<sup>1</sup> shares valuable information about great leadership. I originally read *Chief Joy Officer* in 2018 and many concepts shared in the text resonated with me. What if personnel read more (or listened to more audiobooks)? What if annual evaluations or promotional testing incorporated the reading of books, even books unrelated to the fire service? What is the potential return on investment for professional development personnel who are offered tuition reimbursement opportunities or encouraged to study interdisciplinary themes?

## THE CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION OF THE FIRE SERVICE INDUSTRY

Let's look at a selection of newer fire service positions and what they offer communities and personnel. Then

*A joyful leader Lindsay had the opportunity to work for early in her career was Battalion Chief Jackson Whitehead, who retired from the Tallahassee Fire Department on January 31, 2021. He had served for 28 years. (Holton, 2020).*



we will follow up with the *Chief Joy Officer*. Emergency Managers<sup>2</sup> (EM) in the fire service frequently identify and convey critical information. The responsibilities of these personnel are often dependent upon their geographic location. The EM may be very familiar with leading organizations before, during, and after natural disasters such as blizzards, earthquakes, hurricanes, or wildland fires. Others may work in a metropolitan area requiring continuous multijurisdictional cohesion, coordination, and planning. While others may be very resource-limited, servicing a broad rural region. Emergency Managers can enhance community preparedness and ultimately provide life-saving information.

Fire service Health and Safety Officers<sup>3</sup> often serve and protect our internal personnel. Responsibilities vary based on their organization's available resources and needs. Sometimes they answer directly to the fire chief. In other instances, they report to the chief of operations or chief of training. They typically need familiarity with documentation, emergency medical services, human resources, incident safety officer responsibilities, infection control, operations, policies and procedures, rehabilitation guidelines,

risk management, state statutes, and training. Most recently, these individuals have adapted to managing the safety of personnel through a pandemic and vaccination distribution. Health and safety officers promote operational readiness by improving awareness, understanding, and vigilance.

The City of Las Vegas (Nevada) recently released a job posting for a Mental and Emotional Wellness (MEW) Administrator. Responsibilities for this position include providing crisis intervention services, peer guidance, personnel training, and support and referral for further assistance. This position necessitates strict confidentiality, clear deliverance of the mental and emotional wellness program, coordination of care, peer support team leadership, knowledge of industry trends, resiliency traits, and an understanding of critical incident stress management services. The MEW Administrator will ultimately enhance the delivery of service to the surrounding community by ensuring continuity of care for personnel.

Some agencies provide services in collaboration with law enforcement, such as the Orlando (Florida) Fire Department. This is known as the

*Continued on page 12*



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Continued from page 9

Special Investigative Services (SIS) Division. Responsibilities include:

- Bomb squad operations;
- Fire;
- Internal affairs investigations; and
- Management of the agency's unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operations.

This division also has an arson detection canine, Nessie.<sup>4</sup> These services provide embedded oversight and safety throughout the community.

Charlotte Fire Department (North Carolina) and Yocha Dehe (California) Fire Department both have business/management analysts. Personnel in this role commonly complete predictive analytics and provide statistical information for decision-making, modeling, and tracking. They communicate information regularly, assist with special projects, and utilize software such as Tableau and ArcGIS. The business/management analysts regularly provide critical information as it pertains to accreditation and compliance. Are you interested in modern data visualization techniques? Check out Ann Emery<sup>5</sup> and Stephanie Evergreen.<sup>6</sup>

Fitness, Tai chi, wellness, and yoga all have a place in the modern fire service. Some agencies require annual physical agility testing, and many offer comprehensive annual physicals such as Life Scan.<sup>7</sup> Agencies such as the

Orange County (Florida) Fire Rescue Department offer peer fitness training by certified firefighters and have a public safety fitness facility known as the Fit Pit.<sup>8</sup> In a notable community collaboration, the Compass Program Wellness Center<sup>9</sup> plans to serve first responders mentally and physically in Huntington (West Virginia). Yoga continues to impact the fire service members from coast-to-coast positively. The Tallahassee (Florida) Fire Department<sup>10</sup> provides opportunities to complete yoga flows with instructors hired by the City of Tallahassee. Tai chi<sup>11</sup> instruction for seniors in the community has been incorporated in some fire service public educators' JPRs. There's even terrific a book titled Firefighter Functional Fitness,<sup>12</sup> written by none other than firefighters. These healthy initiatives improve fire service members' vitality, ultimately enhancing the service provided to their communities.

