



# Position Statement

## **PASS Devices and NIOSH Firefighter Fatality Investigations**

**PASS standards are being upgraded.** The NFPA has increased durability requirements for new PASS devices. The new edition of NFPA 1982 is due to be released within days. Applicable manufacturers will have six months to comply when producing the new PASS devices. The new changes include more rigorous testing in areas of shock, water infiltration, vibration and heat. The NFPA also added a muffle test, which means if a firefighter is unable to move, unconscious or trapped and they are covering or on top of their PASS device, it still must be heard. These are all very positive improvements.

**What about existing PASS devices and upgrades?** We strongly encourage all manufacturers to offer a cost-effective modification/upgrade option to existing integrated PASS/SCBA units in use currently. Within the last few years, thousands of departments have received new SCBAs with integrated PASS devices. A cost-effective modification should be offered with a focus on firefighter safety and survival, as well as customer service, to bring all current PASS devices up to the new standard.

**The NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program and the IAFC:** The IAFC will work in partnership with the IAFF and the NFPA along with other fire-service organizations to immediately start the process of identifying funding issues and needs related to NIOSH's Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program. The IAFC president has directed the IAFC Safety, Health and Survival Section to develop a set of recommendations regarding changes to the existing program and report back to the board at its April 2007 meeting. This should include defining what the NIOSH program is now and what the IAFC thinks it should be.

The IAFC strongly supports the concept of increased fire-service involvement in the investigation of firefighter fatalities, to include:

1. Faster and more comprehensive response to firefighter fatality incidents.
2. More fire-service expertise at the response, investigation, review and report levels.
3. Increased and more clearly defined authority for NIOSH and this program.
4. Evaluating the value of objective, factual and rapid-fire service-wide notification of potential firefighter equipment safety concerns. This could include a new system that identifies serious equipment concerns outside of firefighter fatalities.

5. Development of one collection point for data related to firefighter deaths, injuries and equipment failures or malfunctions.

**IAFC support statement of the current NIOSH system and the high priority of future firefighter fatality investigations.**

The NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program is a major improvement over what the fire service has had in the past, and the program has led to countless improvements and firefighter lives being saved.

There is also a great opportunity for improvement, especially in mission scope and resources to support the mission. Our goal is to support major improvements as noted above that clarify the expectations and outcomes of the program and better define what the fire service needs an investigation program to do. We also understand that if the fire service wants a program to be more comprehensive, local governments and local fire departments will have to accept a greater level of federal oversight than they may be comfortable with currently. We are confident that firefighters and fire chiefs support this need for improvement. It should also be noted that the investigation of firefighter fatalities after the fact should not be a substitute for aggressive prevention and leadership efforts to prevent fatalities from occurring.

Adopted by: **IAFC Board of Directors**

Date of Adoption: **8 February 2007**