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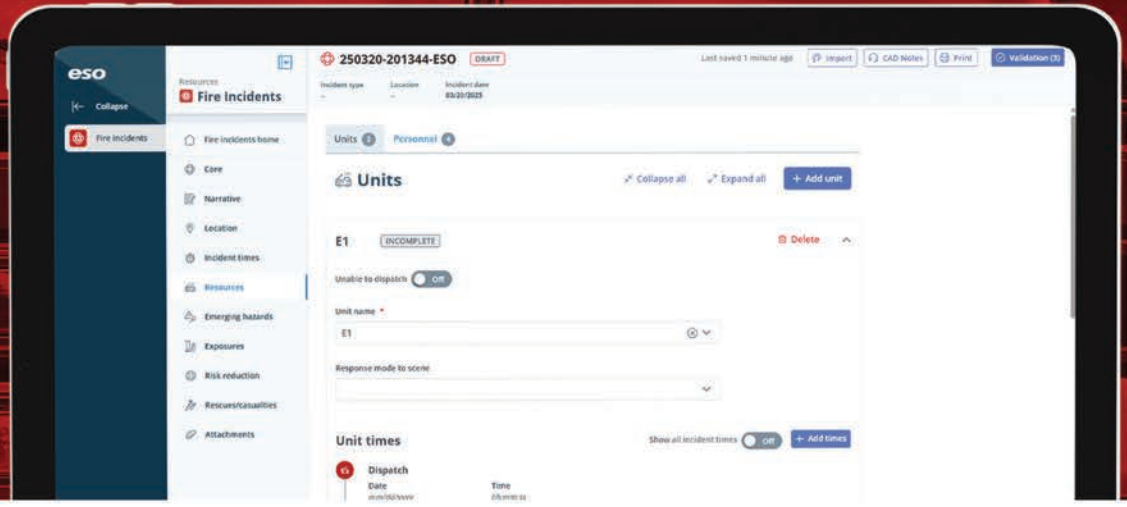

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Published For:
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS
8251 Greensboro Drive, Suite 650
McLean, VA 22102
Tel: 703.273.0911
www.iafc.org

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Published By:
MATRIX GROUP PUBLISHING INC.
Return all undeliverable addresses to:
PO Box 41270
1450 Vassar Street
Reno, NV
89504
Toll-Free: 866.999.1299
Toll-Free Fax: 866.244.2544
www.matrixgroupinc.net

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Redefining Wellness

WELLNESS IS A THEME that touches everything we do in the fire service, from answering calls right down to preparing for a great retirement once our working days are done. As leaders, what challenges us most isn't grasping that firefighter wellness is important — it's learning to expand the definition of wellness to include things we haven't considered until now.

The traditional definition of wellness was fairly limited. It included physical health and not much else. Even within that category, "physically healthy" really just meant "he or she can get the job done." It wasn't a particularly holistic idea, and when it came to things like mental, emotional, or interpersonal health, personnel were more or less on their own as far as the fire service was concerned.

That's changed over the last decade. We're now learning to think about wellness in new, more far-reaching ways. We don't just see it as something based on eating habits or workout routines; rather, we view it as a top-to-bottom philosophy that covers all of the elements that make a firefighter not just a body but a complex human being. It doesn't sound so radical now, but this concept might have gotten you eyerolls a couple of years ago. In the past, it was commonly accepted that *your* feelings were *your* problem; your job was to simply make sure the job gets done.

Back then, I might have replied, "fair enough." Now I have a different perspective, and I'd bet a lot of you reading this do, too. If we were corporate employees or some other regular nine-to-fiver, you could probably get away with that attitude toward your workforce. Ours is a much different role.

The men and women we lead are giving us a heck of a lot more than their time and effort; they're putting their physical, mental, and emotional health on the line to do the things we and the public ask of them. When we talk about wellness in the context of first responders, we're talking about all the small and major things that add up to make an exceptional picture. For us, work is a second life that's just as detailed as the first. It includes a home (the station), a family (all members of the department), unique routines, and everything else that occupies the time we spend on a shift.

When we talk about wellness in the context of first responders, we're talking about all the small and major things that add up to make an exceptional picture.

That means we, as leaders, have to bring wellness into every single aspect of *our* work on behalf of our personnel. From the way we approach station design, seeing it not only as a workplace but as a living space, to the importance we place on long-term mental health for our departments, as key decision-makers, it's largely up to us to make full-picture wellness a reality during our tenures.

As we get ready to face new challenges, share new ideas, and collaborate in new ways at this year's Fire-Rescue International conference and beyond, I hope you'll keep wellness at the front of your mind. We're still defining it, and it's going to continue to be a group effort.

Fire Chief Josh Waldo
President & Board Chair

Changes in Fire Station Design

By Robert Tutterow, F.I.E.R.O.

The design requirements of modern fire stations are evolving at an increasing pace. These changes represent new challenges for local governments looking to fund new or replacement stations, or for embarking on major renovation projects or additions to stations already in operation. A generation ago, there was minimal guidance available on how to design a fire station. This changed when, in 2000, the Fire Industry Education Resource Organization (F.I.E.R.O.) launched the first-ever Fire Station Design Symposium. In 2006, F.I.E.R.O. launched its concurrent Annual Fire Facilities Design Awards Program.

The winners of this award program are selected by a "jury" of current and retired fire service personnel who also have experience in architecture. By seeking out these specific individuals, the F.I.E.R.O. symposium and award program have been able to bring together a highly specialized group of subject matter experts and make a significant positive impact on the field of station design.

