

# SPEAKING OF FIRE

FIRE PROTECTION PUBLICATIONS • OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

A quarterly newsletter of Fire Protection Publications (Headquarters for IFSTA)

Fall 2002 Vol. 2 Number 3

From IFSTA!

## Fire Department Company Officer

By Carl Goodson



To a greater or lesser extent, all fire departments reflect the society of which they are a part. So it is understandable that as society changes, so does the role of company officers within these fire departments. Today's company officers must understand and be able to deal with concepts such as gender equity and cultural diversity. They must know about planning, budgeting, and time management. In short, today's company officers must be much more versatile and better informed than were supervisors in the past.

Today – more than ever – company officers are in the “people business.” In many departments, a small percentage of a company officer's time is spent dealing with emergencies. The majority of their on-duty time is spent dealing with people – both within and outside the organization.

As someone once said: The more things change, the more they stay the same. In spite of the many and varied changes that have taken place in the fire service as a whole – and in the company officer's role in particular – some things remain unchanged. For example, dedication to duty and courage in the face of adversity or danger are as necessary for company officers today as they ever were. Company officers, regardless of their specific rank or title, are on the cutting edge of service delivery to the public. Day or night, summer or winter, whenever there is a difficult or dangerous job to do, the company officer and his or her crew are often the ones called upon to get it done. So, on balance, some parts of the company officer's job have changed while other parts remain the same.

### Responsibilities of a Company Officer

According to the International City Management Association (ICMA) and regardless of whether they are career officers or volunteers and whether they are called fire officers, company officers, or some other title, first-line supervisors (company officers) are responsible for the following activities:

- Meeting the organization's goals and objectives (getting the job done)
- Keeping the work area free of health and safety hazards
- Building teamwork and cooperation

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From the Director

*Up-to-date. Reliable. Accurate. Validated. For nearly 70 years we've been writing fire training manuals to ensure that you go home safely.*

I had lunch a few weeks ago with a good friend of mine who had come up through the fire service at about the same time as I did, and we were reminiscing about our first days as firefighters-to-be in basic academy at OSU. We “remembered” how the instructors were so much tougher and the fires so much hotter in those days, and how we were thankful for the preparation we gained from those “old timers.” In part of the conversation, I recounted the endless hours I spent grinding away studying my IFSTA Essentials manual, but how proud I was to walk around the station with that dog-eared and beat up copy, MY very own “red book.” I wish I still had it; even today it is an inseparable part of the memory of one of the highpoints in my life. Now maybe it is just a sign of middle age and “glory days,” but I continued to think about that conversation for days thereafter, and how my experience, hardly unique, fits into what we do at FPP and how we plan for the future.

In the long and storied history of the U.S. Military Academy, first year cadets and veterans of old equally speak in reverence of “the long gray line,” that brotherhood of cadets that stretches over the vast and storied history of West Point. Here at Oklahoma State University, we are privileged to have the School of Fire Protection and Safety Technology, traditionally referred to through the years as “the West Point of the Fire Service.” It was through the vision and efforts of those same leaders who started the School that OSU Fire Service Training, IFSTA and Fire Protection Publications were born, and even today, these same organizations are inexorably linked. My own fire academy experience here at OSU made me feel for the first time like I was a legitimate member of an equally long and historical line, a “long red line” that is the fire service at OSU. Over the years, that line has included a virtual “who's who” of the fire service such as Pence, Hudiburg, Davidson, Cox, Austin, Mace, Bryan, Brunacini, Hoglund, Monigold, Donovan, Amabili, Neville, Compton, and so many more. In July, at the 69th annual IFSTA Validation Conference, I had the honor of interacting with many of these same individuals at the IFSTA reunion, and also the pleasure at the same time of observing the leaders of today and tomorrow in action working diligently on IFSTA manual validation committees. The long red line continues.

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# Don Davis

By Andrea Baker



Don Davis prides himself in a position where he is able to balance doing what he knows **about printing**, enjoying his work, and having a visible effect on the lives of firefighters and the population.

Don came to FPP in 1979 and currently serves as the production manager. He oversees the Production Division. This area is responsible for the final production work on all materials produced by FPP. This includes creation of illustrations, document design and layout, and photography. Don is accustomed to managing multiple projects and working with tight deadlines, and he does both in a professional manner.

Before working at FPP, Don worked in the printing industry for 10 years. This experience gave him knowledge when dealing with printers since he is familiar with their terminology. By doing his job properly, he produces a well-designed product that is easy to read. Cost is a major concern of Don's, so he ensures that products are made in the most cost-effective manner without sacrificing quality.

