

CHIEFS

The Official Magazine of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



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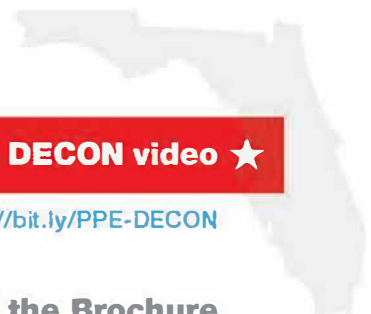
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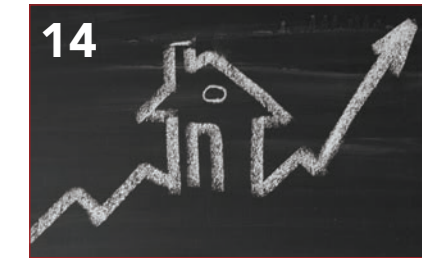
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A Message from the IAFC Acting President and Chairman of the Board



COLLEAGUES, IT IS MY distinct pleasure and honor to bring greetings on behalf of the IAFC Board of Directors and staff to all our members and partners. I am sure we have all heard of the saying “may you live in interesting times.” I think we can say this past year has been interesting to say the least. COVID-19 has affected everyone on the planet and the IAFC had to pivot like most other organizations in response to the global pandemic.

Despite the need to make significant changes, the IAFC Board and staff have remained focused on providing services and advocacy for our members throughout this challenging year. One of the most obvious changes to IAFC business was the postponing of conferences and all in-person interactions. Not only did this change the way the IAFC interacted with our members and affect members’ professional development and ability to network, but it also had a devastating effect on IAFC revenues. Additional financial pressures were caused by a drop in IAFC membership, likely linked to the inability to attend conferences and fire departments’ own financial challenges.

The board worked closely with staff to stay ahead of the changes in our revenue streams and quickly recast a new operating budget which offset loss of revenues with decreasing expenses. Unfortunately, this resulted in a reduction in IAFC staff and other non-compensation items. Besides the loss of staff and their expertise, the remaining staff were challenged with working from home like many other businesses and

shifting priorities to support the IAFC’s mission and our members.

When COVID-19 hit North America, the board was in a board meeting at IAFC headquarters (HQ), were working on the budget, and was in the midst of recruiting a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Executive Director – and now had to implement COVID-19 regulations. As the travel restrictions were implemented in the United States and Canada, many board members had to abruptly travel back to their department and deal with the quickly evolving situation. Based on finances and the difficulty in carrying on with the selection of a new CEO, the process was halted.

After serving as the interim CEO for over a year and having worked closely with the board in implementing many changes to ensure the IAFC remained solvent and relevant during and beyond COVID-19, the board unanimously supported the appointment of Rob Brown as the chief executive officer and executive director.

During the initial stages of COVID-19, Rob took it upon himself to successfully apply for the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to offset revenue losses. He also recognized the need to change the business model at HQ. He implemented many difficult changes and worked closely with the treasurer to implement new accounting processes and procedures to better equip the board with timely and accurate information. Having restructured and with the reduction in staff, Rob also was successful in renegotiating IAFC’s HQ lease, which ultimately reduced the office footprint from 25,000 to 11,000 square feet and saved the IAFC almost \$250,000 a year of operating expenses. Through this change in restructuring existing staff, departments, and office space, he listened to the needs of the members and worked closely with the board.

As COVID-19 was approaching North America, Chief Gary Ludwig (President

2019-2020) stood up the Coronavirus Task Force (TF), which was led by Chief John Sinclair (President 2016-2017). The TF continues to meet weekly to share lessons learned and valuable information with our members through many forums including the very popular webinars. The TF also provides data and advice to the IAFC government relations team which continues to advocate for members and their departments with the government throughout the pandemic. The TF is now working on a hot wash to share lessons learned for similar events in the future.

Besides continuing to advocate for the historical SAFER and AFG grant programs and the IAFC’s PPP application, the IAFC government relations team has continued to work on protecting the 4.9 GHz band (currently stayed), Next Generation 9-1-1, and the Z-axis for cell phone locations.

I am happy to say the IAFC has weathered the initial challenges caused by COVID-19 and the changes over the past year. Following Fire-Rescue International, the board will be engaging our stakeholders as we update our strategic plan to ensure we stay focused on our members’ needs and remain relevant in these changing times. Stay tuned for additional information on our engagement strategies post COVID-19.