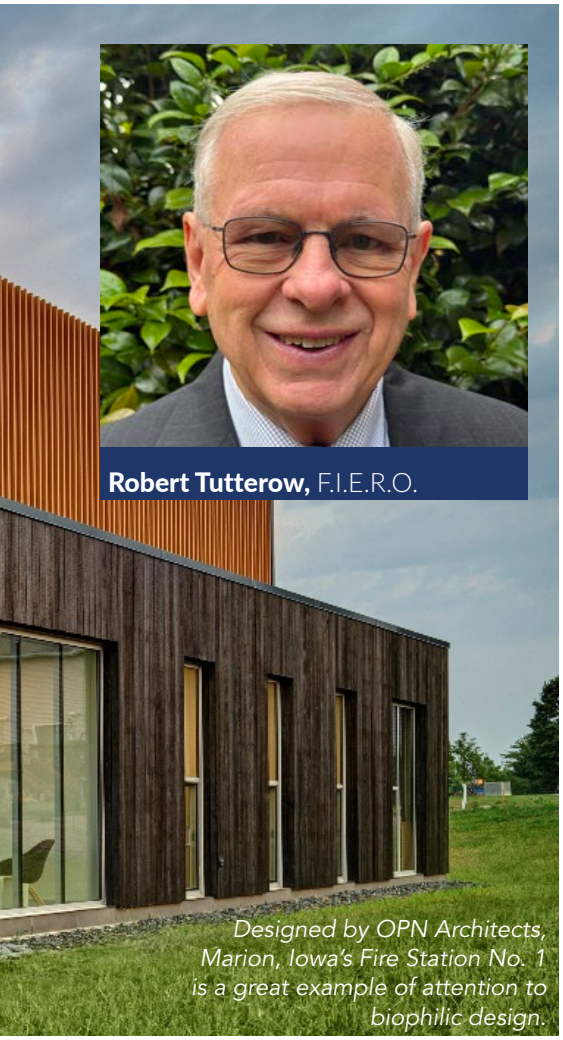
A look back on how stations have evolved puts it all in perspective. There is no doubt that this annual event has led to changes such as:

- Glass walls for fitness rooms so a possible downed firefighter can be spotted sooner;
- Zones for minimizing the spread of contamination;
- Apparatus floor drains located directly underneath the apparatus;
- Removal of ice machines and breathing air compressors from apparatus bays;
- Proper layout or decontamination areas for extraction access;
- Separate rooms for storage of personal protective equipment (PPE) with ventilation to the exterior of the facility; and
- Many other innovative design features.

EXPANDING ROLES

The fire service started taking on the role of EMS in the 1970s, which led to additional vehicles in fire stations and the need for more bay space. It was also around this same time that women started to join the fire service. The presence of female firefighters in stations led to unique challenges regarding bathrooms, showers, and sleeping arrangements. In the 1980s, the fire service started to expand to all-hazards response organizations. Response capability for HazMat, tech rescue, water rescue, natural disasters, and even civil unrest incidents led to an increased number of vehicles in stations, not to mention a need for additional storage related to these new response charges.

Robert Tutterow, F.I.E.R.O.



Designed by OPN Architects, Marion, Iowa's Fire Station No. 1 is a great example of attention to biophilic design.

Concurrent with these expanding roles for the fire service was the increasing understanding and prioritization of firefighter fitness and wellness. Trying to squeeze fitness rooms within existing stations often led to equipment being on the apparatus floor, which is the worst place for aerobic exercise. At the same time, the fire service is working to solve contamination control issues to help slow the cancer epidemic among firefighters. There has also been a growing focus on holistic design principles aimed at helping with the behavioral and mental health challenges facing firefighters — areas of wellness that have historically been ignored or considered the personal responsibility of responders themselves

Some of the emerging, near-future station design challenges are those related to the development of all-electric fire stations, particularly those intended to house electric fire apparatus and support vehicles. Underlying all the changes in the fire service's mission is the consistent need for more storage space to meet mission requirements in a wide variety of different categories.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Almost all fire stations in the United States are in various stages of obsolescence. They were not designed for today's fire service needs.

A common hurdle, especially for municipal departments, is the lack of adequate site space for a functional station within many urban and suburban areas. Seattle's Station No. 22, designed by Weinstein A + U, illustrates one way this can be overcome by taking a different approach to street access while maintaining a drive-through apparatus bay. This and many other features of this station made it a F.I.E.R.O. Honor Award winner.

The architects were given a topographically challenging site with a very small footprint. By turning the station's apparatus bays 90 degrees to the street and placing the apparatus floor on the back of the station, the requirement for drive-through apparatus bays was achieved.

One juror commented, "This station is proof-positive that you do not necessarily need a big site to get a very functional response and return layout. With the cost of real estate in urbanized areas, more departments should look at this [as an] example of what is possible with proper study and understanding by both the architect and the fire department."

The contamination issue is one that cannot be ignored. It has been aptly stated that "firefighters are like farmers." Farmers harvest their crops, bring them to the barn, and then distribute them as needed. Firefighters are harvesters of carcinogens, and they transport their harvest back to the fire station where they are distributed to other parts of the station, and often into their personal vehicles and back to their homes. Many departments will also take those carcinogens to public spaces like the local grocery store for distribution.

Current thought on fire station layout has led to the designation of zones or areas within stations to identify contaminated areas, transition areas, and clean areas. The contaminated areas are typically the DeCon area and related apparatus bays. The transition area is where contaminated equipment is cleaned and firefighters can shower. There should be a separate group of rooms in this area for equipment such as washers/extractors and drying equipment for PPE. The area should have a large stainless steel double sink with hands-free faucets to clean loose emergency response equipment. This sink should be surrounded by stainless steel countertops and/or worktables for disassembly of equipment for cleaning and the subsequent re-assembly of the equipment.