Don has been a Stillwater resident since 1968. In his spare time, he is an emergency volunteer and storm spotter for the city of Stillwater. He became involved with volunteering during the 1975 Stillwater tornado. He also has served as a volunteer firefighter and rescue worker.

Don lives in Stillwater with his wife, Ada, who is an assistant registrar at Oklahoma State University. During his leisure time, Don enjoys woodworking, sailing, kayaking, and photography.

## New Committee Members Being Sought

IFSTA is currently in the process of soliciting applications for membership on four manual review committees that will be commencing projects in 2003. Those four committees are:

- Fire Origin and Cause
  - Hazardous Materials Technician
  - Chief Officer
  - Emergency Management and Planning for the Fire Service
- More information on the committee process and an application form may be downloaded from

[www.ifsta.org](http://www.ifsta.org). Application forms can also be requested by mail by calling Tara Gladden at (405) 744-4111.

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## From the Director

Somewhere today, there is a rookie firefighter with a worn Essentials on their way to class. But they're not alone because elsewhere similarly there is a driver scanning his Pumping Apparatus Driver/Operator CD, a training officer loading her Aerial Apparatus PowerPoint presentation, a Captain answering questions in his Fire Department Company Officer Study Guide, a college student preparing for her test with Fire Investigator, an Explorer online ordering Fire Service Orientation and Terminology, and a Chief reaffirming what Chief Compton says that When in Doubt, Lead! And sometime years from now, that rookie, now a seasoned firefighter, will observe a new firefighter-to-be with their Essentials, perhaps in a new format, but still a product of the IFSTA validation process: up-to-date, reliable, and accurate. And he too will join the long red line that brings him safely home.

Up-to-date. Reliable. Accurate. Validated. That's IFSTA. It's the way it has been for nearly 70 years, and the way it will be for generations of firefighters to come. As you look to your training needs, demand nothing less, accept nothing less. Be safe!

Chris Neal

Christopher Neal, Director

## FPP and IFSTA Announce Fellowship

The International Fire Service Association (IFSTA) and OSU Fire Protection Publications are proud to announce the establishment of the new IFSTA Participation Fellowship. In support of the IFSTA Values, FPP is funding and administering fellowships to provide for costs associated with participation in the validation process, specifically to provide funding for individuals to participate on validation committees when their particular organization is unable to sponsor participation due to financial hardships or limitations. This fellowship program further ensures that the missions and values of Oklahoma State University, FPP, and IFSTA are not only supported, but also an integral part of the validation process.

The proposed Fellowship program would include five (5) awards of \$1,000 annually to provide for participation at the annual IFSTA Conference. Applicants would be required to apply for committee participation according to the current procedure, and in addition, submitting an application for the Fellowship. If an applicant is accepted on the working committee, the fellowship would be awarded and funded throughout the cycle of committee work, contingent on the member's continuing in good standing on the committee (in reference to activity and work assignments). In the event that more than five (5) applicants are eligible for participation, those that meet the greatest need in terms of the IFSTA Values and OSU and FPP Missions, will be selected.

Applications for committee participation can be downloaded from the IFSTA website at [www.ifsta.org](http://www.ifsta.org), or by calling Tara Gladden at FPP at 405-744-4111, or e-mailing her at [tgladden@osufpp.org](mailto:tgladden@osufpp.org). We look forward to having you as a part of the IFSTA family!

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## Why Do You Need This Book?

Company Officer contains critical information pertaining to:

- meeting organizational goals and objectives
- keeping the work area free of health and safety hazards
- building teamwork and cooperation
- developing members' skills
- keeping records and making reports

Addresses these and many other contemporary topics such as cultural diversity, gender equity, and time management.

- Developing subordinates' skills
- Keeping records and making reports

Even though these general responsibilities have not changed in most fire departments, other aspects of the company officer's job have changed significantly. Most fire departments are being

asked by their governing bodies to do more with less. Many fire departments are performing duties today that were formerly not provided at all or were the responsibility of some other department or agency.

### Roles of Fire Departments

A generation ago, many fire departments did not provide emergency medical services, and the terms "universal precautions" and "bloodborne pathogens" were not a part of the average company officer's vocabulary. Most firefighters were neither trained nor equipped to safely and effectively handle a hazardous materials incident. Today, company officers sometimes find themselves in situations where they must supervise subordinates who have a greater level of knowledge and training in some specialized field, such as hazardous materials or technical rescue, than they themselves do.