In closing, I would like to thank our members involved in the IAFC Divisions, Sections, Committees, Task Forces, Councils, staff, and board. Without ALL of YOU, the IAFC could not have made it through this past year. You are why we exist. Having worked with many of you over the years and witnessing the incredible efforts we have achieved together – I am extremely optimistic about the future of the IAFC and proud to be part of such a great organization.

Together we are better!

FIRE CHIEF KENNETH W. STUEBING
IAFC Acting President and Chairman of the Board



Mentorship Matters:

Preparing Our Future Chiefs to Lead the Fire Service



Photos in this spread courtesy of Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department.

By Thomas Jenkins, Fire Chief for the City of Rogers, Arkansas

It's quite common to hear fire service leaders talk about mentoring as an important part of professional development.

Many departments strive for formal programs that connect mentors with protégés within the organization. While some success can be found with these programs, it should be recognized that our profession is full of mentoring opportunities that do

not require a formal policy or process. Today's fire service is starving for more mentoring opportunities as veterans retire and we struggle to fill our entry-level ranks (much less our leadership ranks) with qualified and dedicated candidates.

Developing and mentoring leaders within the fire service is both a challenging and rewarding process. Yet, aside from case studies and a few books and manuals, little has been done within the fire service to prioritize mentoring. No National Fire Academy class exists on the subject and you won't find a chapter about it in most officer development textbooks.

Without mentoring, future leaders are left with much to learn about the job and no guidance on how

to navigate their decision-making process. I have no doubt that plenty of firehouses across the country maintain rich mentoring traditions. However, when you look at how and why it occurs, it is often because of the dedication of a few company officers and the open-mindedness of some firefighters – not because of anything the department itself is doing.

The problem with mentoring in the fire service is not a lack of experienced members or recognition of its importance. Our problem is that this profession presents complexities that many other occupations do not have to contend with when looking at future leadership development. These include complex scheduling, a variety of work locations, hierarchy that

often complicates the process, and perceived lack of people that want to attain higher rank and responsibility (when compared to the past).

There are many leadership success stories in the fire service. I would bet that *all* of those stories have at least one similarity: good mentors. Mentoring seems like an activity that is associated with improving an individual member to attain greater rank, responsibility, or knowledge. That viewpoint is only half true. Mentoring is about organizational leadership stamina. Our organizations need to have a sufficient number of potential leaders and developing people to harness their abilities, control their reactions, and learn the lessons that are not taught in textbooks. If training, experience, and education are the building blocks of professional development, then mentoring serves as the mortar.

Within our departments we need to have some serious conversations about mentoring. You cannot pass a policy requiring mentoring and expect it to magically happen. Mentoring is about connecting the right people together and providing them the framework to have communication that matters. This communication, both formal and informal, is where organizational transformation can take place. We would never promote someone to a leadership position that lacks the experience, training, or education for the position. Similarly, we should not neglect to see that proper mentoring is essential for preparing members for upward advancement.

We cannot develop future leaders by training them to lead today's fire departments. Rather, we must mentor them to lead *tomorrow's* fire departments. While some skills stay the same, or change only incrementally over time, other skills are emerging and changing at a rapid pace. The opportunity we have to make sure our future leaders understand and hone these skills comes through open-minded mentoring. Mentors need to be cognizant of the influence of technology and data on our job and expect their protégés to embrace learning more

about those influential elements of the job than were previously expected.

Mentoring and leadership development go hand in hand. We cannot rely on luck to steer the direction of our departments. We have to identify talent and do our best to mentor it using the tools and resources available. A mentoring program is going to produce dividends in areas far beyond the individual. The concept should serve as evidence to all members of the department that the organization is serious about its future. 🔥

Tom Jenkins was appointed Fire Chief for the City of Rogers on January 16, 2009. In his capacity he is responsible for over 140 career employees in ten locations. Under Tom's leadership, the Rogers Fire Department has become accredited by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (since 2011), Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (since 2012) and was awarded an Insurance Service Officer Public Protection Classification of one in 2015.

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Wildland fire represents the greatest risk to life and property in California.

The need to gather and disseminate real-time wildland fire information at the earliest point allows for quicker decision-making and increased likelihood of fires being suppressed faster.

