EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S RAMBLINGS

Reducing firefighter injuries and deaths is in the psyche of every fire service responder and in the mission and goals of every fire department and fire service organization. We develop standards, training materials, academies, courses, SOP/Gs, and in-service training exercises that ultimately have injury and fatality reduction as one of their cornerstone goals. These are all good things, and they do assist in this goal.

Fire prevention and life safety is often overlooked in the goal of firefighter injury and death reduction, yet it is a very simple concept. A fire that is prevented is one less chance for a firefighter to become a statistic. An evacuated home is one less time that firefighters need to take extraordinary risks to search for and remove trapped occupants. It took many years of working here at IFSTA/FPP for me to realize that conclusion. But if you have the privilege of hanging around FPP Assistant Director Nancy Trench and all of her friends as I have, the image becomes crystal clear.

Fire prevention and life safety needs to be about more than one week each year in October. Fire prevention must be a 24/7/365 priority and effort. Our lives and the lives of the people that we serve are depending on it. Think about that.

Fire prevention and life safety is a core value of the IFSTA/FPP organization. We were first and remain the only publisher of a book for fire and life safety educators that meets the requirements of NFPA® 1035, Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer, and Juvenile Firesetter Intervention. In recent years, led by Nancy, we have done substantial research in the areas of educating children on the hazards of fire, implementing smoke detector installation programs in high-risk areas, and alerting people with disabilities to fires in their homes. We can identify more than a dozen incidents where detectors that our staff or people that we trained have installed alerted occupants to fires before there was significant damage or injuries to the occupants. This is also more than a dozen times firefighters’ lives were not put in jeopardy.

Back to Nancy. She is a pioneer in the fire prevention and life safety profession, and we are blessed to have her here at IFSTA/FPP. Among her many accomplishments was being recognized with the Dr. Anne W. Phillips Award for Fire Safety Education by the Congressional Fire Services Institute in 2008. See fire and safety resources at http://info.ifsta.org/research-menu/fire-a-life-safety-research.

Lastly, as a completely unrelated reminder, all IFSTA and several FPP manuals are now available in eBook format. For more information, go to https://shop.ifsta.org/index.php/cPath/109.

Slow down and keep all the wheels on the road!

Mike Wieder
Associate Director, FPP
Executive Director, IFSTA
IFSTA Holds 81st Annual Validation Conference

The International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) held its 81st Annual Validation Conference from July 12 to 15 at the Renaissance Tulsa Hotel and Conference Center in Tulsa, OK. Approximately 120 people were in attendance at the event.

Conference activities included the International Fire Service Journal of Leadership and Management’s 10th Annual Research Symposium, a meeting of the IFSTA Executive Board, the opening ceremony, and active committee validation meetings. There were five committees working on new editions of IFSTA manuals meeting at the conference. Those committees included:

- Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting
- Fire Detection and Suppression Systems
- Hazardous Materials
- Orientation and Terminology
- Safety Officer

Oklahoma State University Professor Emeritus Dr. Robert England was awarded the 2014 Marvin Austin Distinguished Leadership Award for outstanding contributions to the IFSTA Validation Conference at the opening ceremony. Dr. England was recognized for his founding of the International Fire Service Journal of Leadership and Management and his leadership of the associated symposium that has become an important part of the IFSTA Validation Conference.

IFSTA will hold its Interim Winter Meetings in January 2015.
Install the alarms:
“Giving away” smoke alarms is not effective and does not result in alarms actually being installed in homes. No one is more fire safe if you just hand out smoke alarms.

One is not enough:
Fire is fast! Fire is VERY fast today. After the smoke alarm alerts, the estimated time to escape is 3 minutes or less. More alarms mean quicker alerting and more time to escape.

Install plenty of alarms:
Install smoke alarms inside every bedroom, in the hall outside each sleeping area, and on every level of a home. A three-bedroom, single-story home needs at least four alarms. Add a basement and a second floor to this same home and it will need at least two additional alarms.

Install dual sensor smoke alarms:
Or install some of both types, photoelectric alarms and ionization alarms, in each home.

Prevent nuisance alarms:
Install only photoelectric smoke alarms within 20 feet of the kitchen.

Install alarms with long life batteries:
Some projects prefer installing alarms that have a long life battery sealed inside to prevent its removal.