In most fire departments a generation ago, staffing levels on fire apparatus were higher than is typical today. Few fire departments now respond with more personnel than they did in the past, and some use alternative staffing schemes that vary the number of personnel on duty at different times of the day and night. Because of declining revenues, some departments have had to close fire stations and spread that workload among the remaining companies. Likewise, as other departments of local government experienced revenue reductions, some of their duties and responsibilities were reassigned to the fire department. Some career fire departments are now doing everything from enforcing building codes to reading utility meters. Regardless of whether providing these additional services are appropriate uses

of fire department resources, fire departments are being asked to provide them. Most of these additional duties are performed by firefighters under the supervision of a company officer.

### Duties of a Company Officer

Despite all of the changes in the roles and responsibilities of fire departments, the specific duties of the company officer have, in general, remained the same or expanded. While there are variations from department to department and from volunteer departments to career departments, the general responsibilities mentioned earlier translate into the following specific duties:

- Maintaining health and safety
- Enforcing departmental rules and regulations
- Managing company activities
- Collecting pre-incident plan data
- Conducting company fire inspections
- Conducting company training evolutions
- Facilitating company communications
- Building company motivation
- Implementing departmental goals and objectives
- Performing career counseling and problem solving
- Keeping departmental records and making reports

Clearly, the most important duty of a company officer is to protect all members of the company from injury or illness to the extent possible. A company officer or firefighter who is incapacitated for any reason is of no use to the public or other members of the company. The company officer must

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# Online Ordering is Back!

# www.ifsta.org

The IFSTA/FPP Online Store is available for all your fire service training needs. In addition to the Online Store, be sure to bookmark the site to see our newsletter and other information about IFSTA.



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As part of the validation process, IFSTA Committee members gathered daily at the 2002 IFSTA Conference to share their expertise.

Ann Moffat, Graphic Designer Analyst for Fire Protection Publications, was recently honored at the 2002 IFSTA Conference for 30 years of dedication and outstanding contribution to the quality of IFSTA and FPP materials. She is shown here with the FPP Production Department. From left: Ben Brock, Ann, Don Davis, Missy Reese, and Brien McDowell.



The IFSTA Conference Reunion provided a perfect opportunity for past members to come together and renew old friendships. From left: Marv Austin, Dick Pippinger, Joe Donovan, Lou Amabili, Ron Graw, Kathy Lohr, Harold Mace, and Paul Boecker.



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## Carlson Receives Two Awards at IFSTA Conference

(summarized from a speech prepared by Nancy Trench and presented by George Dunkle at the 2002 Conference)

Gene Carlson, the Director of Emergency Community Relations for VFIS in York, Pennsylvania, was the recipient of the Everett E. Hudiburg Memorial Award at the 2002 IFSTA Conference. The award is given to a person who has made significant contributions to the training of firefighters.

Gene's earliest connection to the fire service is very close to home. His Dad was the volunteer fire chief in their hometown, Hampshire, Illinois. Gene grew up with the fire department as a part of his life. He became a volunteer firefighter in 1959 and studying fire protection was a natural course for Gene. His searches for a school led him to Oklahoma State University. Gene entered the OSU School of Fire Protection in 1963. After graduating with degrees in fire protection and general management he worked for the American Insurance Association where he evaluated and graded municipal fire departments.

Gene's career eventually brought him to Fire Protection Publications and IFSTA where he remained for the next 23 years.

The list of Gene's accomplishments is lengthy. His nomination for this award provides highlights in these areas:

- He has been a visionary and pioneer in hazardous materials emergency response training and standards for the fire service.
- He has had a long and distinguished history of service to Fire Protection Publications as writer, editor, manager, assistant director, and as the ambassador for international marketing.
- He is a prolific writer of technical material for the fire service. His writings have influenced more than 3 generations of firefighters and fire instructors.
- He is a fire instructor. He demonstrates the best of the most desirable characteristics of a fire trainer.

Ultimately, Gene has demonstrated his commitment to professional excellence for the fire service as a leader. To quote the nominator, "His generosity and ingenuity as an information resource for fire fighters from across the globe have made Gene Carlson an exemplary ambassador, not only of IFSTA, but of the Fire Service of the United States of America."

Gene was also the recipient of the Marv Austin Distinguished Leadership Award at the IFSTA Conference which recognizes an individual who has shown outstanding leadership contributions to the IFSTA Validation Conference and process.



Gene Carlson received both the Marv Austin and Hudiburg Award for excellence in his profession at the 2002 IFSTA Conference. Pictured from left are Carlson and Chris Neal, Director of Fire Protection Publications.