Imagine it is a typical late summer day in California. Temperatures are warm and both forest and chaparral fuels are at or near record dry fuel moisture. Winds are light, but fire weather forecasters and predictive services staff expect wind velocity to increase and surface out of the northeast. Relative humidity is also expected to drop. These weather conditions are expected to remain for the next 48 to 72 hours. Whether a municipal, volunteer, or wildland firefighter in the West, these are the conditions we have grown accustomed to expecting earlier and extending later each year due to the effect of climate change. The “fire season” is now longer than ever before in recent history.

Early that afternoon, a wildland fire is reported in Southern California. The fire is nearly 200 miles from the Fire Integrated Real-time Intelligence System (FIRIS) base, located at the Joint Forces Training Base – Los Alamitos, in north Orange County. The University of California San Diego (UCSD) Workflows Integrating Collaborative Hazard Sciences (WIFIRE) Lab staff has received the fire location and the UCSD supercomputer has instantly sent a wildfire spread model to the Southern California Fusion Center located at the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) Communications Center.

Within seconds, the LAFD Fusion Center sends the location and initial wildland fire spread model (without suppression action) to the desktops, tablets, and smartphones of hundreds of firefighters, emergency managers, air tanker pilots, and policymakers. Within seconds of the fire being reported, the three questions everyone from firefighters to citizens want to know have been answered:

1. Where is the fire?
2. How big is the fire?
3. Where is the fire going?

All three questions are answered within seconds of being reported. The initial image must be simple to interpret and not so busy that it takes more than a glance to understand the information. As we like to say, it must be like reading a book authored by Dr. Seuss. It doesn’t need many words to be understood, just a glance to have good situation awareness. Most of the time, the initial image on my smartphone is that of a map showing fire spread in 30-minute increments.

The table in one corner of the image provides, in 30-minute increments, the number of property and lives in the path of the fire. In another corner is a mountaintop camera photo of the fire showing the levels of flame and smoke. From just a glance at the photo, it’s easy to see the fire is wind-driven and building in intensity. The initial image layer can also be applied to a variety of map layers. This particular image shows the land status (direct protection area), which is extremely useful for the agencies that will be responsible for managing the incident. In short, all three of the questions have been answered by one picture.

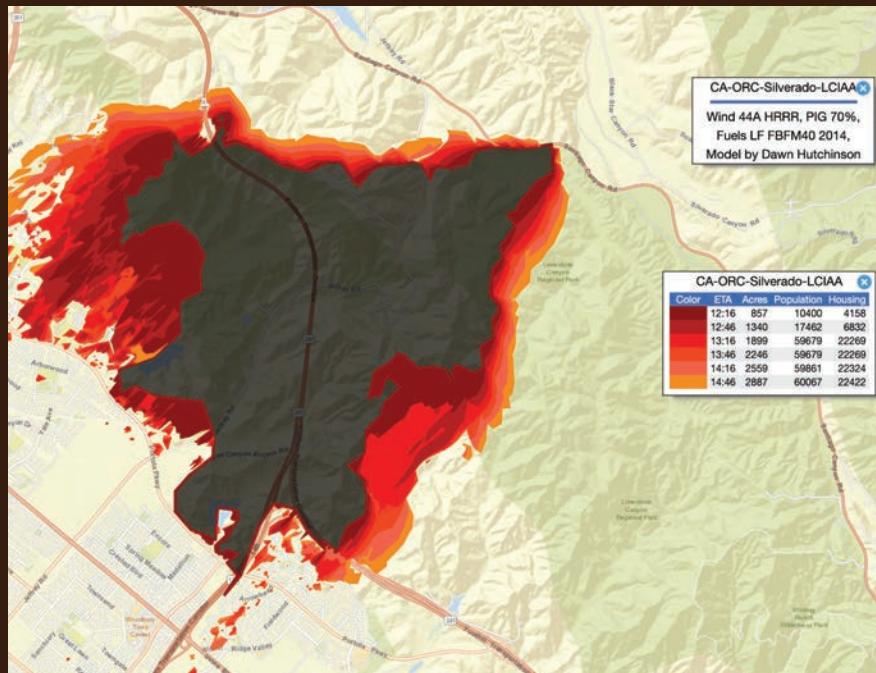
Coordination in California

By **Brian Fennessy**, Fire Chief of Orange County Fire Authority

In the meantime, the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) Emergency Command Center (ECC) has received the location and initial wildland fire spread model (without suppression action) from the LAFD Fusion Center. The on-duty FIRIS aircrew(s) have also received the information on their smartphones. The FIRIS-crew-staffed King Air 250 is on its departure roll down the runway with a 22-minute estimated time to arrival (ETA) to the fire. The aircraft arrives quickly and establishes an operating altitude of 15,000 feet, which is well above any temporary flight restriction or the fire traffic area.