It is important to keep stored PPE off the apparatus bay floor in a separate room, with motion-sensing light activation and dedicated ventilation to the exterior of the building. Another aspect of the carcinogenic issue is diesel exhaust from the apparatus. There are three approaches to exhaust capture, and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

The mental health needs of departments are also important when considering station design. Firefighters, due to the nature of their work, are at an elevated risk of depression, PTSD, substance abuse, and suicide. We are now learning that the design of a fire station, where career firefighters spend about 30% of their life, has a direct impact on behavioral health. During non-sleeping hours, there is a need for natural light and biophilic design. Colors used in a fire station, and even the inclusion of photos on the walls, can impact a firefighter's disposition and provide a sense of home.

PUTTING FIREFIGHTERS FIRST

Marion, Iowa's Fire Station No. 1 is a great example of attention to biophilic

design. The station was designed by OPN Architects and has an emphasis of "putting firefighters first." It was a F.I.E.R.O. Honor Award winner as well as a Commendation Award winner for "Attention to Firefighter Health and Wellness Issues." The addition of this two-level, 21,200-square-foot fire station in a rapidly growing community reduces response time, establishes a strong and transparent civic presence, and uses biophilic design principles to support firefighters' physical and mental wellness.

The plan and massing are anchored by a two-story apparatus bay. Full-height glass doors on both the north and south elevations maximize daylight and establish a tangible, visual connection to the community the department serves. Extending east, shou sugi ban wood, which is charred using controlled fire, wraps the living and office spaces to add depth, texture, and contrast with the smooth plane of the glass. Interior spaces are complemented by two ipe wood terraces sheltered by a roof and wall trellis. A green roof surrounds all the living spaces and sleeping rooms. The lobby is stretched to become the primary first level of circulation; it mediates between a tree grove and a history wall.

This welcoming, light filled space allows direct views into the apparatus bay and displays the fire department's rich history, pride, and tradition. Strategic sequencing of spaces, including a decontamination area, between the bays and the office and living areas mitigate exposure to carcinogens to protect the firefighters' health.

On the opposite side of the bays, the hose-drying tower also serves as a training area to simulate rescues. Training opportunities continue at the exterior, where a retention pond is also used to train for ice rescues. The living areas, wrapped in full-height glazing with exposed wood ceilings, include a full kitchen, a large family-style table, and a television and gaming area to ensure the firefighters have a variety of space types to relax and recharge in.

Circadian rhythm-based lighting is used throughout to ensure the firefighters' wake-sleep cycle is synchronized with natural light while escalating alarms reduce physiological and psychological stress upon waking. The implementation of biophilic principles is having a profound effect on firefighters' wellbeing, including stress reduction and increased awareness and cognitive ability.

"This fire station should be the national benchmark for how biophilic design can reduce PTSD in firefighters," says Chief Deb Krebil (retired).

Sleep deprivation is now a hot research topic within the fire service, and fire station design is at the forefront of this discussion. Should the sleeping areas be an open dorm concept, open dorm concept with partitions, individual bedrooms, suites, or some other configuration? The current thought is that individual

Richmond, Virginia's Station No. 12, designed by Moseley Architects, was built with involvement from and for the community (new design on page 8; old station on page 9).

bedrooms might be the best option. Ambient noise is a consideration, and equity among the sleeping compartments is crucial. How firefighters are alerted to a call while sleeping is particularly important. Both the audible alert system and the lighting need to "ramp up" slowly rather than being sudden disorienting blasts of noise and light.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED

Most fire stations are supposedly built to last 70 years, yet many were built with the present in mind rather than the future. No one knows what the future holds with any certainty, but we do know there is a strong likelihood that stations will begin to house large drones and robots. Some departments are designing their new stations with a medical monitoring room for the public. The efficient use of electricity and the subsequent battery needs are critical in designing new stations. And, once again, you can never have enough storage.

Of course, no fire station should be built without some involvement from and for the community. Richmond, Virginia's Station No. 12, designed by Moseley Architects, is a great example. Public art is alive and well in the Carytown neighborhood of Richmond. This neighborhood culture of murals on the street is extended into the station through the public lounge and museum, meeting rooms, and even within the dayroom flooring. Art glass imagery of firefighting personnel from long ago hearkens back to the original station. Being a pedestrian and dog-friendly community is also expressed in the eclectic artwork of the station.

Marion, Iowa's Fire Station No. 1 uses biophilic design principles to support firefighters' physical and mental wellness.

The third floor is almost entirely dedicated to the community. The stairwell to the space features a mural of one of the many bridges that crosses the James River. An ornate slide pole echoing those of the past is featured on the community floor.

SMALL BUT COMPLICATED

This article has just briefly touched on the changes in station design. Every room has its own particular "dos and don'ts." Fire stations are complicated buildings, and very few architects are up to speed on the service's current needs. If the local jurisdiction requires the use of a local architect, and that architect does not have extensive fire station design experience, it is imperative that the local architect be required to sub-contract with a fire station design consultant or an architectural firm experienced in station design before beginning work on the project.

There are many intricacies involved in the design and equipping of the areas within a fire station and on the broader site to ensure they all function effectively and efficiently. In short, a fire station is perhaps the most complicated small building project anyone involved will ever be involved in.