Plan the family fire drill:
People must know how to escape their home when the smoke alarm alerts. Help plan and practice the family fire escape.

Who will wake children?
Children do not wake up to the sound of a smoke alarm. The escape plan must include who will wake and help children escape.

Install bedside alert devices:
People who are deaf and people who are hard of hearing need an alert device to awake them. Check for the UL or ETL listing.

Regular testing:
Manufacturers recommend weekly testing by pushing the test button on the smoke alarm.

Replace old alarms:
Smoke alarms are fully functional for 10 years. Replace alarms that are more than 10 years old.

Know best practice:
Read the National Fire Alarm Code, NFPA® 72, 2013 Edition, Chapter 29. It is only a few pages and FREE to read online at NFPA.org.

Target high-risk homes:
Too many homes do not have working smoke alarms. Begin a smoke alarm installation project in an area where there has been a home fire death, or where you respond most frequently. People who smoke and people who live in poverty are at greater risk for home fire deaths. Mobile home fires are deadly. Those homes need smoke alarms and could be the community priority.

Mobile homes:
Install smoke alarms on inside walls only - not on the ceiling or on outside walls. Some mobile homes do not have enough insulation to protect the alarms from high and low temperatures.

DO NOT install smoke alarms:
In kitchens, bathrooms, garages, porches, or unfinished attics. Do not install them near air vents, ceiling fans, or where drafts could divert smoke from reaching the smoke alarm.

Avoid dead air spaces:
When installing on the wall, place at least 4” from the ceiling, but no more than 12” down. On the ceiling install at least 4” from the wall avoiding the corner dead air space.

REMEMBER:
Smoke alarms save lives because they alert people to a fire. Smoke alarms are on duty detecting smoke 24/7. Deadly home fires occur while people are sleeping, so the primary emphasis is:
Smoke alarms need to intercept smoke from a fire before the smoke reaches sleeping people.
The smoke alarm must wake people. The standard smoke alarm sound does not wake some people. They need to be alerted with a low frequency sound and a bed shaker (tactile alert).

About the Author:
Nancy Trench has managed smoke alarm installation projects for more than 10 years. She makes it a priority to stay up to date on all matters concerning smoke alarms and alert devices for homes. If you have questions you can reach her at ntrench@osufpp.org.
Due to a national shift in terminology, the term Youth Firesetting Intervention has replaced Juvenile Firesetter Intervention. This change more accurately describes the action instead of placing a label on an individual.

Gone is the day when a parent brought a child into the fire station to have the Chief or Company Officer instill fear or scold the child for setting a fire. We know that youth firesetting is often a cry for help to a larger crisis in the child’s life (such as abuse, neglect, bullying, or death of a pet or family member). Youth firesetting is not a fire department problem but a community problem, and we need to seek partners from the community to be a part of a multi-disciplinary team to provide the juvenile and family with the appropriate services.

A successful youth firesetting intervention program must start with an identification and intake process. There are multiple ways that juveniles involved in fire incidents come to the attention of a youth firesetting prevention and intervention program, including parents and caregivers, schools, law enforcement, juvenile justice, courts and attorneys, mental health agencies, social and child protective services, and the fire service.

Once the juvenile has been identified, the pathway to intervention depends on a number of factors:

1. **Immediate referral**: Mandates may require immediate referral to the local justice system if there is a violation of local, state, or federal law.

2. **The age of the juvenile**: This is known as the age of accountability (when children can understand right from wrong). The age can vary from state to state.

3. **The nature and severity of the fire**: Those youths who commit firesetting acts that result in large dollar loss and/or loss of life may be referred to the juvenile justice system before any firesetting intervention takes place.

4. **The firesetting history of the juvenile**: Many youth firesetting prevention and intervention programs have strict guidelines on disposition of first-time firesetting versus repeat firesetting.

5. **Standard operating procedures (SOPs) or standard operating guidelines (SOGs)**: It is essential that all personnel who have the potential to interact with a youth and his/her family have a basic understanding of SOPs or SOGs of the youth firesetting prevention and intervention program. This is most important when dealing with walk-in requests for services at a fire station. SOPs and SOGs will help ensure that rapid and reliable assistance is provided to all families in need of program services.