Within minutes, Intel 24 has provided a real-time fire perimeter and is sending live stream color and infrared video to desktops, tablets, and smartphones. The information is also being warehoused and is accessible from the program's common operating picture contract provider. It's not long before the OCFA ECC has contacted Intel 24 and advised of a train derailment in a remote area of the Mojave Desert. The real-time wildland fire information has been shared with the firefighters on the ground, the agency command center, and the Cal OES State Operations Center. FIRIS Intel 24 departs for the new incident.

Both OCFA FIRIS King Air 250 fixed-wing aircrafts are equipped with a variety of sophisticated sensor equipment that is operated by skilled and experienced sensor operators. The pilots also have considerable experience with flying manned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions. The Air Tactical Group Supervisors (ATGS) are the most experienced in the



A fire-spread model of the Silverado fire that LAFD Fusion Center sent to fire departments, emergency managers, policy makers, etc. Photo courtesy of Brian Fennessy.

industry having retired from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management, CAL FIRE, and local government. Due to the high number of USFS ATGS vacancies, the FIRIS ATGS's support the USFS by staffing the air tactical aircraft that the USFS is unable to staff. The FIRIS aircraft are operated on a 24-hour/7-day basis and respond from bases in Los Alamitos and Sacramento.

The FIRIS program proof of concept began in 2016 in partnership with Department of Defense (DoD) contractor General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA). This began a nearly three-year relationship with GA. GA manufactures various models of military unmanned aircraft systems, most notably the Predator model(s). Former military special operators employed by GA shared that, while not well known, manned ISR platforms are as common in war theatre as unmanned aerial platforms. Both manned and unmanned have their unique value. One value of a manned ISR platform is the ability to adjust quickly based on onboard human input; the same has proven true for civilian ISR applications, such as the FIRIS program.

In 2017, and during the early stage of FIRIS program development, the

UCSD WIFIRE Lab was invited to make a presentation on FIRIS program development. It was quickly realized that the WIFIRE fire spread modeling would be continuous as long as an ISR platform camera was pointed on wildland fire. In December 2017, GA (with WIFIRE capability) responded to a Santa Ana wind-driven wildland fire (Lilac Fire) in North San Diego County. The GA ISR platform provided real time high-definition color video and infrared heat sensing video of WIFIRE fire spread modeling. Dozens of fire spread models were completed over the first 36 hours of the fire. Each proved demonstrably accurate and thus validated WIFIRE fire spread modeling.

In 2018, CAL FIRE, the California National Guard, Cal OES, the USFS, the FIRESCOPE Board of Directors, and many other subgroups of the agencies mentioned earlier received in-person briefings and presentations.

In early 2019, OCFA met with California state legislators and committees to share the immediate availability of real time information; further, that this information should be available as early into a wildland fire start as possible. In spring 2019, and as a result of the visits with legislators in

OPPOSITE PAGE: The Silverado Fire was a wildfire that burned in October and November 2020 in southern Orange County, California northeast of Irvine. Orange County Fire Authority Chief Brian Fennessy stated, "The winds were extraordinary even by Santa Ana standards. Fire spread is exceeding more than anything I've seen in my 44 years." – www.desertsun.com/story/news/2020/10/30/silverado-blue-ridge-fire-crews-make-progress-orange-county-blazes/6086983002

Sacramento, the OCFA was notified that it was successful in securing \$4.5 million for the 150-day FIRIS pilot program.

The 2019 FIRIS pilot program demonstrated that the integration of intelligence information and event prediction during initial response is as important as rapid and direct concentration of ground fire resources and aerial fire suppression. The 2019 pilot program was so successful that Cal OES, through provisional language to support and enhance local government mutual aid, provided funding to support

two FIRIS platforms in 2020. The 2020 program focus is all-hazard planning, response, and recovery, no longer just wildland fire response.

The 2020 FIRIS 2.0 Program provides a crucial link between the dynamic, real-time intelligence needs of initial response and enhanced situational awareness required by state and regional agencies to support the transition into extended attack. Implementing the FIRIS 2.0 Program has had a significant impact on combating the

effects of wildfire and other all-risk emergency incidents in California, while serving as a 24/7 pathway statewide for intelligence fusion and situational awareness.