All of this is underscored by looking at the fire station topics offered by F.I.E.R.O. Annual Fire Station Design Symposium. The Symposium, now in its 25th year, offers nearly 50 different topic areas with nearly 40 different subject matter experts. This year's event will take place on September 21 to 24 at the Hyatt Regency Greenville in Greenville, S.C.

For more information, go to www.fieroonline.org and click on events. Attendees often leave saying over and over: "I would have never thought of that."

F.I.E.R.O. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization run by a Board of Directors, all with a fire service background.

Robert Tutterow is President of F.I.E.R.O. He is retired from the Charlotte Fire Department where he served in the roles of Health and Safety Officer and Logistics Officer. Also a former volunteer firefighter, he has been an active participant in the NFPA Standards Development process for over 35 years.

The Future of Fire Degree Programs

By Keith Padgett, Columbia Southern University, and **Emily Sinclair Montague,** IAFC

When we talk about fire, we often speak of it as a living thing. It has behaviors, habits, needs, and ideal environments; it can be unpredictable, seeming to possess a mind of its own; it consumes, breathes, dies, and responds to stimuli. There is no other natural phenomenon so intrinsically tied to our evolution as human beings than fire.

Maybe this is why humanity has always been so fascinated by fire and its qualities. We truly have a relationship with it. From the moment our distant ancestors first struck spark to tinder, we've been obsessed with this manifestation of heat and light to a degree that can sometimes border on pathological. We love it for all of the things it has given us. We fear it for all the destruction it has caused. Stephen Pyne writes in his book *Fire: A Brief History*, "Fire made us. Fire continues to make us. What we make of fire is what we make of ourselves."1 The quote captures Pyne's central argument that fire is not just a tool but a dynamic force in human evolution.

There's a certain irony in the way firefighters seem to especially love and be fascinated by fire. Get a bunch of off-duty firefighters together for a weekend camping trip, and chances are you'll soon find them building an enormous bonfire just for fun. There's nothing outwardly sophisticated about this scene, but behind the antics lies a genuine, intellectual urge to *understand* fire.

Luckily for us (and the public), firefighters are uniquely positioned to do just that. More and more are choosing to take this understanding to the next level — fire science degrees have never been more popular than they are right now. And yet the concept of a "degree in fire" is relatively new compared to most other programs.

When did the study of fire become the respected field it is today? How has it evolved, and how is it changing? And, most importantly for those of you

While it's true that much of a firefighter's expertise comes from hands-on experience, a degree in fire can significantly improve that practical knowledge by providing a better understanding of the science behind fire behavior and suppression tactics.

reading this article, what's the value of a fire science degree for members of the modern fire service? The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) decided to explore these questions in depth with our partners at Columbia Southern University (CSU).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRE SCIENCE FIELD

As a dedicated field of study, fire science didn't get its start until the early 20th century. Prior to this, fire service members generally relied on their own practical experiences to understand fire behavior. There were a few published guides on fire safety and fundamentals written by fire engineers like the IAFC's own founder, John S. Damrell, but these were not widely accessible to the "average" firefighter.

Indeed, the IAFC's history is intrinsically tied to the origins of fire science as a formal discipline. After the terrible conflagrations of the mid to late-1800s, figures like Damrell felt compelled to share their insights, concerns, and conclusions not only with other fire engineers but also with public officials and regular citizens living in urban centers.

In an 1886 address to the Boston Veteran Firemen, Damrell stated, "To surmount the causes that produced these [fires] became a serious question, and it was a difficult matter to determine the best methods to [...] secure the property of our fellow citizens from further ravages by [fire]."

There was a widespread lack of understanding about fire, he warned, and this could only result in further

Continued on page 14

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Ram Air Gear Dryer TG-6H

Firehouse Labs conducted a third-party, independent field test of the Ram Air Gear drying technology. The company is firefighter-owned and boasts a wide range of products that are engineered to help to dry PPE. Although several models were available, it was decided to test the company's midrange model, the TG-6H, which is a heated bunker gear dryer that's designed to hold as many as 12 pieces of gear, 6 helmets and 18 accessories.

The company stands by its marketing phrase, "Dry Gear Fast," which our independent analysis supported.

The TG-6H heated bunker gear dryer holds as many as 12 pieces of gear, 6 helmets and 18 accessories

The Review

Over the period of two days, Firehouse Labs thoroughly tested and documented the performance of the TG-6H. Accounting for variables, including ambient air temperature and humidity, the testing was conducted under field-level conditions. The gear that was selected for the testing was purposefully chosen to provide a representation of various manufacturers, designs, materials and features. As a control, two sets of identical gear (only slightly varied in size) were in the test group, with one being subjected to a hang-dry option to identify the ambient air-drying capability.

To measure the effectiveness of the dryer, turnout gear weight was measured prior to washing (dry), post-washing (wet) and after it was on the gear dryer for one hour. Even if the gear felt dry, it wasn't considered dry until it was back to its starting weight.

It's important to note that at no time during the test did the evaluator register a temperature that was hotter than the maximum 105 degrees Fahrenheit that was established by *NFPA 1851: Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting.*

At no time during testing was a temperature that was hotter than 105 degrees Fahrenheit registered. That temperature was established as the maximum permissible by *NFPA 1851: Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Firefighting.*

The Results

Testing revealed that 90 percent of the time, the gear was dry within one hour. Outliers to the one-hour result included gear that had thick leather knee pads, integrated belts, large solid areas of reflective material, or inner pocket liners that used moisture-barrier material, essentially trapping moisture between two non-permeable surfaces.

In all but one test, the gear that wasn't back to its starting weight felt dry to the touch, particularly in areas that are prone to holding water, such as the underarm or groin areas of the gear. This is an impressive result considering that the average amount of water in the wet gear was nearly half a liter.

