



International Association of Fire Chiefs

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IAFC Members, Partners and FRI Attendees:

The impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected all of our lives. Early on, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) began monitoring the potential impact of COVID-19 on our conferences and other educational meetings. In March, we were forced to cancel our signature Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) conference in Reno, NV. In May, we had to make the decision to cancel our highly successful Hazardous Materials Conference scheduled for earlier this month in Baltimore, MD.

As we were all looking forward to getting together for Fire-Rescue International (FRI) in mid-August, the IAFC Board and IAFC staff have been closely monitoring the status of COVID-19 in Phoenix, AZ. In doing so, staff has been in constant contact with Phoenix city officials. Late last week, city officials were still unable to advise when the restriction of 150 people or less would be lifted on mass gathering events. In addition, Arizona has recently emerged as a COVID-19 “hot spot”. Since May 1, the number of reported COVID-19 cases in that area has surged by approximately 300 percent.

Many contend that the number of cases can be related to increased COVID-19 Testing. However, the metric used by the IAFC to determine the risk is the hospitalization rate of COVID-19 patients. That being the case, we have been tracking the upsurge in emergency department visits for patients with suspected and confirmed positive cases of COVID-19, which reportedly set a record on Sunday. Yesterday, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) reported that intensive care beds were at 80 percent capacity and that the state could run out of beds in July.

Facing these challenges, the IAFC Board has made the difficult decision, *acting out of an abundance of caution for safety and health of our attendees, exhibitors, customers and staff above all else*, to cancel Fire-Rescue International (FRI) 2020 that was scheduled to take place August 19-25 in Phoenix, AZ.

We are all disappointed by this cancellation. Not only were many of us looking forward to connecting, but Phoenix is a beautiful vibrant city all of us were certainly looking forward to

visiting. The City of Phoenix staff, the Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau and Convention Center staff, and most certainly Phoenix Fire Chief Kara Kalkbrenner and the staff of the Phoenix Fire Department have worked hard to prepare for FRI 2020. I can only imagine how disappointing this decision is for all of them.

A virtual FRI format will be announced on July 7, 2020, scheduled to take place over the week of August 19. Our plan for the virtual FRI format will be to offer our members and attendees the opportunity to:

- Connect with fire service thought leaders.
- Offer the same quality classes and seminars on best practices in emergency services.
- Connect with GEM partners and other leading fire and emergency services vendors.
- Learn more about emerging technologies, products and best practices.
- Attend (virtually) COVID-19 specific programming to showcase preparedness, response and recovery best practices and “lessons learned”, with a special focus on products and technologies that offer COVID-19 prevention, protection and mitigation solutions to help us adapt to the challenges we face as we operate in this new environment.
- Ensure that we can conduct the annual business of the IAFC and install our new officers.

As part of this virtual effort, staff will be working with the IAFC Divisions, Sections and Committees to facilitate virtual meetings and “private” access rooms to conduct member-only and/or executive sessions, on-site elections and other business activities where access must be restricted.

Sharing the news with you today of our decision to cancel FRI 2020 in Phoenix, AZ is difficult. But FRI is not completely gone in 2020. On July 7, much like the city’s namesake of the Greek mythological *Phoenix* that gains new life by arising from the ashes -- FRI, too, will arise from the ashes in the form of an informative and exciting virtual FRI event.

We look forward to “connecting” with you soon!

Sincerely,



Chief Gary Ludwig
President and Chairman of the Board