The ISR fixed-wing platforms are managed, administered, and operated by OCFA on behalf of Cal OES, in support of the California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System. The FIRIS program assists with coordination and utilization of the resource between all requesting cooperators of the California Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System. 🔥

Brian Fennessy became Fire Chief of the Orange County Fire Authority on April 16, 2018. Chief Fennessy has enjoyed a diversity of executive leadership and management experiences in both the wildland fire and metropolitan fire service communities. He believes that Mission-Driven Culture (MDC) is the future of the fire service and has presented on this topic at a variety of local, state, and national venues.



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Budget Breakdown:

The Real Cost of Operating a Fire Department

By Steve Pegram, Fire Chief and Township Administrator for Goshen Township

As the global pandemic seems to be winding down, communities are still feeling the impact of it, the changes to their local economies, and how that affects fire and EMS budgets. One thing is for sure, fire and EMS agencies are competing for budget money now more than ever.

Volunteer communities are struggling with the rising cost of equipment and a reduction in available first responders to handle the calls. Suburban communities served by volunteer and/or combination departments are also struggling with the growing cost of doing business, especially as more and more communities look to hire part-time and even full-time personnel to supplement or increase staffing. Career departments continue to struggle with the rising

cost of personnel, pensions, and benefits, all while politically, in many communities, the budget priorities seem to be moving away from public safety.

Like many of us are told when we meet with a personal financial planner, it's time fire and EMS chiefs diversify. The pandemic has shown us that once-reliable sources of funding for fire and EMS are no longer as dependable or robust as we thought. Some communities decimated by the housing market crash of the late 2000s saw increasing property values and property tax revenue during the pandemic. However, many communities that had moved away from property taxes as a primary source of funding to an income and/or earning tax model for funding saw numbers plummet in their

communities, especially those with a reliance on tourism, travel, and other industries. In addition, communities have been struggling with population changes, call volume, and revenue loss as the businesses shuttered and working from home became the new norm.

It is critical now more than ever that as a fire chief I explain the "how" and "why" of our budget, not just to our bosses and the elected officials who vote to approve the budget, but to ALL the stakeholders who share in the responsibility for the budget and who the budget process affects. One of the biggest groups affected by the budget process – and who often don't know or understand anything about it – is our employees. In many firehouses across the country, we can find conversations riddled with frustration over how and why a department is

funded, or the money is being spent. I have found that being as open and transparent in the budget process as possible, with all stakeholders, including our employees, and yes, even the union, can help eliminate these issues.

In Goshen we hold an annual department meeting to explain the budget and to work through all the numbers. This process has helped, but hasn't eliminated complaints of why or why not certain things are done and/or provided or purchased by our community. At the beginning of the budget process, I create a spreadsheet of all the projected revenue for the next fiscal year. For us, the vast majority is from property taxes with supplemental funding from EMS billing and grants. Next, we go through all the associated costs of the fire department. Slowly all the available resources (money) diminish before their eyes.

When working through the budget, I start with the "knowns," or the fixed costs that are not discretionary. Like your budget at home there are some bills you have to pay first, like your mortgage or a car payment. As we work through the budget process, it quickly becomes apparent that there isn't as much money available as it may have seemed. For example, in Goshen, we have a mortgage payment on one of our fire stations; that's a fixed payment we have to make annually and is plugged in first. Just like that, four percent of the "budget" just disappeared. Once that is accounted for, we move on to other debit services like lease-purchase payments for vehicles. Just like that, another seven percent of our budget is gone and we haven't paid a single employee or purchased a Band-Aid.

Next, fixed costs like property/casualty insurance, 9-1-1 dispatch fees, and auditor costs consume another five percent of the budget. We have 85 percent left, which looks and sounds like a lot of money until we start plugging in payroll costs. Our department is a combination department with a mix of full-time,

part-time, and volunteer personnel. I provide our employees a breakdown of the actual cost of an employee. Often employees know what their salary and overtime are, but rarely do they fully know or understand each employee's total cost on the overall budget. Once salaries, healthcare, pension, and other related personnel costs are entered into the budget, another 78.5 percent of our available resources are gone – this leaves 6.5 percent of our revenue to operate a fire department.

After seeing the visual, many of our employees realize (for the first time) how little discretionary funds we, as a department, have at our disposal. The remaining 6.5 percent covers all the other expenses, including utilities (phone, internet, gas, electric), fuel, office supplies, uniforms, turn-out gear, trash removal, repairs and maintenance, tools and equipment, EMS supplies, and training.