In order to determine the juvenile’s level of risk for recidivism, the next process includes conducting a comprehensive screening or interview with the juvenile and his/her family. A new 6-step screening method for juveniles involved in firesetting is called **IRONIC**.

The **IRONIC** method was adopted from public information provided by Lt. Paul Zipper, Ph.D., of the Massachusetts State Police and is taught in the youth firesetting prevention and intervention classes at the National Fire Academy.

**IRONIC stands for:** Introduction, Rapport, Opening Statement, Narrative, Inquiry, and Conclusion.

**Introduction** - The person or people conducting the screening introduce themselves before the process begins.

**Rapport** - This critical phase begins immediately on contact with the interviewee and continues throughout the interview. Start with small talk. Find out if the youth has a favorite sport, pet, or hobby. You also build rapport by being on time, prepared, and respectful if the interview is in the youth’s home.

**Opening Statement** - This step informs the youth the reason for the screening. Be direct by saying something like “I am here today because of the fire next door to your house.”

**Narrative** - This step allows the youth the opportunity to provide a full account of what happened. Allowing the youth to describe the incident provides a wealth of information to the intervention specialist. He/she should closely analyze the youth’s words. If possible, the narrative should be recorded and transcribed. This narrative of the incident should not be contaminated with leading questions. Follow-up questions may be asked to determine the following: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

**Inquiry** - This step serves to document the answers to specific questions asked of the interviewee. Using an approved screening form, the intervention specialist should ask the questions listed on the form and document the answers.

**Conclusion** - This is the wrap-up of the screening. The intervention specialist should thank the youth and parents/caregiver(s) for their time and ask if they will be available for a second screening, if necessary. They also should provide the family with information on how to maintain contact with the program.

We have a duty to constantly remind parents and caregivers of their responsibility in fire safety. They need to know the following four common factors that influence firesetting:

1. **Easy access to ignition materials**: Secure lighters and matches from children.

2. **Lack of supervision**: Parents are often shocked to learn their child was engaged in firesetting over a prolonged period of time.

3. **Failure to practice fire safety**: Young children, teens, and parents often lack understanding of the dangers associated with firesetting and safety rules about fire. Have clear rules rather than relying on vague threats or warnings.

4. **Easy access to information on the internet**: Technology has made explicit media available to juveniles about many dangerous and often illegal, negative risk-taking activities for them to replicate (such as #FireChallenge and building chemical reaction pressure devices).

Parents or caregivers often feel they are the only ones to ever face the problem of firesetting or other negative risk-taking behavior by their child. Fire departments and communities must have measures in place and personnel trained to handle inquires and incidents before they occur.

The National Fire Academy offers professional development training delivered in a 2-day or 6-day format called Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention. More information may be found at www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa.
The International Fire Service Journal of Leadership and Management (IFSJLM) and its annual Research Symposium marked their 10th anniversary at the 2014 IFSTA Validation Conference held in Tulsa, OK on July 12. Both the journal and the research event are sponsored by IFSTA and Fire Protection Publications (FPP) at Oklahoma State University.

The symposium attendees were welcomed to the event by Dr. Robert England, Founding Editor of the IFSJLM. Dr. England talked about the significance of the 10th anniversary and the unique role that the journal and symposium have in the fire service. The IFSJLM is the only peer-reviewed academic fire journal of its type in the world. Dr. England also presented the first IFSJLM Legacy Award to former FPP Director Chris Neal for his role in helping Dr. England establish the journal and event. Dr. England later also received a Legacy Award from IFSTA Executive Director Mike Wieder at the opening ceremony of the IFSTA Validation Conference.

Dr. England also introduced Chief Dennis Compton as the 2014 Recipient of the Dr. John Granito Award for Excellence in Fire Leadership and Management Research. The award was presented by Dr. John Granito, Professor Emeritus and Retired Vice President for Public Service and External Affairs at the State University of New York at Binghamton and Public Safety Consultant. Following the presentation of the award, Chief Compton delivered the symposium’s keynote address entitled, “Do Current Fire Service Issues Offer Political and Operational Leadership Challenges?”

