



ILLINOIS FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to Excellence in the Fire Service

P.O. Box 7, Skokie IL 60076

phone 847-966-0732, fax 847-966-0782

Website: www.illinoisfirechiefs.org



Registration for the 55th Annual Symposium is now open! This year's Symposium will be held May 13-15, 2025 at the Par-a-Dice Hotel in East Peoria IL. We encourage you to plan on attending the Illinois Firefighter Medal of Honor ceremony in Springfield IL that morning and then head to East Peoria where the Symposium will start that evening.

The committee has lined up some outstanding speakers and topics. A brief topic description and bios for our speakers are contained in this newsletter.

We hope that you plan to attend the Symposium. The purpose of the Symposium is to provide for a mid-year networking event focusing on education, exchange of ideas and issues within the Fire Service.

IFCA Symposium Committee

Online Attendee Registration

<https://ilfca.memberclicks.net/symp0513>

Full Registration - May 13-15, 2025 \$185.00

Includes all presentations. One ticket to: Tuesday evening reception with the attorneys. Buffet Breakfast on Wednesday and Thursday, Lunch on Wednesday and the Wednesday evening BBQ

Spouse/Significant Other Full Registration \$ 85.00

One ticket to: Tuesday evening reception with the attorneys. Buffet Breakfast on Wednesday and Thursday, Lunch on Wednesday and the Wednesday evening BBQ

Daily Registration - Wednesday, May 14, 2025 \$110.00

Wednesday Presentations. One ticket for Wednesday Breakfast and Lunch

Daily Registration - Thurs, May 15, 2025 8am-noon \$ 60.00

Thursday Presentations, Buffet Breakfast on Thursday morning.

Hotel Reservation Information

A block of rooms has been set-up for the Symposium at the Par-a-Dice Hotel. The room cost is \$109.00 plus tax and resort fee. The block pricing is available until **April 21, 2025**.

Guests can call 1-800-547-0711 or 309-699-7711 and provide the block code **FIRE25C**.

You can also make your reservation online, using the link below and the block code **FIRE25C**. Go to this EXACT web address <https://paradise.boydgaming.com/groups-and-weddings/group-reservation> scroll down and enter code.

Once entered the group booking you will need to adjust check in and check out dates. Even if the date says "No Availability" guest can still click on that date.

Illinois Fire Chiefs Association 54th Annual Symposium Program

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

- 1530-1800 **Registration**
 1700-1800 **Evening Reception with Attorneys**
 1800-2100 **Open Forum**

Karl Ottosen & Stephen DiNolfo, Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. • Karl & Steve will moderate our open forum with an open microphone format. Bring your hot topics for discussion. Attendees will be invited to submit questions anonymously before the symposium for discussion and answers. Hospitality bar & heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

- 0630-0800 **Breakfast** (included in registration)
 0700-0800 **Registration**
 0800-0815 **Welcome**
 0815-0930 **Protocols for Building Resilience and Balance – Do as I say and as I do** ♦ Aaron Zamrow ♦ As leaders in the fire service, we face unique challenges that can take a toll on our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. In this transformative seminar, we will explore practical protocols for building resilience and balance in the high-stress environment of the fire service. The seminar will focus on using gratitude, attitude, and EMS (eating, moving, sleeping) to improve personal well-being and create a culture of resilience within your department. Walk away with a personalized "challenge" plan to ensure that you are talking the talk and walking the walk (or run).
 0930-0945 **Break**
 0945-1000 **Illinois Office of the State Fire Marshal**
 1000-1130 **"Firefighter Retirement Benefits Update"** ♦ Dan Ryan & Joel Babbitt, IPPA ♦ What's new in Illinois firefighter retirement? A lot. The new *Social Security Fairness Act* will impact most firefighters and current retirees for the better. The *Act* will be explained and key planning information will be presented. And more and more cities and districts are using Retirement Healthcare Plans to boost recruiting and retention and reduce sick time use and overtime. Learn how this works and see new developments in plan design.
 1130-1300 **Lunch** (included in Registration)
 1300-1315 **Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts**

Wednesday, May 14, 2025 (continued)

1315-1445 **"Learning from the Experience of Others"**, ♦ Chief Dave Traiforos ♦ This classroom session focuses on viewing videos and photographs depicting moments captured on the fireground that illustrates how firefighters' aggressive actions can lead to danger and interfere with the tasks at hand, leaving firefighters at risk for injury or death.

These scenarios come from the experiences of firefighters who shared their stories with lessons to learn.

Will discuss such topics as fire scene incident command, safety and accountability, vehicle placement and operations, hose line placement, use of portable ladders, building construction, water supply, search and rescue in addition to Standard Operating Procedures, General Orders, and Best Practices.