At the end of the process, a department with an overall budget of \$3.5 million has less than \$225,000 to truly "operate" once debit services and payroll costs are accounted for. I have found this process of budget explanation to be useful for our chief officers who are not yet directly in charge of the budget but will be in the future. It also helps justify to company officers why their request

for a new tool has been denied. Finally, it shows the firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics where the money is being spent and explains why their training might be denied simply because there is no money left in the budget.

That being said, we do allow for input on how the final two to three percent of our budget is spent. Some years more money is allocated for training, and other years we may make a big equipment purchase, but rarely can we do both. This is a reality that many departments struggle with, and one that we as fire and EMS leadership must share with our employees, elected officials, co-workers, and community so we can make better decisions and understand the true cost to serve and protect our communities. 💧

Steve Pegram is the Fire Chief and Township Administrator in Goshen, Ohio. He has been a member of the IAFC since 1991. In 2020 Chief Pegram was appointed the Chairperson of the COVID-19 Economic Taskforce for the IAFC. In addition, Chief Pegram serves on the IAFC Program Planning Committee and was appointed by the IAFC Board of Directors to serve on the Board of Global Public Safety Solutions (GPSS).



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One Great Save:

San Diego's Justification and Journey to Acquire the S-70i™ FIREHAWK® Helicopter



By Chuck Macfarland, City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department

Plenty has been said and written about the Sikorsky FIREHAWK® helicopter's prowess in wildland firefighting operations – mostly by the Los Angeles County Fire Department, which has courageously and brilliantly pioneered the use of this exceptional aircraft for initial attack and year-round public safety operations.

I'm going to talk about the journey taken by the City of San Diego to acquire and enter into service the latest-generation FIREHAWK® helicopter – the S-70i – which we completed in time for the 2020 fire season. I'll cover what justified the need, the steps we took along the way to customize the aircraft and train our crews, the overall cost and our assessment.

Before I dig into the details, I'll preemptively plant this thought in your mind: You only need one great save to justify every penny of investment I'm about to describe.

LARGER FIRES

Megafires that burn more than 100,000 acres (404 sq. km) of land are increasing in Southern California and in other western U.S. states, such as Colorado. While this upward trend is cyclical, there's no doubt that fire seasons are longer, extending almost year-round.

The City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department had watched and learned as the increasing severity of wildland fires afflicted neighboring counties – San Diego County to our east, and Orange, Ventura, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara counties to our north.

The city's Bell medium helicopters (a 412EP and a 212HP) are highly reliable multi-role workhorses. However, to protect our city and assist our neighbors when requested, we needed a more capable helicopter for aggressive initial attack.

The twin-engine FIREHAWK® helicopter – a military-designed BLACK HAWK® configured for aerial firefighting – can carry up to 1,000



"No matter how experienced your pilots are, your mantra should be: Crawl, Walk, Run."

gallons (3,785 liters) of water, almost three times that of our Bells. The pilot also can fully control the amount of water released to suit the fire type. Furthermore, the FIREHAWK® cabin can easily accommodate 12 seated firefighters and their equipment.

CHOOSING AN AIRCRAFT

Air operations are very expensive, so it's critical you do your research. Both the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) and the State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) had hired outside consultants to assess their options. CAL FIRE has bought 12 new S-70i FIREHAWK® helicopters,

while LACoFD has added two to their original three S-70A models.

Our city's department of finance commissioned a study by Conklin & de Decker to learn the best aircraft types for the mission, and the true cost of operations. Ultimately, we chose the FIREHAWK® for its ability to carry as much as 40 percent more water than the other recommended aircraft. Cabin volume, speed, mission endurance, lower direct operating cost, reliability, situational awareness, 4-axis coupled flight director, and price, among other performance comparisons, also were considered in our decision.

The city signed the contract for one S-70i BLACK HAWK® helicopter in

January 2018. We were thrilled with the city's purchase. The S-70i has an integrated digital cockpit and more power, payload, maneuverability, and flight safety enhancements than any helicopter we had ever flown. This was going to be a game-changer.

AIRCRAFT CUSTOMIZATION

We kept it simple. Avionics integrator Hangar One in nearby Carlsbad, California, installed tactical radios, navigation systems and other equipment we specifically wanted.

Then United Rotorcraft's facility in Englewood, Colorado, installed the external water tank made by Kawak Aviation Technologies of Bend, Oregon, integrating it to the cockpit so that our pilots have full control at their fingertips.