The inner liner of the gear held more water than the outer shells. However, the various pockets, patches, built-in padding in the elbows and knees, and folds in the fabric of the outer shells proved to be the last areas to dry. Areas, such as the neck shroud, could expedite drying with minor adjustments throughout the drying process; however, these adjustments were minimal and didn't disrupt the drying process.

When questioned about variables that could affect drying time, Ram Air Gear representatives mentioned ambient air temperatures, humidity levels and many of the gear manufacturing variables that were discovered during testing. Overall, the results were consistent and proved that the gear dryer would "Dry Gear Fast."

The Product

The Ram Air Gear product line was designed to maximize airflow to each piece of gear on the system. Opening accessory drying ports didn't reduce the airflow to other areas, and it was noted that there was more than enough airflow to fully inflate any gloves that were placed on the dryer. The controls were easy to understand and had built-in safeguards to prevent user errors that might damage firefighter turnout gear.

The design of this dryer combines impressive airflow volume and consistency, specifically engineered with firefighters' needs in mind. Each unit is sized to fit through a standard doorway and comes equipped with casters, which makes it easy to move without requiring an expensive installation.

Backed by a five-year warranty, this product has proven it can walk the walk, proudly earning the Firehouse Labs Seal of Approval.

Continued from page 11
preventable tragedies like the Great Boston Fire of 1872. That same fire was the impetus for Damrell's formation of the National Association of Fire Engineers; he and his peers chartered the organization to advance the profession of firefighting and consolidate the experience of fire officers from cities across America. Other organizations, such as the National Fire Protection Association, followed.

In the early to mid-20th century, increases in funding further fueled the formalization and expansion of the fire science field. This was a turning point for the discipline. In the United States, federal and state programs were established by entities such as the United States Forest Service, the National Bureau of Standards, the Federal Civil Defense Administration, and others. Such programs and initiatives were not limited to the U.S. Similar programs arose in the U.K. and European countries throughout this time period.

The 1970s saw a further surge of funding and development for the fire science field. The establishment of the U.S. Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Fire Academy, and similar agencies offered new opportunities for and increased awareness of the discipline. With these developments, many colleges and universities began to offer fire science curricula, either as part of other degree programs or as degree programs in their own right.

Now, fire service professionals can find dozens of established fire science programs at respected universities in the U.S. and beyond.

THE CURRENT ROLE OF FIRE DEGREES

Modern fire degrees are a multidisciplinary field that bring together elements of engineering, physics, environmental science, urban planning, sociology, and more. Students can pursue different levels of mastery based on their career needs and goals.

Some students pursue associate-level degrees or complete specific, specialized courses that focus on particular elements or types of fire; others complete full four-year degrees in fire administration. Still, others continue to graduate-level studies, earning a master's in fire executive leadership to develop the skills needed for high-level command, policy, and administrative roles in the fire service. A select few dedicate their entire professional lives to the discipline, going on to teach, lead innovation, as well as conduct applied research with a terminal degree such as CSU's Doctor of Fire Integrated Research. The way you approach higher education is entirely up to you and your specific career plan, whether you're just entering the field or looking to shape its future

The development of online fire programs has been a significant change for the field. These options offer greater flexibility for those looking to get degrees or certifications while actively working. The courses offered by Columbia Southern University, the IAFC's education partner, are great examples of the various forms these online programs can take.

Many firefighters view a degree as useful, though not always essential, for the job. While it's true that much of a firefighter's expertise comes from hands-on experience, a degree in fire can significantly improve that practical knowledge by providing a better understanding of the science behind fire behavior and suppression tactics.

This academic foundation reinforces those skills learned through training and experience. Although a degree may not be required to get hired, it may at some point be required to get promoted to department-level officer positions. Then it becomes a major asset for those who desire to move into higher leadership within the organization.

Earning a degree online is a smart way to build on the experience you've gained on the fireground or emergency scene. An online degree makes it easy to explore the many different elements of the fire service, whether you're interested in fire behavior, leadership, emergency management, or prevention, all while keeping up with your current role and personal life. The flexibility of online learning means you don't have to put your career or family on hold to expand your knowledge and grow in the field. As the fire service continues to evolve, having that academic edge can set you apart and prepare you for leadership opportunities when they arise. Investing in your education now can open doors to your future for many years to come.

Chief Keith Padgett is currently the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Academic Program Director with Columbia Southern University (CSU). Prior to that, he served as the Chief Fire Marshal for the Fulton County Fire-Rescue Department, a metropolitan sized department in Atlanta.

Emily Sinclair Montague is a communications and outreach specialist with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). She is an experienced writer with strong family ties to the fire service and an interest in public safety, professional development, and nonprofit advocacy.

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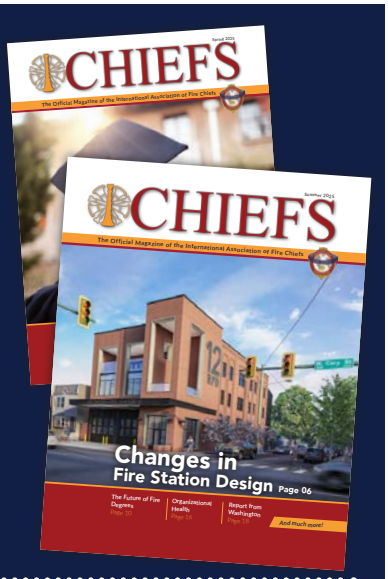

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Organizational Health in the Fire Service:

Jon Nevin, PhD

By Jon Nevin, PhD

An Editorial

When someone enters the fire service, they are joining an institution that will carry them through their professional life. Along that journey, many expectations are placed on them, both technical and those centered on values. Those who have trouble accepting these concepts often have difficulty assimilating into the profession or thriving long-term.