An impressive slate of other fire service leaders also made presentations at the symposium. A summary of these included:

“Constrained Leadership: The Conditions Facing Today’s Fire Chiefs” by Dr. John Granito

“The Future of the Fire and Emergency Services: The Next 35 Years” by Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent, National Fire Academy

“Integrated Community Healthcare: A Paradigm Shift for the Fire Service” by Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, Assistant to the General President of the International Association of Fire Fighters

“Firefighting Research: The Federally Funded Renaissance” by Daniel Madrzykowski, Fire Protection Engineer, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

“Communication and Emergencies: New Reflections on an Old Challenge” Dr. Anne Eyre, Trauma Training Consultant, Coventry, United Kingdom

For more information on the IFSJLM, go to http://www.ifsjlm.org/
Don’t Forget Fires Still Happen

By Tom Jenkins, Fire Chief, Rogers Arkansas

The evolution of today’s fire service has caused a dynamic shift in our most frequently addressed risk. Our title is a misnomer – a holdover from a generation of public servants who just suppressed and extinguished fire. Firefighters today are healthcare providers, informal engineers, and servants of the highest caliber. The national statistics supporting this evolution in our industry are shocking. Medical incidents are climbing, fires are less frequent year-to-year, and overall our departments are busier than ever. Couple these facts with the attention focused on the Affordable Care Act and the “all-hazards” nature of our job, and it’s easy to comprehend why it feels like fire suppression and fire safety don’t seem to have the emphasis that they once did.

Risk is the probability of something bad occurring multiplied by the severity of the incident. Fires are risky situations that have the potential to take the lives of civilians and firefighters alike, all the while consuming property. Fires are the most frequent “risky” thing that we do. I think, as an industry, we’ve found ourselves in the habit of dismissing fire because we do it less frequently than other things. However, we, as fire service leaders, should be quick to remind our colleagues that fire is still a threat to all communities and fire fatalities are far from extinct. Unfortunately, they’re alive and well.

Fire prevention isn’t the responsibility of the Fire Marshal’s Office in your department. It isn’t the Fire Chief’s job, either. Fire prevention must be something embedded into the culture of the entire organization. All that our employees can ever provide to the citizens they serve is their time. We’re often criticized by people outside of our profession with what we do with our precious time. However, let’s take an internal look and see if we can do better.

- What is your department doing with its idle time?
- Are the members of your department experts at identifying reasons why they “can’t” install any more smoke detectors in their first-due areas?
- Do the supervisors in the field feel that they’re too busy with training to adequately and effectively conduct public education talks to the children of your community?

I fear that we have an epidemic of providing lip service to the mission of fire prevention and public education instead of actual service. The good news is that it only takes one good leader to make a difference. As an example, a captain at one of our slower stations decided to take the initiative to install a few smoke detectors each shift. This effort created a “pied piper” effect on the other two shifts at that station. Soon, this station had installed more detectors than the entire department installed in the previous year. Additionally, they had run out of their station’s allotment of detectors. Soon, this prevention “epidemic” spread to all seven stations. Before long, one shift had helped the department install six times the smoke detectors it previously had, and it all happened because one company officer decided to do something different with his time.

As Fire Prevention Week draws near, let’s make sure we are true advocates of safety and prevention. Let’s face it, we have the time.
Helping Policymakers Better Understand Fire Department Service Outcomes

By Chief Dennis Compton

In 2013, I conducted a survey to identify what some metropolitan fire chiefs from across the country believed to be the most critical issues facing their local fire departments and the national fire and emergency services over the next two or three years. This article is intended to provide some tools and information that might help fire departments address some of the issues that those chiefs identified as well as others.

Two Critical Issues

Two of the issues identified by the fire chiefs surveyed dealt directly with communicating effectively with elected officials and other policymakers:

1. “Educate the people who fund us and the general public about the complete role of the fire department and firefighters.”
2. “The fire service should rebuild service delivery capability in a methodical way using science, not history, while showing that the fire service is evolving and learning in an effort to better serve our communities. The reputation and relevance of the fire service must be maintained.”

The Phoenix, (AZ), Fire Department has a rich history of innovative leadership within the fire and emergency services community, and the department is once again displaying this in a way that relates directly to the two issues that the fire chiefs identified above. Their approach could well be “cutting edge” when it comes to identifying and communicating the economic value of the fire department within society.