EXTRA TRAINING

With a new helicopter on the ramp, you might be tempted to rush into firefighting operations. Resist this urge. No matter how experienced your pilots are, your mantra should be: Crawl, Walk, Run.

Each of San Diego Fire-Rescue's four pilots, myself included, has many thousands of hours in helicopters. We retrain annually on FSI simulators. But for the FIREHAWK® we went an extra step. We brought in Kevin Bredenbeck, one of the best BLACK HAWK® pilot trainers in the business, to teach the ways of the FIREHAWK®.

FIRST MAJOR SAVE

In the first week of December 2020, we received a request for assistance from the San Miguel Fire District, one of the fire agencies in San Diego County. Structures were burning, lives were at risk. Santa Ana winds were blowing at 30 to 40 knots. We responded. 🔥

Chuck Macfarland is Chief of Air Operations for the City of San Diego's Fire-Rescue Department.

This is an abridged version of the full story. To read the full article, visit this link: www.iafc.org/onegreatsave.



Legislative Update



Ken LaSala, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy

Welcome to the Summer of Infrastructure!

By Ken LaSala, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy

Happily, summer weather is here and COVID-19 infections are going down. In March, President Biden signed the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (P.L. 117-2) with \$200 million for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program; \$100 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program; and an opportunity for fire departments to be reimbursed by Medicare for providing treatment in place to 9-1-1 callers. For more information is available on the IAFC website.

Both President Biden and Congress are focused on getting Americans back to work and improving the nation's infrastructure. This represents a rare opportunity for the fire and emergency service to ask Congress for a major investment in infrastructure for the fire and emergency services and public safety community. Our requests are outlined below.

\$1 BILLION FOR FIRE STATION CONSTRUCTION GRANTS

According to a July 2019 report by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 43 percent of the nation's fire stations are over 40 years old. They suffer from a lack of backup power and diesel emissions systems, environmental and mold problems,

and a lack of quarters and space for female firefighters.

Along with other major fire service organizations, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is asking Congress to introduce legislation to authorize a \$1 billion grant program at the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency for fire station modification, renovation, and construction. These grants would be awarded using a peer review process similar to the one used for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program. Specifically, the grants could be used for:

- Building new and rebuilding old fire and EMS stations.
- Upgrading and renovating fire and EMS stations.
- Upgrading facilities to install diesel exhaust emissions systems, replace environmental control systems, and construct or modify living quarters for use by male and female personnel.

The eligible applicants would be career fire departments, volunteer fire departments, combination fire departments, and third-service EMS departments (career EMS departments like in Boston or volunteer EMS departments). No private entities could apply. The awards would be

limited to \$7.5 million and allocated as follows:

- 25 percent to career departments.
- 25 percent to volunteer departments.
- 25 percent to combination departments.
- 25 percent for competition between career, combination, and volunteer departments.

The IAFC, International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) all are working together to pass this important legislation.

\$15 BILLION FOR NEXT GENERATION 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1)

As communications technology continues to evolve, many jurisdictions are still using technology similar to what was used during the first 9-1-1 call in 1968. It will require a historic investment to upgrade the nation's 9-1-1 Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) to receive voice, text, pictures, and location information from callers using mobile devices. In addition, there needs to be a greater focus on cybersecurity in today's connected environment.

The Leading Infrastructure For Tomorrow's America (LIFT) Act (H.R. 1848), introduced by Representative

Frank Pallone (D-NJ), would allocate \$15 billion for a national transition to Next Generation 9-1-1. This legislation would create a cybersecurity operations center to improve cybersecurity across the connected PSAPs. It would also ensure the participation of local public safety officials by creating a public safety advisory committee to help guide the rollout.

In addition, the bill would include funding for training of the communicators working at the PSAPs to ensure that they send important, actionable information to the incident commanders. This bill is also focused on ensuring end-to-end interoperability to make it easier to seamlessly transfer calls between jurisdictions. The IAFC is working on this legislation with the Metro Chiefs, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major County Sheriffs of America, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and APCO International.

\$350 MILLION FOR THE RETROFIT OF FIRE SPRINKLERS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

With many Americans stuck at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased focus on protecting Americans from the dangers of house fires, especially

at-risk communities. For example, the NFPA reports that people age 65 and older are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fires as compared to the population as a whole.