Agencies have created Mobile-Integrated Health (MIH) and community paramedicine programs. Palm Beach County (Florida) Fire Rescue<sup>13</sup> offers various services through their MIH program to include addiction, chronic disease management, crew referrals, high-frequency utilizers, and pregnancy outreach, to highlight a few. The program is attributed to reducing call volume as well as improving patient experiences and overall outcomes. Additionally,

agencies have added registered nurses to their staff. An example is the Occupational Health Nurse<sup>14</sup> position for the City of Tampa (Florida). Nursing staff provide a variety of services to the fire and police departments to ensure compliance with HIPAA, OSHA, local laws, infectious disease control, medical care and treatment, injury tracking, and trending and workers' compensation case management. Having these resources within the organization improves outcomes for both our internal and external customers.

Supporting positions that don't necessarily report directly to the fire chief or public safety director can also influence an agency's positive change. Human resources personnel who effectuate services affiliated with diversity, equity, and inclusion can impact the fire service industry. In another illustration, the City of Denver (Colorado) has a Chief Storyteller<sup>15</sup> to document community history and engage underserved populations. The concepts of interdisciplinary studies, developing and connecting talented personnel give the potential to enriching our workforce.

### INSERT JOY HERE

This brings us back to *Chief Joy Officer: How Great Leaders Elevate Human Energy and Eliminate Fear*. The need for dynamic, interested, motivated, and passionate personnel is eternal in



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our industry. What better way to prepare our people for professional growth and newly-created positions than to develop and encourage them to stretch? They may have little knowledge of arson detection, emergency management, health and safety, nursing, risk management, or the use of UAVs when they are hired. Succession planning begins here.

The author of *Chief Joy Officer* is the CEO of Menlo Innovations. His cofounder, James Goebel, identified three guiding principles for Menlo Innovations:

1. Create meaningful, sustainable, positive human impact.
2. Always demonstrate integrity and authenticity.
3. Act in a way that expresses care, hope, love, and joy!

In Sheridan's brilliance, he divided this book into two parts: *What are joyful leaders* followed by *Building a culture of joyful leadership*. Characteristics to describe joyful leaders include authentic, humble, loving, optimistic, visionary, grounded in reality, and

servant leadership. If leaders foster joyful environments, their personnel may feel empowered to reach goals they may not have previously considered. This can happen, no matter the environment – chatting at a stoplight when driving to swap out apparatus, sitting around the kitchen table, wrapping up at a training event, after a staff meeting, or a simple check-in phone call. These workplace touchpoints can have a tremendous impact on our personnel if we are intentional in our approach.

A joyful leadership culture includes starting with a purpose. Value leaders (not bosses) pursue systems and not bureaucracy. They care for the team, learn together, and become storytellers. J. Adams is quoted as saying, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."<sup>16</sup> The Harvard Business Review<sup>17</sup> shares that a blend of harmony, impact, and acknowledgment is where joy evolves. Similarly, Sheridan shows that it is beneficial to focus on the systems which reward the right behavior. The key attributes he shares are collaboration,

transparency, the avoidance of finger-pointing, and speaking truth to power. Consider the potential of engaging, energizing, and exciting personnel in a workplace where joy resides. Maybe there doesn't have to be one position on an organizational chart listed as Chief Joy Officer, it can simply be added to existing positions as other duties as assigned. 🔥

*Lindsay Judah, DPA, CTO, is a Training Captain in Florida. She has 10 years in the fire service and is passionate about safety, leadership, and training. She is a Florida FOII, Hazmat Technician and FLUSAR Rescue Specialist, Inspector, Instructor III, Investigator, Live Fire Training Instructor, and Safety Officer. She is also an adjunct professor and alumna of Valdosta State University, teaching courses in the Organizational Leadership program. Her doctoral research focused on implementing innovation in the fire service, specifically UAV<sup>18</sup> programs.*

*The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not represent any organization.*

#### READING/RESOURCES:

1. <https://richardsheridan.com/books/chief-joy-officer>
2. [www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners](http://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/practitioners)
3. <https://www.fdsos.org>
4. <http://www.cityoforlando.net/fire/accelerant-detection-canines>
5. <https://depictdatastudio.com>
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# The Pandemic is Not Over for the Fire Service

By James Augustine, MD., Fire EMS Medical Director, Member of the IAFC Coronavirus Task Force



In March 2020, President Gary Ludwig created the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Coronavirus Task Force, led by Fire Chief John Sinclair, IAFC President (2016-2017). The Task Force developed guidance for fire service leaders to protect first responders, assist the larger public health system response, address supply shortages, and mitigate some of the impacts of community shutdowns and health care disruption. The Task Force worked collaboratively with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) to craft safety plans and best practices for quarantining, testing, and maintaining local funding for fire and emergency medical services.

