



Illinois Task Force on Firefighter Life Safety

Throughout the last year, a task force has been working on the advancement of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives (see sidebar and www.everyonegoeshome.com). It was decided recently that the Task Force will become a sub-group of the Illinois Fire Services Association (IFSA) and work is being done to make that happen. The committee structure will include Co-chairs, Chief Ralph Webster (Woodstock) and Division Chief Al Schlick (Wauconda) and Secretary, Cynthia

Leighton (Motorola). Because the Task Force will be doing some fundraising, there is a need for a treasurer, which will be provided by the IFSA.

The main mission of the Task Force is to advance the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives and improve firefighter safety in Illinois. The mission will need to be accomplished through phases, which will begin by getting the word out that the Task Force exists, and that we are working to improve firefighter safety. The first objective is to improve awareness of the initiatives according to previously developed groupings (buckets). The bucket concept was used because the Task Force members felt that it would be more efficient to work on a smaller group of basic subject areas that the initiatives naturally fall into. The groups, or buckets, are as follows:

- Bucket 1 – Training (1, 2, 4, and 5)
- Bucket 2 – Health, Wellness, and Safety (6, 8, 13, and 16)
- Bucket 3 – Public Education (14 and 15)
- Bucket 4 – Policy (3, 4, 5, 11, and 12)
- Bucket 5 – OSFM (7, 9, and 10)

Education and awareness about our efforts and the 16 Initiatives will be accomplished through the use of websites, periodicals and safety bulletins (a standard format that will be used to highlight one initiative each month, starting with Initiative 1, and then moving through the Training Bucket). Funding is needed to prepare and distribute materials so the Task Force will be asking all fire service organizations to commit \$500 towards the development, preparation, and distribution of printed materials. In addition to any money committed by the various fire service organizations, we will be seeking grant funding and donations from private industry.

With regards to other activities, the Task Force will be working with the IFSA to develop a logo so that the Task Force has an identity that firefighters can easily recognize. A website is being developed (with assistance from IFSI) that will ultimately act as our Illinois information source, and the Task Force is asking all Fire Service organizations to pass a Resolution of support that they, as an organization, commit to the Life Safety Initiatives in principle and practice. The Resolution will also act as a way to raise awareness about the initiatives. Once we get the fire service organizations on board, we will be reaching to fire departments and fire protection districts and asking them to pass a similar Resolution. In addition, the Task Force is challenging departments and districts to commit to 100% compliance on the National Seat Belt Pledge – **we want Illinois to lead the nation in 100% compliant departments!** The pledge is also another way for us to commit to safety and raise awareness.

16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

1. Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.
2. Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.
3. Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities.
4. All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices.
5. Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters based on the duties they are expected to perform.
6. Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.
7. Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relates to the initiatives.
8. Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.
9. Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses.
10. Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.
11. National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.
12. National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.
13. Firefighters and their families must have access to counseling and psychological support.
14. Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program.
15. Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.
16. Safety must be a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.

Finally, it is important to recognize those organizations that have been involved in the initial stages of this effort and thank them for their continued participation.

Illinois Fire Services Association
Illinois Fire Chiefs Association
Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois
Illinois Fire Inspectors Association
Illinois Professional Firefighters Association
Illinois Fire Safety Alliance
Illinois Fire Service Institute

Office of the State Fire Marshal
Illinois Society of Fire Service Instructors
Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
Illinois Firefighters Association
Motorola
Illinois Risk Management Agency

Should you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, you can contact either of the co-chairs at rwebster@wfrd.org or Schlick@waucondafire.org.

A RESOLUTION BY THE ILLINOIS FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Whereas, firefighting has been designated as one of the nation's most hazardous professions; and

Whereas, the nation's fire service encounters a line-of-duty death approximately every third day and an estimated one hundred firefighter fatalities with hundreds of near-misses and thousands and thousands of work-related injuries annually; and

Whereas, 50% of line-of-duty deaths are a result of cardiac-related emergencies and 25% are vehicle related by responding to or returning from emergency incidents, many involving the lack of use of seat belts; and

Whereas, since 1984, nearly three-thousand, five-hundred firefighters, career and volunteer, have given their lives in the line of duty; and

Whereas, Illinois has had forty Firefighter Line-of-Duty Deaths since 1999; and

Whereas, in 2004, two-hundred thirty-nine fire service professionals gathered in Tampa, Florida, to discuss the issue of reducing line-of-duty deaths; and

Whereas, more than 80,000 firefighters are injured in the United States each year, with 48% occurring during fire ground operations; and

Whereas, the product of that meeting was the development of 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives to help meet the goal of reducing Line-of-Duty deaths 25% by 2009 and 50% by 2014; and

Whereas, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has created the Everyone Goes Home® campaign to increase firefighter knowledge through public awareness, as well as participation in the Courage To Be Safe training curriculum; and

Whereas, it is incumbent upon fire departments to encourage, educate, and enforce firefighter safety, health, & wellness.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Illinois Fire Chiefs' Association did on the 13th Day of May, 2009 adopt the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives and support the Everyone Goes Home® campaign to help meet the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's goal of reducing firefighter Line-of-Duty deaths.