As we all know, automatic fire sprinkler systems are key to protecting lives and property from fires. According to NFPA, flame damage was confined to the room of origin in 97 percent of fires where sprinklers were present. To help retrofit public housing with fire sprinklers, the IAFC is urging Congress to include a \$350 million grant program.

The IAFC is working with NFPA, the Congressional Fire Services Institute, the National Fire Sprinkler Association, and other major fire service organizations on this effort.

ACCELERATED DEPRECIATION FOR THE INSTALLATION OF AUTOMATIC FIRE SPRINKLERS IN HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

In addition to public housing, the IAFC is working to encourage the owners of high-rise buildings to install fire sprinklers in their buildings. According to the NFPA, fire departments responded to an average of 14,500 structure fires in high-rise buildings each year between 2009 and 2013. These fires resulted in an annual average of 40 civilian deaths, 520 civilian injuries, and \$154 million in direct property damage. The IAFC is working with other fire service organizations to accelerate the depreciation time period for the retrofit installation of automatic fire sprinklers in high-rise buildings.

AUTHORIZATION OF THE ALERT GRANTS AND OTHER HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The nation's roads and rails are now populated by an increasing variety of hazardous materials, including ethanol-powered engines and lithium-ion batteries. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) funds several grant programs to train firefighters and other responders for hazmat incidents.

For example, PHMSA's Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT) grants fund training for fire departments in rural areas to respond to incidents involving the rail transportation of ethanol and other hazardous materials. PHMSA also has other grant programs that support training for pipeline emergencies. The IAFC is urging Congress to authorize these programs and ensure that they are adequately funded.

A STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF PFAS FOAM ON FIRE SERVICE PROPERTY

Fire departments across the nation have been using PFAS foam to respond to incidents involving hazardous materials, such as aviation fuel. In addition, fire departments and fire training facilities used PFAS foam in training exercises. At the time, the PFAS foam was not thought to be harmful, but we now know that it can have damaging effects in a community's groundwater. Before asking Congress for funds to clean up this contamination, we need a better understanding of how many communities across the country are affected and what the cost of clean-up might be. The IAFC is asking Congress to authorize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to work with the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) to report on PFAS foam contamination at the nation's fire departments and fire training facilities.

AN AMBITIOUS AGENDA

As you can see, the IAFC has an ambitious agenda to support the nation's fire and emergency service as part of infrastructure legislation. In addition, we are awaiting President Biden's budget request to see his recommendations for funding programs like USFA, the AFG and SAFER programs, and the Volunteer Fire Assistance programs. Please stay informed about what is happening in Washington, DC, and join the fight at our Legislative Action Center (www.iafc.org/gr). 🇺🇸

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



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"Our organization has survived through two world wars, the Great Depression, and now two worldwide pandemics."

IN MY LAST *iCHIEFS* magazine column we were all looking back at an unprecedented year of challenges for the IAFC, our members, and our communities, and how all of us had to meet those challenges head-on. Then, COVID-19 still had a firm upper hand and the future of our 2021 on-site educational programs and conferences looked to be in doubt.

Now, as I write this message in late May 2021, over 50 percent of the United States population has been fully vaccinated against the Coronavirus; we just completed the first in-person Fire Service Executive Development Institute (FSEDI) Cohort on-site at the National Conference Center in Loudoun County, Virginia, since before the pandemic; and registration has officially opened for our Fire-Rescue International

(FRI) conference, which will be held on-site in Charlotte, North Carolina.

As we cautiously emerge from the restrictions and impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic, we are laser focused on ensuring the IAFC's continued financial resilience; growing our IAFC membership; advocating for our IAFC members; and re-initiating our in-person conferences, educational, and outreach programs. That said, we learned much about the use of virtual platforms for meetings and some educational programs, and we will continue to explore ways in which we can integrate virtual options in the future as well.

Winston Churchill once said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." The IAFC, like all of our members, faced many challenges in 2020. Fortunately,

the strong leadership of our IAFC Board of Directors and the tireless work of our Sections, Committees, Task Forces, and Divisions has kept us moving forward.

In closing, I am truly humbled and honored by the opportunity that the IAFC Board of Directors has bestowed upon me to serve as your IAFC Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director. In just over two short years, the IAFC will celebrate our 150th anniversary. Our organization has survived through two world wars, the Great Depression, and now two worldwide pandemics. If not for our dedicated and steadfast members, our longevity and resolve would not have been possible.

ROB BROWN

IAFC Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director



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