# When In Doubt, Lead... The Series

By Dennis Compton

Several years ago, I began contemplating ways to communicate key leadership concepts, information, behaviors, and practices more effectively. After spending most of my life reading lengthy textbooks that left me looking for the meat of the lesson to highlight, it became obvious that there had to be a more straightforward way of getting key points across to the reader. From these thoughts emerged the series of books I've written titled *When In Doubt, Lead!*

I initially established five critical goals for the series. Each book had to:

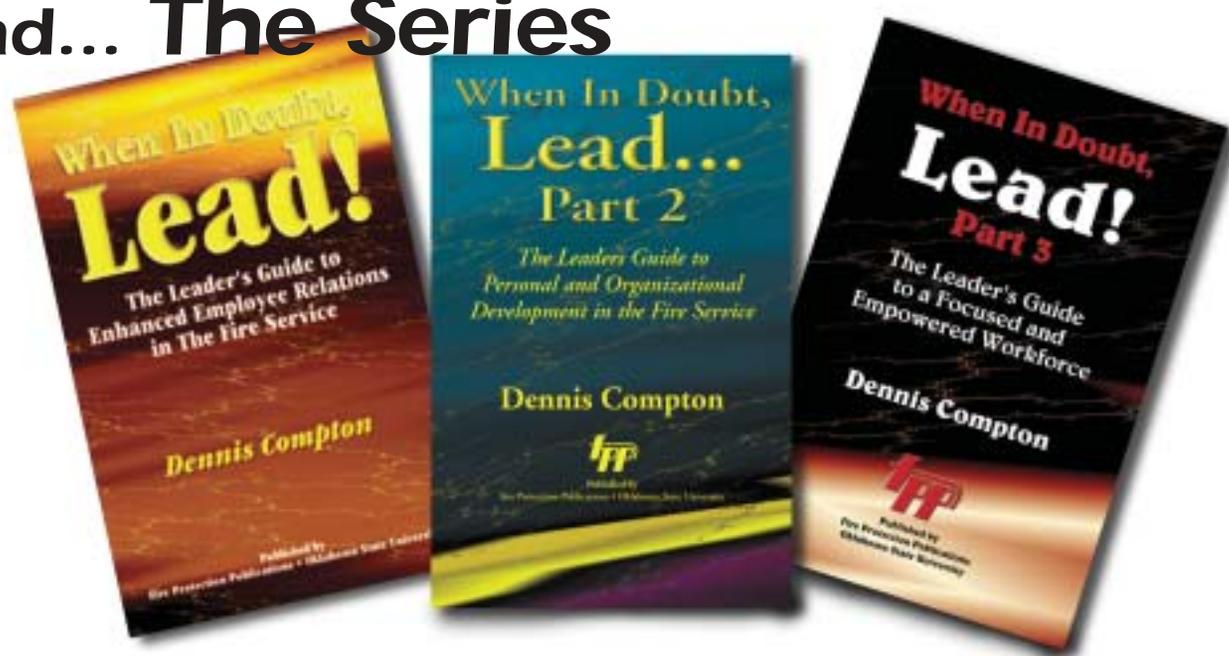
- Contain useful (state-of-the-art) information and practical concepts
- Be less than 80 pages in length
- Take less than 4 hours to read
- Be difficult for the reader to highlight... because the entire book would contain only the highlights of a subject
- Cost less than \$15

If you've read any or all of the books in the *When In Doubt, Lead!* series, you'll agree that these goals have been met each time. Currently three books are in the series and plans are to expand it further.

Part One covers the subject of Employee Relations. The way that the workforce (labor) and management interact has a direct impact on the quality of service provided by an organization (internally and externally). *When In Doubt, Lead!* (Part One) provides a roadmap to a more successful relationship between labor and management. No matter what your current relationship is... improving it can help the bottom line... thus make the organization more effective.

Part Two in the series covers Personal and Organizational Development. We know that nothing in an organization exists in total isolation. Everything is in some way connected to everything else. *When In Doubt, Lead!* (Part Two) addresses some unique aspects of leadership. These include developing personal leadership behaviors and characteristics, committing to organizational ethics, managing career development to build succession capability, creating organizational change, and developing important relationships in the community. Every reader will find a direct connection to themselves and their organization in this book.