During the summer months, the IAFC continued to develop and promulgate best practices through the challenges of civil unrest, a vicious early wildland fire season, and a record setting tropical storm year. The IAFC and the Task Force were able to positively influence how the federal and state governments allocated personal protective equipment (PPE), and prioritized emergency medical services (EMS) and fire service members for COVID-19 vaccines as they have come available.

There is a year of hard work behind us, but there are critical elements still ahead. This work can be viewed as five theatres of operations. Fire chiefs and service leaders have critical skills and responsibilities to help many communities organize the end of the pandemic. This five-theatre process has used, and will use, best practices and will be ready to implement them rapidly when our departments and communities are ready for them. Please share any experiences, so that we can learn from them as we continue to battle this pandemic.

## FIRST THEATRE

As we reach February 2021, North America has seen the highest COVID-19 numbers yet, which has caused major stress on Fire EMS and our emergency departments (EDs). Through this big wave of COVID-19 patients, the challenge was to provide critical EMS services to as many people as possible, including patients who are not being affected by the virus. We are battling an issue of maximum capacity within our hospitals, EDs, and intensive care units (ICUs). There were extensive efforts to not lose more of our members to the illness. That required, and still requires, the reinforcement of

great exposure control practices on and off duty, and the ramp up of COVID-19 vaccination protections.

It is likely that by the summer this theatre of operations will be concluded.

## SECOND THEATRE

The IAFC and IAFF combined efforts to improve the uptake of the two initial available COVID-19 vaccines by fire service members, despite limited available supplies. This second theatre involved building confidence in initiating the complicated vaccination process. As frontline workers, many fire EMS providers received available vaccines as soon as they could. The IAFC was part of the group that designed and implemented a novel system for collecting information on adverse side-effects. The rapid reporting of safety with the vaccines increased the confidence in the process. Very importantly, many members of the force then joined the immunization teams, acting as a force multiplier for local public health resources.

The great performance and leadership in this phase of vaccine distribution opened the door to the critical next step of ending the pandemic and restoring our communities.

## THIRD THEATRE

This is the “mass vaccination” theatre, which addresses the unprecedented difficulty of having to deliver multiple vaccines and multiple doses of vaccines.

The incredible work by scientists worldwide has led to four available vaccines, two of which are becoming available across North America. Though millions of North Americans have begun their vaccination process, still millions are waiting for their turn. This is an immense process. Organizing a two-shot sequence was never planned for in the “pandemic playbook.”

When more kinds of vaccinations become available, there will be a



significant challenge added, though there will be hopefully more options available. This may open up the issue of everyone wanting their own “flavor” of vaccine, which could put pressure on an already crushing demand to be protected.

Fire chiefs and EMS leaders helped improve, one community at a time, the general recognition that the way to exit the pandemic is through vaccination. Even in these spring months, there is a public relations opportunity for our ED and fire EMS members, who are well respected in the community and drivers of public opinion, to continue building confidence in the vaccinations.

There are still more opportunities to establish efficient vaccination sites. Working with public health and the media to deliver a “24 hour-a-day operation” will run smoother if there is a respected fire EMS leader and medical director helping the community through the process, keeping the public safe.

For the past year, our fire EMS and ED workforce has faced enormous amounts of stress as they have treated innumerable sick patients. However, as they participate as providers in the vaccination program, they are now getting to be part of the rewarding experience of delivering a vaccine to prevent infection.

#### FOURTH THEATRE

Today we are faced with the challenge of safely winding down pandemic operations to a “new normal” in the emergency system. The wind-down will include tough decisions of how to back down on PPE use, re-open our communities, and re-instate public events safely. For those in the emergency medical and unscheduled

care system, this will include a major implementation of telemedicine and community paramedicine, and a very different way of approaching patients with unscheduled acute care needs.

Winding down to a new normal will also include efforts to address the mental health of our public safety force and strengthening our approaches to resiliency. Most providers haven’t had a break or a moment to consider what they’ve been through throughout this pandemic. As they pause and the pandemic wanes, they’ll need support through that phase.

#### FIFTH THEATRE

After 18 months of massive disruption, loss of life, and unthinkable numbers of personnel ill or in quarantine, there are significant voids to fill. The prominent challenge for many departments are the financial difficulties of many jurisdictions that will impact operations. In the EMS arena, this includes wider implementation of payment for “Treatment in Place” like an emergency triage, treat, and transport (ET3) system.

The mental health stresses on top of the fatigue and physical stress have severely impacted personnel and need to be addressed. Many services are suffering major voids in personnel as older members are leaving, and the recruiting and training pipelines are very empty. In many cases, the personnel health surveillance process has not taken place and needs to be restored.