The initial steps along this path are an expectation of selflessness and public service. As the years progress on the job, firefighters are expected to continue to hone their focus on the primary mission — the public's safety and wellbeing. If they choose to become company-level officers, they must accept a new focus of responsibility in addition to the original mission of protecting life, property, and the environment. That new obligation is serving and protecting those subordinates they are charged with supervising. As a company officer, they are responsible for ensuring their crew has the experience, equipment, and oversight to carry out their duties safely and effectively.

Most assume that those two main constructs are where the primary obligations stop. The existential problem with that belief is both caring for a 911 caller and supporting a specific employee are fleeting. Those responsibilities only last as long as the employee or the supervisor works at that agency. The service provided to the community is done in even shorter increments, usually measured in minutes or hours at most.

The lore of the fire service has long been one of danger and risk — for good reason. This has translated into health-focused fire department research and management practices. There has been a prominent paradigm shift in the fire service towards an increased focus on employees. At no time in the modern fire service's history has so much focus been placed on the holistic wellness and physical health of firefighters as it is today.

As one transitions to higher levels of management within the fire service, there needs to be an acceptance of the third level of duty, one that lasts to theoretical perpetuity. This additional duty is the protection and growth of the organization itself, comprehensively referred to as organizational health.

CLARITY AND ALIGNMENT

The term organizational health can include many facets and can be difficult to define, but at its core, it must be about aligning culture, strategy, management, and operations, explains Patrick Lencioni in his book *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else In Business*. Lencioni further discusses how a dominant feature of organizational health must be clarity. If *any* portion of the organization is not clear about the integrity of its actions and missions, overall clarity doesn't exist. When decisions are being made that impact public service or firefighter wellness, clarity must be prioritized to develop a solution that also supports organizational health.

While formal fire service leadership training has been relatively stagnant until the last decade, the new attention given to servant leadership coincides with strengthening organizational health. Servant leadership focuses on developing *individuals* so that the *organization* can become more productive and improve. Further, servant leadership is seen as well-suited for application within the paramilitary profession of the fire service, and it is particularly well-suited for the union-dominated labor-management environment of the fire service.

That protecting and providing for fire service employees and taking care of the community should be priorities is not in question. However, if the agency isn't guided toward strength and health along the way, there may not be an available conduit in the future to be successful with the provision of the first two responsibilities. Unlike employees, the agency as an entity lives on in permanence. If individual leaders' decisions are made without assessing for risk to the agency, such as a lack of a safe and health-focused culture or short-sighted fiscal decisions, the impacts can be devastating.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP LESSONS

Defying a long-living mantra in corporate finance that delivering shareholder wealth is above all else in business, Herb Kelleher, the founder of Southwest Airlines, famously promoted the idea that if employees are put first (by management), the rest of the main concerns (shareholder wealth and customer satisfaction) will succeed. This trailblazing strategy has lived on through the decades, but proponents often overlook the fact that Kelleher also made incredibly strong long-term decisions focused on the organization's health as a collective entity that exists beyond its status as a group of individual employees.

Examples of these organization-benefitting decisions include creating an operational culture centered on speed and efficiency (Southwest Airlines long had the fastest aircraft turnaround times in the industry), choosing a single airplane type for scale and efficiency, and focusing on point-to-point flying instead of the entrenched hub and spoke models. These decisions were made to set the organization up for long-term success, all while he made sure that his employees (and by proxy, the customers and shareholders) also came first.

Often overlooked is that support of the organization is not a one-way action. Organizations that support long-term strength in their culture and decision-making consistently outperform in a wide array of metrics, and the importance of organizational health transcends industries. Lencioni states, "The single greatest advantage any company can achieve is organizational health. Yet it is ignored by most leaders even though it is simple, free, and available to anyone who wants it."

It is the alignment of agency forces (culture, strategy, management, and operations) that supports long-term organizational health. Organizational health is a construct that can counterbalance decision-making processes that focus on service and employees. Any major decision should enhance fire service employees and the public while still promoting the overall health of the organization.

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Get Ready for a Busy Summer!

Ken LaSala, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy

Accomplishments and More Work to Do

Representative Bill Pascrell, Jr. was one of Congress' strongest champions ever for the fire and emergency service, rightly recognized as the father of the AFG and SAFER grant programs.

It has already been a busy year. After his inauguration, President Trump got to work with a number of executive orders, while Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) began a full-scale evaluation of federal programs resulting in mass federal layoffs. The 119th Congress set the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 appropriations and began working on massive legislation to extend President Turmp's 2017 tax cuts and strengthen border security. It also made progress on some important fire service legislation.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

The Trump Administration has been in constant activity. Under the DOGE's influence, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) began a manual review of all grant payments, which delayed payments under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs. These delays were lifted. In-person training at the National Fire Academy (NFA), which had been halted, resumed as of June 2. Staff at the federal Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP) and World Trade Center Health Program were laid off and subsequently restored to their positions. The National Firefighter Registry for Cancer also went offline for approximately a month before being restored.

Meanwhile, President Trump issued executive orders that will affect the fire and emergency service. On January 24, President Trump issued his Executive Order 14180, *Council to Assess the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)*. The order created a council to conduct a "full-scale" review of FEMA. The council would have no more than 20 members and be chaired by the Secretaries of Defense and Homeland Security. The council held its first meeting on May 20. The council is directed to submit its final report 180 days after the council's first public meeting.