Part Three in the series covers the challenge of creating a focused and empowered workforce. It captures several key leadership concepts and describes each as individual pieces of a whole "system." These include cultivating supervisory leadership, understanding the "system" within which fire service leadership takes place, defining and instilling self-discipline, defining organizational and operational structures, and balancing employees' need for direction with their desire for empowerment. Each concept covered in *When In Doubt, Lead!* (Part Three) is communicated



in a format that provides the reader with a unique methodology designed to improve their own performance and that of the organization as well.

The *When In Doubt, Lead!* series has been fun to write. It cuts to the chase, speaking directly to leadership philosophies, concepts, behaviors, and practices that tend to make people more positive, productive, and healthy at work. The series also describes the interrelatedness of leadership, management, and supervision. Being at our personal best all the time must be a key goal for each of us, whether in prevention efforts, public education, emergency response, or any of the support areas that make delivering these services possible. If we, as leaders, get up each day with the goal of moving our systems and ourselves another step forward, we will (in some way) do better than we did the day before... and so will those we're leading. I hope you find the entire *When In Doubt, Lead!* series helpful. Thousands of people already have. Thanks (in advance) for exploring these books.

Dennis Compton is a well-known speaker, national advocate, and executive advisor for fire service and emergency management issues and organizations. He served as the Fire Chief in Mesa, Arizona, for more than 5 years and as Assistant Fire Chief in the Phoenix (AZ) Fire Department for more than 27 years. Dennis is the author of many publications, including his series of books titled, *When In Doubt, Lead!* He is coeditor of the current edition of the ICMA's text and reference book titled *Managing Fire and Rescue Services*. Dennis is the Immediate Past Chair of the Executive Board of the International Fire Service Training Association, the Past Chair of the Congressional Fire Services Institute's National Advisory Committee, and serves on the Board of the National Fire Protection Association. Chief Compton is a charter member of the Arizona Fire Service Hall of Fame and was selected as the University of Phoenix Alumnus of the Year in 2001.

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## Badgett Donation Enhances Library



The IFSTA/Fire Protection Publications Library recently received a large donation of manuals from Jim Badgett, Dallas County Fire Marshal. They are an accumulation of old and current books from his personal library that cover everything from fire service management, terrorism to fire prevention, suppression, and training.

*Susan Walker, FPP librarian, says, "We are very appreciative that he thought of us as a suitable recipient of this sizable donation. It's a wonderful addition to our library."*

*"The collection of more than 1,500 books, which also includes obsolete IFSTA manuals, will help fill in the gaps of missing 'red books' from over the years," adds Walker.*

*"These old manuals have great historical value in the fire industry," she says.*



Badgett says the main reason for the donation is that he believes in IFSTA and the good that the organization brings through the validation of quality training materials. He wanted FPP to be the central location for such materials.

*"I thought the books would serve a better purpose in its collection," Badgett says. He adds, "Susan has done an outstanding job of building the existing library over the years. I know she will be able to find good use for the books."*

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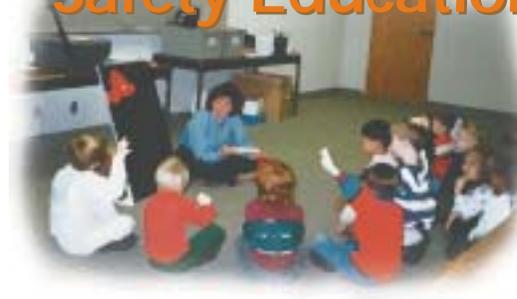
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## Safety Education Hero Award Recognizes Life-Saving Educators



**WILKESBORO, N.C.** – Leading safety organizations recently announced the creation of a new award to honor everyday heroes in fire and life safety public education. Lowe's Home Safety Council, the Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI) and NFPA created the Safety Education Hero Award to recognize the outstanding efforts of those professionals who work diligently in teaching the public how to help prevent and respond to home fires and unintentional injuries.

Eligible applicants for this award are individuals whose work conducting an NFPA educational program results in a life saved or a tragedy averted. This individual is a fire services or life safety educator who exemplifies the values, ethics and spirit of a hero in the fire services community. The inaugural Safety Education Hero award recipient will be honored at the CFSI National Fire and Emergency Services banquet in Washington, D.C., on April 30, 2003, and will receive a \$1,000 honorarium, a medal and up to \$2,000 in NFPA educational materials.

Life saves must occur between Jan. 1 and Dec. 1, 2002, and be documented by NFPA. Life saves, as defined by NFPA, are case histories of actual incidents in which the knowledge gained from NFPA's educational programs has been put into action resulting in the preservation of human life. For more on the Safety Education Hero Award, fire services professionals can visit [loweshomesafety.org/educationhero](http://loweshomesafety.org/educationhero). Entries must be received no later than Dec. 2.