Our education processes for fire and EMS personnel have been gutted due to the expense of operations and safety measures for this pandemic. The individuals needed to fill these positions will not be restored for several years,

and these positions will have to be redesigned to accommodate the lessons of the pandemic.

COVID-19 has proven that things need to change. Our facilities, equipment, and treatment modalities will be completely overhauled. There is an immediate need to address the availability and quality of PPE, and to re-stock those items across jurisdictions. After years of shortages, there is a need to resupply emergency drugs. There also needs to be a conscious redesign of ambulances, our stations, and the entrances to emergency departments, to ensure patient safety.

#### THE CALLING OF THE PHOENIX

Let us call the coming months the period of rehab and renewal. The Phoenix has always been the symbol of our service, as a bird born of fire and ashes.

There is a high level of exhaustion throughout the fire and EMS sectors, but in the past few months, a sense of exhilaration has started to build as the vaccines are rolled out and some elements of community begin to return. Out of every crisis in history, there is a tradition of rapid improvements in products and services. We need to make sure we are thinking expansively in the after-action reviews that are waiting to be written, and to confirm and recognize the fire chiefs and service leaders who have used their critical skills to serve their communities over the past year.

Let us build a better future for the service ahead. 🍀

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*James Augustine, MD, is a Fire EMS Medical Director, and Member of the IAFC Coronavirus Task Force.*



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# Legislative Update



**Ken LaSala**, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy

**By Ken LaSala, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy**

It has been a whirlwind few months in Washington, D.C. After the election, the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress returned to finish up its business. Congress took a break before Christmas, but then returned to override President Trump's veto of the annual defense authorization bill and begin the 117th Congress. The year started off with the civil disturbance at the U.S. Capitol and the eventual inauguration of long-time Congressional Fire Services Caucus Senate Co-Chair Joe Biden as President. During everything, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) has stayed focused on providing useful information to our members and securing important legislation to help you in your community.

First, let's start off with the good news. On December 27, 2020, then President Trump signed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 116-260). This legislation included many legislative priorities for the IAFC. For example, it included funding for the federal programs that support the fire and emergency service. In many cases, these programs saw increases (see Table 1).

The legislation also included a \$500,000 increase for SIREN grants, totaling \$5.5 million. The SIREN grant program is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to help rural EMS. The bill also included \$2.5 million for the National Firefighter Cancer Registry. To address firefighter mental health issues, the legislation included provides \$1 million for the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Violent Death Reporting System to support the development of a Public Safety Officer Suicide Reporting System. Also, it directed the U.S. Fire Administration to start collecting data on firefighter suicides and include an assessment on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) ability to require firefighter suicide reporting on Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant applications.

The FY 2021 *Consolidated Appropriations Act* also met two major IAFC legislative goals. It prevented the auction of public safety spectrum in the T-Band (470 MHz-512 MHz), which protects public safety communications systems in 11 major metropolitan areas, including New York City, Los Angeles, and Boston. The bill also made permanent the *Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act*, which allows volunteer firefighters to receive any property tax benefits and up to \$600 in other state and local benefits without being taxed by the federal government. We were very happy to see such good news over the holidays.

As the country continues to deal with civil unrest, the IAFC has produced several resources for fire chiefs. The IAFC has documents to provide help in dealing with incidents involving crowds during the COVID-19 pandemic and violent crowds. The IAFC has also accumulated resources into an Active Shooter Toolkit, including a checklist for responding to active shooters. In addition, fire chiefs are encouraged to consult the *IAFC Homeland Security*

*Intelligence Guide for Fire Chiefs* to learn about possible threats to their communities, and the *Terrorism Response – A Checklist and Guide for Fire Chiefs and Community Leaders* to help prepare for potential acts of terrorism. These documents can be found on the IAFC website at [www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/large-scale-response](http://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/large-scale-response).

Moving forward the IAFC continues to focus on the needs of fire departments as they face a growing number of threats. The IAFC is asking Congress to appropriate a special \$500 million each for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant and SAFER grant programs. These programs will be important to help local fire departments as they face budget cuts and increased workload. After surveying our membership, the IAFC found that fire departments nationwide will face a \$16.9 billion shortfall in 2021. We also estimate that the budgetary effects of the pandemic could lead to almost 30,000 personnel losing their jobs between 2020 and 2021.

The IAFC continues to push for fire departments to be at the top of the list for receiving personal protective equipment, supplies, and vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, we have pushed the federal government to remember that fire and EMS personnel are meeting COVID-19 patients in their homes and offices, providing aid, and transporting them to hospitals. This work is extremely dangerous. It has led to many COVID-19 infections and, sadly, more than 150 deaths.