- 1445-1500 **Break**
 1500-1515 **Illinois Fire Service Institute**

1515-1645 **"Alzheimer's and Dementia: Understanding of the Disease,"** ♦ Daryl Carlson, *Alzheimer's Association, IL Chapter* & Chief Joe Henning, *Western Illinois University* ♦ In Illinois today, over 250,000 people are living with Alzheimer's and Dementia and 6 out of 10 will wander at some point. How does this disease impact the community? What do you do to communicate effectively with those who are living with the disease? Why do they wander and how do you respond? Daryl Carlson from the Alzheimer's Association along with Joseph Henning from Western Illinois University will give you a deeper understanding of this disease and bring clarity to all of these pressing questions. **Together we #endalz**

1700-2200 **Bags, BBQ & Brotherhood Social**
 An evening of fun, relaxation, and brotherhood. Food, drink and a bags tournament provided. The event is held onsite.

Thursday, May 15, 2025

- 0630-0800 **Breakfast** (included with registration)
 0800-0815 **Illinois Fire Chiefs Association**
 0815-1000 **"Leveraging the Background Process in Recruitment & Retention,"** ♦ Dan Skoczylas ♦ Recruitment and retention have become the biggest personnel challenges in the fire service industry today. A thorough and compliant background investigation program can be invaluable to the hiring process; allowing you to identify and avoid poor hires, another agency's problems and potentially even those individuals prone to workplace violence before they are among your ranks. Participants will learn what a compliant and systematic background program consists of as well as the regulatory and legal pitfalls and how to avoid them.
 1000-1015 **Break**
 1015-1130 The purpose of the Assessment and Consulting Services (ACS) is simply to help IFCA member agencies in addressing promotional assessment and testing, hiring chief fire officers, consulting on fire and EMS planning and operations. his presentation will identify and review what is required by Illinois Statute for promotional lists, why assessment centers are important and why the IFCA uses the process we do, and what you need to know about selecting a consulting service.
 11:45am **Raffle/Closing**



Invited Speakers:



Karl R. Ottosen is a shareholder and managing partner with the law firm of Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. at the firm's Naperville office. Mr. Ottosen has over thirty-five years of experience representing government entities. He is a frequent speaker

at seminars and workshops on topics such as labor, employment, and local government law issues. [You may contact Mr. Ottosen at kottosen@ottosenlaw.com.](mailto:kottosen@ottosenlaw.com)



Stephen H. DiNolfo is a shareholder with the law firm of Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. Mr. DiNolfo's practice is concentrated in the full range of litigation services. From the Naperville office, Mr. DiNolfo manages the firm's litigation practice and

handles a variety of liability, employment, discipline, and labor matters for the fire service. His email address is sdinolfo@ottosenlaw.com.



Aaron Zamzow, known as ZAM, has an extensive background with over 20 years of experience as an on-call paid firefighter in Golden Valley, Minnesota, and currently serves as a Fire Lieutenant in Madison, Wisconsin. He chairs the Fitness and Nutrition advisory boards for the First Responder Center for Excellence (FRCE) and

founded Fire Rescue Fitness, a company dedicated to developing workout programs and fitness resources specifically for first responders.

Aaron holds a Bachelor of Science degree in health and wellness and is a certified Peer Fitness Trainer through NSCA, NASM, Precision Nutrition, and ACE. With more than 30 years in the fitness industry, he has worked with professional athletes from the NBA, NFL, and NHL, as well as general fitness enthusiasts.

His writing has been featured in several publications, including Firehouse, Fire Rescue Magazine, Lexipol, FR1, and International Fire Fighter. He is also the host of the "Better Every Shift" Podcast hosted by FireRescue1, where he and his guests delve into important topics relevant to the fire service.



Daniel W. Ryan is project coordinator for the Illinois Public Pension Fund Association (IPPFA). He is retired from careers in municipal finance and union benefits and is a long-term trustee of the Skokie Police Pension Fund. Dan has served on the adjunct faculty at SIU and Lewis University and is an instructor in public finance at the NIPSTA Fire Academy. His book, Social

Security for State and Local Government Employees, has been referenced in the Wall Street Journal and the Chicago Tribune. He is the lead author on the IPPFA Retirement Guide and the Chicago Police and Fire Retirement Guide

Joel J. Babbitt has been active in the insurance, investment, and Third-Party Administration business since 1987. Since 1991, Joel has been primarily focused on improving the retirement outcomes of public sector employees and has assisted local unions in contract negotiations in structuring Retirement Healthcare Funding solutions.