Furthermore, on March 18, President Trump issued Executive Order 14239, *Achieving Efficiency Through State and Local Preparedness*. This order revises the whole Homeland Security framework. It requires the development of a National Resilience Strategy within 90 days. It also develops a National Critical Infrastructure Policy, which shifts the focus from "all-hazards response" to "risk-based response." The Administration will develop a National Risk Register within 240 days. In addition, the Trump Administration will revise the founding documents and other national preparedness and response policies of the Homeland Security framework (HSPD-5, PPD-8) within 240 days. Within one year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is tasked with revising the Emergency Support Functions and other FEMA policies.

Chief Josh Waldo, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) President and Board Chair, created an IAFC DHS/FEMA Reform Task Force to review and provide recommendations to these White House efforts. The ten-person task force is chaired by Chief Jim Schwartz (Ret.), the former fire chief of the Arlington County (VA) Fire Department and former chair of the IAFC Terrorism and Homeland

Security Committee. We will have more information as the task force continues its work.

THE FY 2025 APPROPRIATIONS

In the early part of the year, Congress was focused on keeping the federal government from shutting down. It finally passed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Full Year Appropriations and Extensions Act (P.L. 119-4), which President Trump signed on March 15. (The fiscal year started on October 1, 2024.) Overall, the law was a continuing resolution extending many of the funding levels from FY 2024, including cuts to the AFG, SAFER, and other grant programs.

Figure 1 shows the FY 2025 funding levels for fire service programs.

President Trump released his FY 2026 budget on May 2. It proposes an unspecified cut of $646 million to FEMA's grant programs but seems to eliminate the Targeting Violence and Terrorism Prevention and unauthorized programs like the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium. It also would consolidate and unify Federal wildland fire responsibilities into a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service at the Department of the Interior. In addition, programs like the State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance may be eliminated. The IAFC is working to protect federal fire and EMS programs, while Congress considers the President's FY 2026 budget request.

The House has also begun work on the FY 2026 appropriations bills. The IAFC will continue to monitor the process and keep members informed as details emerge, such as through the weekly Washington Update.

Figure 1: FY 2025 Funding Levels (in Millions ($))

Program	FY 2023 (Enacted)	FY 2024 (Enacted)	FY 2025 (President's Request)	FY 2025 (Enacted)
AFG	360	324	385	324
SAFER	360_	324	385	324
USFA	60	71.2251	78.6142	71.2251
UASI	615	553.5	531	553.5
SHSGP	520	468	421	468
US&R	37.832	40.832	37.832	40.832

1. This amount includes $10 million for the development of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) program and $1.25 million for information technology upgrades at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in the Procurement, Construction, and Improvements (PC&I) account.
2. The USFA base request was $65.114. This amount includes $2 million in the PC&I account for the NERIS program and $11.5 million for upgrades at the NETC.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

In addition, Congress began work on legislation, the Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), to extend President Trump's tax cuts and increase resources for securing the border. The bill passed the House before Memorial Day. The bill made changes to Medicaid eligibility but does not seem to have made any changes that would affect states' Ground Emergency Medical Transportation (GEMT) programs. It also would eliminate the income tax on overtime through 2028. There is a $150,000 cap on this provision. The House bill did not include legislation to create tax incentives for residential building owners to retrofit their buildings with automatic fire sprinklers. So, the IAFC is looking to add this legislation in the Senate.

The House and Senate also made progress in passing legislation to improve the safety of e-bikes and other micromobility devices that use lithium-ion batteries. On April 28, the House passed the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act (H.R. 973). The bill would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to set safety standards for these devices. The Senate companion bill (S. 389) was passed out of committee, and it is exactly the same as H.R. 973. So, the IAFC is asking the Senate to just pass H.R. 973 and send it to President Trump to sign into law.

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted to pass the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act (S. 237) on May 20. The bill would grant eligibility for the PSOB program to the families of public safety officers that die or are disabled from cancer due to job-related exposures. The bill is ready for passage on the Senate Floor, but, so far, there has been no action on the House companion bill (H.R. 1269). The IAFC is urging the Senate to pass S. 237.

In addition, the House and Senate are working on major legislation to address the wildland fire problem. The House passed the Fix Our Forests Act (H.R. 471) on January 23. The IAFC endorsed the Senate companion bill (S. 1462). The bill would make it easier for communities to use prescribed fire to remove hazardous fuels. It also would create an interagency Community Wildfire Risk Reduction program and Wildfire Intelligence Center to provide better data and policymaking resources to help address the threat of wildland fires. We expect action on this legislation over the summer.

As you can see, there is a lot happening here in Washington. The IAFC produces a weekly Washington Update to keep fire chiefs informed on how developments in Washington may affect them. In addition, IAFC members can use the IAFC's Legislative Action Center to engage with their Senators and Representatives on major fire service legislation. Now is the time to act to protect federal fire and EMS grants and programs!

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

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A New Era

After more than 150 years as an organization, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is more than familiar with change. Anyone who's been working in our field during the last few decades will be familiar with it, too. Change is one of the defining characteristics of this era of fire service history, and one gets the sense that it's continuing to accelerate with each passing year.

At the same time, it's easy to lose sight of changing processes while living out our day-to-day routines. In the fire service, we are challenged with balancing reliable tradition — the principle of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" — and continuous innovation. Both are necessary for those of us in the business of saving life and property. Both can be double-edged swords.