Impact on Lives and the Economy

In February 2014, the L. William Seidman Research Institute at the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University (ASU), along with Underwriters Laboratories (UL), partnered with the Phoenix Fire Department to produce the results of a study they conducted together between June 1, 2012 and May 31, 2013 to measure the economic impact of commercial fire responses in the fire service. Realizing that saving lives comes first for any fire department, the study’s basic purpose was to measure the economic value and the return on investment (ROI) the entire community receives from the services provided by its fire department. For purposes of the initial study, the researchers focused solely on 42 separate commercial structure fires that had occurred in Phoenix during the established timeframe. These structures were all burning beyond the incipient stage and required extinguishment by fire crews. The study makes use of an Arizona-specific version of the Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) forecasting model (updated at the Seidman Research Institute) to produce economic estimates of commercial businesses and organizations in Phoenix, Maricopa County, and Arizona as a whole.

The findings of this study should get the attention of all fire and emergency services leaders from labor and management, as well as elected officials and other policymakers. Based on this study, had the fire department not successfully intervened in these 42 separate fire incidents, the following economic impacts could have resulted:

- Upwards of 7,000 non-farm jobs could have been lost in the city, county, and state combined.
- The gross state product could have been lowered by more than $600 million and the real state disposable personal income lowered by about $290 million.
- Arizona state tax revenues could have fallen by about $35 million.

According to the study conclusions, “the results clearly indicate that the Phoenix Fire Department exerted a significant impact on the local, county, and state economies over the 12-month study period by successfully extinguishing these fires.”

Do these efforts suggest that we should abandon the collection and use of current data for measuring the success of a fire department service delivery system? No, and that is not the point of the work being done in Phoenix. What the study does suggest is that there are previously uncharted ways of measuring the value and ROI of a fire department. The study also indicates that these methods could be more fully explored and used to more effectively communicate outcomes to elected officials and other policymakers who determine the levels of resources that will be invested in their fire departments.

Next Steps

During a Phoenix Fire Department Labor/Management Retreat conducted in May, it was jointly agreed to move more aggressively down the path this research is guiding them. Officials will work with their partners towards expanding the use of the model to more commercial fires, include residential fires, and explore the application of this methodology to EMS as well. They are excited about the benefits of expanding the research and cultivating this data, as well as the many uses it might have in the administrative, management, and political processes within which they are engaged.

It will be interesting to see how other fire departments react to this “different” way of measuring outcomes, effectiveness, and impact. I was recently informed of a fire department in North Carolina that became aware of this study and is going through the process of designing and implementing a similar process in its organization. As you may know, the fire and emergency services community is engaged in research efforts to identify and implement better data management elements and systems than what are now in place. Remember what the fire chiefs said in the recent survey where they communicated their most critical fire service issues. Two of the issues they identified relate directly to the research conducted in this study:

1. “Educate the people who fund us and the general public about the complete role of the fire department and firefighters.”
2. “The fire service should rebuild service delivery capability in a methodical way using science, not history, while showing that the fire service is evolving and learning in an effort to better serve our communities. The reputation and relevance of the fire service must be maintained.”

If you want to learn more about what the partnership formed in Phoenix is doing within this program, you can contact Deputy Chief Jeff Case at jeff.s.case@phoenix.gov. He will be more than willing to share this experience and information. This work being done by the Arizona State University Seidman Institute, the Phoenix Fire Department, and UL has real potential. It is worth a closer look by the major national fire service membership organizations, fire chiefs, and union leaders. After all, they might be on to something useful…and what a shame if the rest of the fire service were not made aware of it.

About the Author:

Chief Dennis Compton is a well-known speaker and the author of several books including his most recent offering titled Progressive Leadership Principles, Concepts, and Tools. He has also authored the three-part series of books titled When in Doubt, Lead, the book Mental Aspects of Performance for Firefighters and Fire Officers, as well as many articles, chapters, and other publications.

Dennis served as the Fire Chief in Mesa, Arizona for five years and as Assistant Fire Chief in Phoenix, Arizona, where he served for twenty-seven years. Chief Compton is the Past Chairman of the Executive Board of the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) and Past Chairman of the Congressional Fire Services Institute’s National Advisory Committee. He is currently the Chairman of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Board of Directors, and Co-Chairs the Fire Service-Based EMS Advocates Steering Committee.