In 1993, Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse founded Lowe's Home Safety Council, a nonprofit organization, with the vision of creating safer American homes. Lowe's Home Safety Council has invested more than \$25 million to educate children, adults, seniors and families on how to improve the safety and security in their homes. For additional home safety information and free brochures, visit [loweshomesafety.org](http://loweshomesafety.org).

CFSI, based in Washington, D.C., is a non-partisan policy institute that promotes the interests of the 1.2 million firefighters and emergency services personnel in the United States.

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by developing and advocating scientifically-based consensus codes and standards, research, training and education. NFPA also produces educational curricula, including the *Risk Watch*® community-based injury prevention curriculum and the *Learn Not to Burn*® fire safety curriculum. NFPA headquarters is in Quincy, MA, USA. Visit NFPA's Web site at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).



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### IFSTA/FPP On The Road

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## From IFSTA!

know the department's safety rules and follow and enforce them conscientiously. One of the most effective ways that a company officer can promote safety within the company is by setting a good example — that is, by being a positive role model.

Just as setting a good example helps the company officer promote safety, it is also an essential part of enforcing departmental rules and regulations. A company officer cannot expect other members of the company to abide by the rules if he or she does not. A company officer who knowingly ignores departmental rules or allows his or her subordinates to do so sets a precedent that will erode the foundation of discipline on which the company and the department depend. Company officers must be willing to enforce all departmental rules and regulations, even those with which they disagree.

As mentioned earlier, one of the company officer's major responsibilities is to get the job done. More than anything else, this means managing the time and activities of the company. Because of the many and varied assignments that most fire companies have today and because of the time spent responding to emergencies, there are not enough hours in the day to complete them all. Therefore, the company officer must apply time management principles to prioritize and schedule the company's activities. However, the company officer must also realize that the most carefully planned schedule may be changed or entirely eliminated by one or more emergency calls during the tour of duty.

One of the assignments that must be managed along with the other company activities is collecting pre-incident plan data. Collecting this data has a number of benefits for the company. By visiting the target hazards within the response district, the crew becomes more familiar with the potential problems they may have to handle during an emergency. Using the data collected to identify the resources that would be needed in various scenarios also helps in developing contingency plans.

Many career fire departments require their companies to conduct fire and life safety inspections in a wide variety of occupancies to identify potential hazards, and they are to apply the appropriate codes to get the problems corrected. Conducting these inspections in a thorough and conscientious manner requires that fire depart-

**"I have researched training manuals for the purpose of preparing officers for their duties, as well as preparing candidates for promotion to officers positions and have found the IFSTA Company Officer manual to be the best in the business. The validation process used in developing the manuals is second to none and insures every manual is written to the appropriate NFPA standards."**

*Jeffrey J. Lara, Fire Chief  
Yukon Fire Department (OK)*

ment personnel inspect every room, compartment, or void space in a building and, in the process, identify hidden or obscure hazards that can be corrected before they cause a problem.

Helping company members acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to safely and effectively perform their jobs is certainly a critically important duty of company officers. In some departments, a full-time training staff delivers most of the skill-development training (new skills/information), while the company officers use repetitive drills and other techniques to help company members maintain their skills. In other departments, company officers are responsible for both skill development and skill maintenance training.

In order to facilitate company communications, company officers must understand the principles of effective communication and be adept at selecting and using the most appropriate communications medium in each situation. Communications at the company level may involve everything from face-to-face oral communication to handwritten reports and records, to fax machines and cellular phones, to mobile and portable radios, and to e-mail and sophisticated computerized communications programs. Regardless of how basic or sophisticated the available communications equipment may be, its skillful operation requires hands-on training and regular reinforcement in realistic simulations and actual emergencies.

Keeping company members motivated on a long-term basis can be a significant challenge for many company officers. At a relatively quiet station, there may be long periods between emergency calls. During these long periods of relative inactivity, it is easy for company members to divert their attention to more stimulating activities such as playing games or watching television. The challenge for company officers is to find ways to keep the members interested in and focused on their jobs. One way of maintaining members' focus

is by involving them in the planning and execution of programs designed to fulfill company-level objectives that contribute to the achievement of departmental goals. If members clearly understand the relationship of an assignment to the goals of the department, then they are often self-motivated. So one of the keys for company officers is to be able to translate departmental goals into company assignments.