As the Biden Administration has begun to take shape, IAFC leaders met with the incoming Secretary of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas, to discuss the needs of the fire and emergency service during this pandemic.

The IAFC also is urging Congress to pass legislation to allow fire and EMS departments to be reimbursed for treating patients and not transporting them to hospitals. Many patients do not want to be transported to the hospital for fear of catching COVID-19. Unfortunately, fire and EMS departments are only reimbursed for the mileage of transporting a Medicare or Medicaid patient to the hospital. To address this problem, the IAFC has joined with other fire and EMS organizations to urge Congress to further broaden federal reimbursement for EMS calls during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Specifically, we are pursuing reimbursement for treating patients suffering from low acuity calls like scrapes and bruises, altered blood sugar levels in diabetics, and minor

Program	In Millions (\$)		
	FY 2020 (Enacted)	FY 2021 (President's Budget)	P.L. 116-260
AFG (FIRE Grants)	355	344.344	360
SAFER	355	344.344	360
U.S. Fire Administration	46.844	49.716	49.269
Urban Areas Security Initiative	665	426.461	705
State Homeland Security Grant Program	560	331.939	610
Urban Search and Rescue	37.832	37.832	37.832
USDA Volunteer Fire Assistance	18	17	19

slip-and-falls that do not need to be transported to hospitals.

The IAFC is also working on legislation to transition the nation's Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) to Next Generation 911 (NG 911). This transition will allow PSAPs to receive voice, text, and data (such as pictures and video). This process will be expensive – as much as \$15 billion – and requires training to ensure that vital information, such as the location of victims, is transmitted from the PSAP to the incident commander.

This will be a busy year. Congress will be focused on passing a new COVID-19 relief bill and then focused on legislation to improve America's infrastructure. The Senate will also be focused on confirming President Biden's appointees, like a new FEMA Administrator. The IAFC will be fighting to ensure that your needs are addressed here in Washington amidst the tumult. 🙏

*Ken LaSala is the IAFC's Director of Government Relations & Policy.*

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# Hindsight is ... 2020!



**I REMEMBER YEARS** ago when we all started looking forward to the year 2020. Our twin boys, born 21 days after the attacks of September 11th, had been looking forward to being high school seniors in the year 2020. Worldwide, the media started profiling the kids of the “Class of 2020” when all of those kids were in grade school. Here in the United States, the “Class of 2020” would be the first class of high-school kids born “after” 9/11. And remember all those “Vision 20/20” plans developed by many local, state, and federal governments? Had we only known...

Without a doubt, the year 2020 was quite challenging for all of us. But as we have always done so many times before – when faced with adversity – the fire and rescue service rose to the challenge. The challenges faced by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) were daunting in many

ways, but we persevered, as we are trained to do.

Here at the IAFC, your staff also rose to the challenges by working hard to ensure our members were provided with timely deconflicted information and guidance; ensuring strong representation and advocacy for our members, the fire service, and our association through rapid interpretation of legislative acts and impact, and relentless initiative to turn policy into action; and leading financial recovery best-practices for fire departments, and securing the financial stability and resilience of the IAFC.

Under the leadership of your IAFC Board of Directors, we developed a five-phase strategy to guide us:

- Phase 1 – Resolve (address the immediate challenges);
- Phase 2 – Resilience (address the broader impact issues);
- Phase 3 – Return (implement a plan of action to adapt quickly to return to business);
- Phase 4 – Reimagine (embrace permanent changes to become stronger); and
- Phase 5 – Reform (manage our destiny).

Little did any of us imagine in March of 2020 that it would be more than a year later before we could even begin to move from Phase 2 to Phase 3.

As I look back on 2020, we can all be proud of our resilience. However, our focus now is on recovery – embracing the changes and returning to our “Mission at Work” in 2021. With COVID-19 vaccines being made available, your IAFC staff has begun planning for safe in-person conferences. We will remain cognizant of the national and international COVID-19 impact and steadfast in our efforts to lead by example when it comes to the health and safety of those we serve, as well as those of us that serve others.

It is an honor to serve as the IAFC’s interim CEO/Executive Director and to lead your IAFC staff during these trying times.

One very late night at IAFC HQ in March of 2020, I recalled the fabled Chinese curse, “May you live in interesting times.” Well, as 2020 becomes “hindsight,” I think we can all agree that we were most certainly living in “interesting times.” As we embrace 2021, your IAFC staff is excited and committed to the “return and reimagination” of our organization and our service to you – our valued members.

**ROB BROWN**

*IAFC Interim CEO/Executive Director*

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