

Oklahoma State University Legacy Saves Lives Every Day

International Fire Service Training Association Celebrates 75th Validation Conference

Firefighters are important members of every community and have the courage to risk their lives to save fellow citizens. What not everyone knows is that generations of firefighters have honed their skills using training materials developed at Oklahoma State University (OSU) under the auspices of the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) and an OSU auxiliary enterprise known as Fire Protection Publications (FPP). From July 11-16, 2008, IFSTA and OSU FPP mark the 75th anniversary of the first IFSTA Validation Conference.

A group of fire chiefs and training officers met 75 years ago in Stillwater, OK, and began assembling the first formally developed, reviewed, and disseminated fire training materials ever seen in the US. Out of that first meeting were formed the organizations that became IFSTA and FPP.

The organizations have evolved from a small-time, back room publishing office with one editor and a shared secretary, to a full-scale modern publishing operation with more than 60 employees. Literally thousands of firefighters, fire scientists, and other qualified volunteers from around the world have given their time to the IFSTA validation process.

OSU is called “the West Point of the fire service” for its host of nationally recognized academic and technical fire training programs. In fact, FPP, which is an enterprise of the College of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology, is the nation’s number-one developer of fire service training materials. OSU also is headquarters for IFSTA, the fire service organization that assures the validity and technical accuracy of the training materials.

“With our wide range of fire service training programs and the materials we produce here at FPP, it’s hard to run across a firefighter or community anywhere in the country that hasn’t benefited in some way from OSU’s commitment to firefighter education and training.” Mike Wieder said. Wieder is FPP assistant director and leader of the group’s editorial and production functions.

IFSTA Executive Board Chairman Jeffrey Morrissette, said, “Volunteering for IFSTA is a way of giving back to OSU and the fire service.” Morrissette is state fire administrator for the State of Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and an OSU alumnus.

FPP Director Chris Neal said, “In the fire service, we have a saying that ‘training equals safety.’ IFSTA validation committee members have the unique privilege of assuring that FPP publishes and distributes materials that are technically accurate and reflect the best training approaches. We help keep firefighters and the public safer as a result. That’s really what we’re celebrating in our 75th year.”