Joel created, under the umbrella of The National Public Pension Fund Association (NPPFA), The Wise Choice Co-Op. The co-op includes The NPPFA 457(b) Plan (The Wise Choice For Public Workers), Retirement Healthcare Funding Programs (VEBA), The Wise Choice For Educators 457(b)/403(b) Plan, and the 401(a) Plan. The plan has nearly 300 participating units of government, 15,000+ participants, and nearly \$1 billion of assets under management. Since 2001, these programs have saved public sector employees over \$55 million dollars in fees.

Joel has been a featured speaker at Institute for International Research, numerous FOP and FOP Labor Council Conferences, Municipal Treasurers Association, the Illinois Public Pension Fund Association, National Public Pension Fund Association, Pennsylvania Association of Public Employee Retirement System, National Association of Police Organizations, Texas Public Employee Retirement System, along with presentations at state and national police and fire union conferences for funding retirement healthcare programs and improving retirement outcomes.



Chief David Traiforos David Traiforos is a 53-year member of the fire service. He currently teaches as an Instructor at McHenry County College Fire Academy in Crystal Lake, IL. Career firefighter serving in all ranks of the

Franklin Park IL Fire Department over a thirty-year career. He retired as Chief of Department. He has had a passion to teach the next generation of firefighters serving as a fire service instructor since 1988. This has allowed him to be involved in teaching as a HOT (Hands On Training) Class and Classroom Instructor at FDIC (Fire Department Instructors Conference) for twenty-five years. He is a nationally recognized instructor, speaker and author speaking and teaching a variety of instructional classes with his own company Great Lakes Fire & Rescue Solutions. He has been an adjunct instructor in the Fire Science Programs for College of DuPage, in Glen Ellyn IL, Triton College in River Grove IL and McHenry County College in Crystal, Lake IL.

Mark Your Calendar
IFCA Annual Conference
October 12-15, 2025
Peoria Civic Center/
Peoria Marriott Pere Marquette
More Info Coming Soon

Watch for an email from Survey Monkey.
Submit your questions for the Attorney's Forum.

Invited Speakers continued:



Daryl Carlson serves as the Program Manager for the Alzheimer's Association Illinois Chapter out of the Peoria office. He holds a bachelor's degree in communication along with several certifications in advanced communication models and coaching.

Daryl Carlson joined the Alzheimer's Association in November of 2015 after 15 years of non-profit work in Alaska, Russia and Ukraine. Daryl brings his diverse experience, training, and talents to advance the vision of a world without Alzheimer's disease and all other dementia.



Joe Henning serves as the Fire Science Coordinator at Western Illinois University in Macomb, IL. He holds a Master's Degree in Organizational Behavior from Benedictine University in Lisle, IL. He is also a retired Fire Chief from Quincy IL, having served that Department for 28 years, the last 12 years as Chief.

Joe joined the Alzheimer's Association in Spring of 2023 as a Macomb Walk Volunteer with Omega Gamma Phi, the Western Illinois University Fire Club. The next year, he assumed the role of co-chairman of the Macomb Walk, a position he holds again this



Raymond Kay began his service as a responder in 1984 as a Paid-on-Call Firefighter for the Roberts Park Fire District. In 1987 Ray began a full-time career with the Downers Grove Fire Department, then moving to the Oak Lawn Fire Department and lastly finding a home at the Orland Fire District. Ray progressed through ranks at the Orland FPD including serving as the Fire Chief.

In a parallel pathway, Ray has been a Field Staff Instructor at the Illinois State Fire Academy, IFSI, since 1994, remaining active today. Serving as the Hazardous Materials Program Coordinator for IFSI, Ray worked with numerous public safety organizations beyond the fire service including law enforcement, EMS, public health, emergency management, military agencies, and Federal agencies. In addition to working with the State Fire academy, Ray has been instructing at the community college level and developing Master's level curriculum and teaching at the master's level at National Louis University. Ray has been an invited guest speaker at national level conferences for the US EPA and OSHA. The Naval Postgraduate School invited Ray on several occasions to be a guest speaker, to address Master's degree candidates.

Recently Ray served as the Homeland Security Branch Chief for the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS)-IL assigned to Cook County Emergency Management and Regional Security (EMRS). Ray holds a Master's degree in Homeland Security from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, attained an Illinois Professional Emergency Manager (IPEM) certification from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and numerous additional educational achievements. Working with Cook County EMRS, Ray has supported a wide variety of planning efforts, planning documents.

Watch for an email from Survey Monkey.
Submit your questions for the Attorney's Forum.



Mark Your Calendar

Illinois Fire Chiefs Educational & Research Foundation Annual Golf Outing

**Wednesday, July 16, 2025
Bloomingdale Golf Course
Bloomingdale, IL**

all proceeds benefit the
IFCERF Scholarship Program

**Join us for a day of fun benefiting
the Illinois Fire Service**