Because a company officer has acquired enough education and experience to have been promoted, firefighters interested in earning a promotion often turn to their company officer for advice about their own careers. Providing this advice is a legitimate and important duty of every company officer. Company officers should know their subordinates' professional strengths and weaknesses and be willing and able to offer constructive suggestions when asked. In addition to career counseling, company officers are sometimes asked for advice on more personal problems. The company officer must know what professional counseling services are available through member assistance programs and how to access them.

Even in this electronic age, fire departments still require a great deal of paperwork. While some data can be reported and stored electronically, many hard-copy forms and records must still be submitted and maintained to satisfy federal and state or provincial mandates. Many company officers spend a good deal of their on-duty time filling out forms and writing reports. A certain amount of routine paperwork can and should be delegated, but much of it is privileged or confidential information such as performance evaluations or disciplinary documentation. The company officer is responsible for the completion of these reports. Therefore, regardless of who actually writes the report, the company officer will be judged by the grammar, spelling, and punctuation used as well as the accuracy of the content. Considering that any report may someday be used in court, the company officer must make sure that all reports submitted by his or her company are as accurate, complete, and well-written as possible.

While the traditional roles and responsibilities of fire departments and company officers remain unchanged, new and different ones have been and continue to be added. Today's company officer must be at least as strong and physically fit, emotionally stable, and mentally agile as company officers have ever been. In addition, to cope with today's new challenges and tomorrow's unknown ones, current and aspiring company officers must work harder than ever to keep up with changes in technology and changes in society that directly or indirectly impact the fire service.

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*All company officers have legitimate power.*



*Teaching is one of a company officer's most important duties.*

# Safety and Health Guidelines for Fire and Explosion Investigators

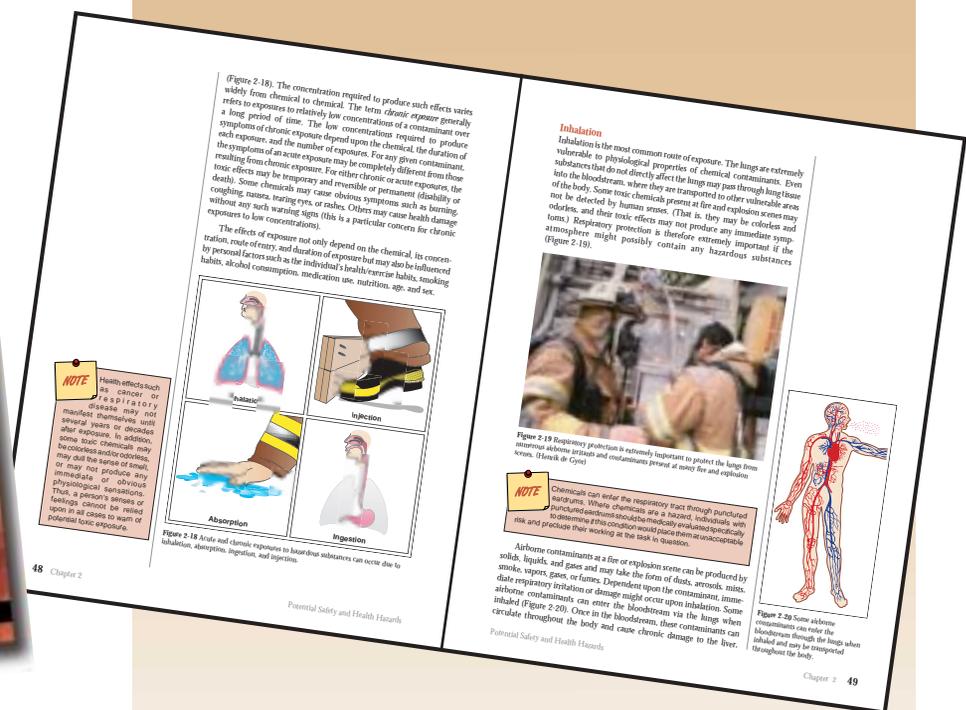
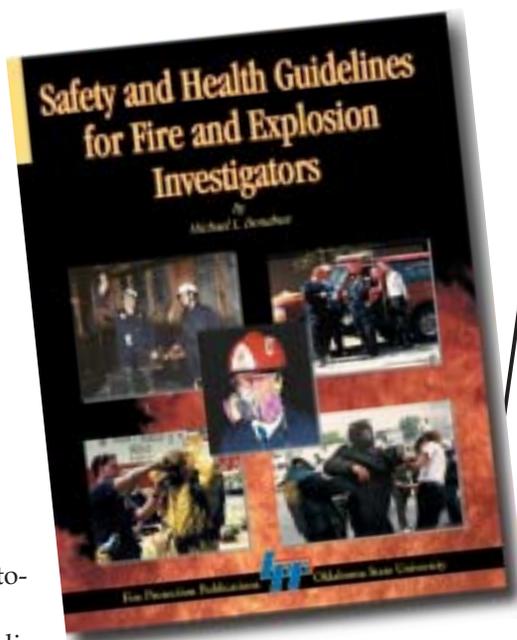
by Michael L. Donahue