Over-reliance on tradition can mean missing out on changes that improve outcomes; change without proper consideration can cost a department and a community dearly. One can easily undercut the other if approached with the wrong mindset. So, how do great leaders approach this "paradox of change?" This question is at the heart of everything the IAFC does.

Answering it has been and continues to be a long-term collaborative process that includes the voices of every member, partner, and supporter we have. As an organization, we are often asked to be both the voice of caution and the champions of innovation at the same time. That means we must occupy a balanced role that honors our members' past experiences while giving new, potentially better methods of doing our work the chance to be tested and potentially adopted.

The sometimes uncomfortable truth is this is an imperfect process that, by nature, involves mistakes, lessons, and the need for honesty regardless of how it might be received in the moment. This part of our work doesn't detract from it; on the contrary, it's at the core of our integrity as an association dedicated to the genuine, long-term improvement of the fire service. And when the process grants us great success, the difficulties faced on the road that led us there only deepen the good that our collective work accomplishes.

The IAFC has itself faced many challenges over the past few years. The COVID-19 pandemic may seem distant to us now, but its impacts linger and have at times compounded other newer challenges we have encountered since that era ended. And yet, from those challenges we have learned a great deal, been given the opportunity to welcome new faces to our organization, and have been reminded of our own resilience as an entity whose legacy reaches down into the very deepest roots of fire service history.

As we approach the 2025 Fire-Rescue International conference, my colleagues and I have spent time reflecting on all that you, our members, have taught us about this ever-evolving association and its continued mission. As you see in the articles included in this edition of *iCHIEFS*, the twin concepts of change and balance are central to those reflections. I hope you will continue to teach and learn with us as we enter a new era of IAFC history together. Your voices matter more than ever.

Rob Brown
IAFC Chief Executive Officer &
Executive Director

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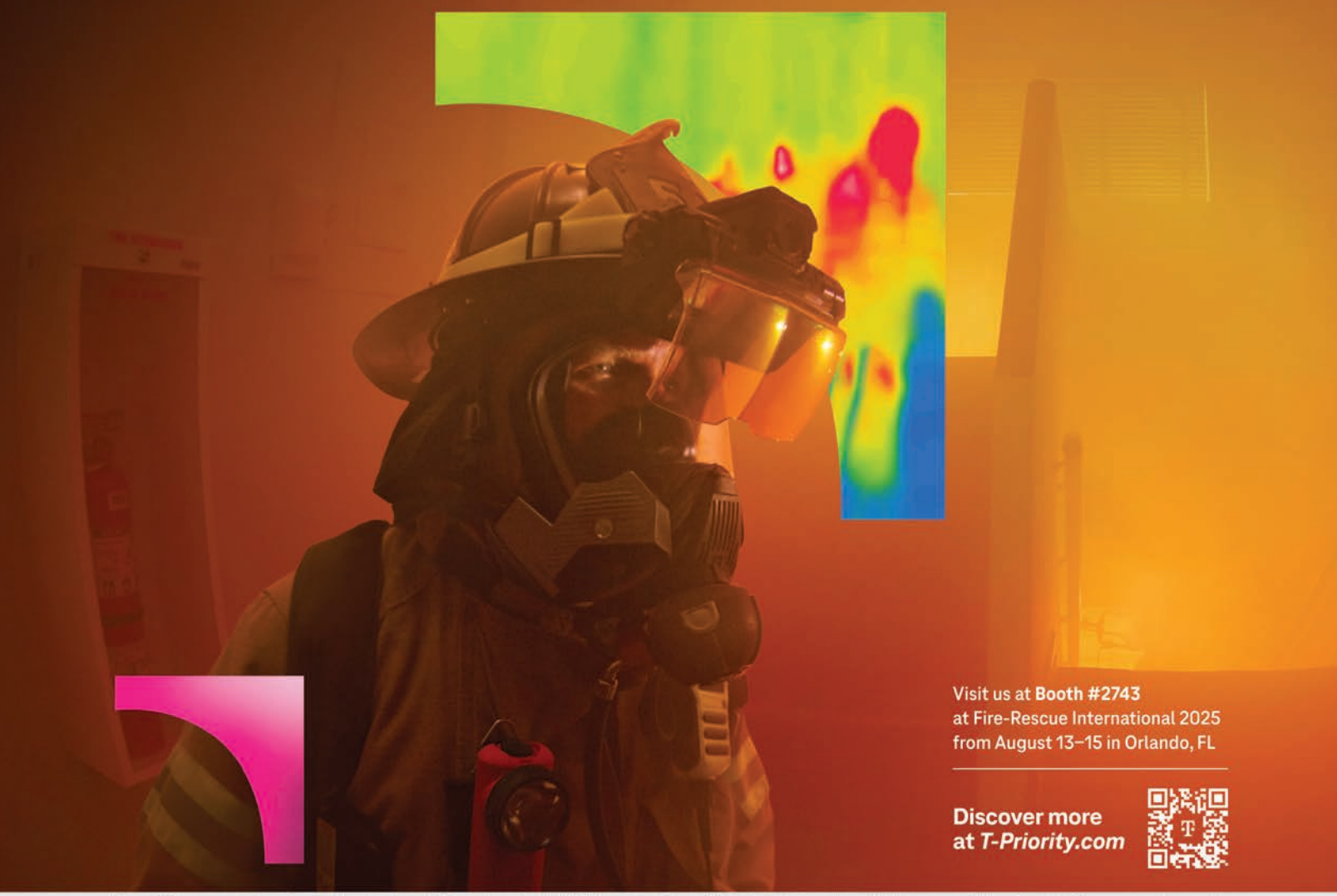

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