Today's fire and explosion investigators work in environments and conditions that are considerably more hazardous than those 20 years ago. The widespread use of synthetic building materials and furnishings has greatly increased the amounts and kinds of toxic byproducts of combustion. In light of the recent acts of terrorism in the United States and abroad, investigators must also be aware of the potential for exposure to chemical and biological agents and hazardous materials, not to mention the dangers posed by special hazards such as clandestine drug laboratories, weapons of mass destruction, and explosive incidents. However, many public and private organizations have failed to adequately address these newly recognized occupational safety and health hazards by modifying their standard operating procedures and training programs for investigating fires and explosions. In-service training programs, seminars, and conferences for investigators seldom address occupational safety and health training. In addition, safety and health are often taken for granted since most investigators assume that by the time they arrive at a scene, the potential hazards are either eliminated or diminished to the point that they are no longer concerns.

**Many investigators have been diagnosed with disabling and debilitating injuries and chronic illnesses that surfaced days, months, and years after investigations were concluded.**

Regardless of the scientific and technological advances in fire and explosion investigation during the past several years, the successful investigation of fires and explosions still requires investigators to work in potentially hazardous environments that may result in personal injury, illness, and death. Many investigators have been diagnosed with disabling and debilitating injuries and chronic illnesses that surfaced days, months, and years after investigations were concluded. Although investigators typically begin their investigations into the origins and causes of fires and explosions after fire-suppression operations are completed, they face many of the same safety and health hazards that confront firefighters during fire-suppression and overhaul operations.

The safety and health of fire and explosion investigators are increasingly key issues for many organizations and are becoming priorities to many investigators. In recent years, numerous injuries, illnesses, and deaths associated with the investigation of fires and explosions have been



documented. Many investigators have been diagnosed with a variety of cancers that occupational physicians believe may result directly from exposures that occur due to investigators' job duties and responsibilities.

Although many fire service organizations have focused on the safety and health of firefighters, this same level of awareness, funding, and research has not extended to fire and explosion investigators. Few available resources offer any specific guidance to assist organizations in developing the necessary policies, procedures, and training programs for investigators to comply with federal, state, and local occupational safety and health requirements.

*Safety and Health Guidelines for Fire and Explosion Investigators* is one of the most comprehensive occupational safety and health resource specifically designed for fire and explosion investigators available. It contains the most up-to-date safety and health-related information for federal, state, local, and private investigators based on guidelines and procedures recommended by some of the nation's leading authorities and resources in the following disciplines:

- Fire and explosion investigation
- Occupational safety and health
- Hazardous materials emergency planning and response
- Weapons of mass destruction
- Clandestine drug laboratories

*Safety and Health Guidelines for Fire and Explosion Investigators* is designed to be part of every investigator's formal training in occupational safety and health. As such, it is an essential complement to their training in conducting fire or explosion investigations. It addresses the following major subject areas:

- Potential safety and health hazards
- Fire and explosion scene safety practices and procedures

- Occupational safety and health administration regulations and voluntary consensus standards
- Hazardous waste operations and emergency response rules
- Hazardous materials incident operations for investigators
- Weapons of mass destruction incidents
- Clandestine drug laboratories
- Fire and explosion investigation safety and health program management guidelines
- Safety, health, and investigative sources of information

The book discusses a number of actual case histories of incidents in which fire investigators were injured or killed, and it emphasizes important safety lessons learned to prevent similar incidents. It includes over 60 technical references and links to more than 100 Internet Websites dedicated to occupational safety and health issues and fire and explosion investigation.

*Safety and Health Guidelines for Fire and Explosion Investigators* is a unique resource specifically designed for fire and explosion investigators that is based on federally mandated occupational safety and health regulations, national consensus standards, and recommended practices, procedures, and guidelines that have proven effective in reducing the incidence of accidental injury, exposure, and death. Any fire department, law enforcement agency, or insurance company investigator who conducts fire and explosion investigations will greatly benefit from the information contained in this book.

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