



FIRE & LIFE SAFETY SECTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS



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Ed Comeau is the 2009 Winner of ICC's Award for Excellence in Fire & Life Safety

We are very pleased to announce that Mr. Ed Comeau is the third annual winner of the Excellence in Fire & Life Safety Award, sponsored by the International Code Council (ICC). This year, the judges felt that Mr. Comeau best exemplified the award criteria of an individual whose service, professional abilities and leadership were exemplary in promoting fire prevention and who serves as an example to all fire prevention and fire protection professionals.

The award was presented at Fire Rescue International on August 28 by Fire Chief Adolf Zubia, president of the International Code Council and board member of the Fire & Life Safety Section, and Chief Jeffrey D. Johnson, president and chairman of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). They were joined on stage by Mr. Jim Tidwell, who was, until recently, the vice president for fire service activities for the ICC.

Mr. Comeau, of Belchertown, Mass., is the owner of Writer-Tech.com, a technical writing firm that publishes [Campus Firewatch](#), a monthly electronic newsletter that focuses on issues relating to campus fire safety. He is the founder and past-director of the Center for Campus Fire Safety, a nonprofit education and advocacy organization focusing on the complex issues of campus fire safety. Mr. Comeau has been instrumental in developing educational materials targeting students as well as raising national awareness of the importance of fire safety among parents, administrators, legislators and students. His writing has appeared in a number of international publications and he is the author of the campus fire-safety chapter in the current edition of the *NFPA Fire Protection Handbook*.

Before forming Writer-Tech.com, Mr. Comeau was the chief fire investigator for the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Fire Investigations Department, responsible for the investigation of numerous major domestic and international incidents, including the English Channel Tunnel Fire, the Dusseldorf Airport Terminal Fire and the Oklahoma City bombing, among others.

Before joining NFPA, Mr. Comeau was a fire protection engineer for the Phoenix Fire Department, where he helped organize the department's urban search and rescue program and develop training materials for the department's technical rescue program in the areas of structural collapse, trench rescue and confined-space operations. Prior to joining the Phoenix Fire Department, he was an on-call firefighter for the Amherst, Mass., Fire Department.

In 2007, Mr. Comeau began a project to record and disseminate information about significant multiple-fatality fires after what seemed like a horrible start to the year. He researched and documented the fires through his own efforts by searching the news, compiling the data and making it widely available using the latest internet tools, including a very effective visual link in *Google Maps* to allow viewers to see where and when these multiple-death fires are occurring.

As a result of Ed's questions that often start with "Why can't we...?" he began working with the USFA to increase the availability of daily information of civilian fire deaths nationwide.

Most recently Mr. Comeau has been heavily involved with the Vision 20/20 initiative to review performance of past fire and life safety efforts and to focus attention and resources on those areas that remain a problem or where recommendations have been deferred. He has worked tirelessly behind the scene on many logistical areas to ensure that the initiative is a success.

Comments from Colleagues:

Ed has been a major contributor to Vision 20/20. His contributions on the Executive Committee have had a profound impact on our work.

Fire Marshal Jim Crawford, Vancouver Fire Department

Ed has been instrumental in many of the fire prevention efforts that Firehouse.com is bringing to the fire service. The idea to create the annual catastrophic fire podcast has had a great impact for us.

Peter Matthews, Editor (Firehouse.com) *Cygnus*

Any narrative should acknowledge Ed's contributions while at NFPA, as well as the many facets of his campus fire safety initiatives including meetings on Capitol Hill and helping—at no charge—many who have benefited from his insights. In the case of my home community, Ed helped public safety officials at Mount Saint Mary's University understand the difference between "safety and security," which after more than a dozen years of encouragement from the local Vigilant Hose Company finally sunk in, leading to sprinkler retrofitting of 200-year old wooden multi-story student dorms now underway there.

R. Wayne Powell, Fire/Life Safety Specialist, Marriott International

Ed has always asked the right questions on sprinklers, smoke alarms, fire investigations, campus safety and fire fatalities.

Ken Farmer, Branch Chief, U.S. Fire Administration

What can you say ... the guy gets it done; he translates the rhetoric into reality that makes for a Fire Safe America.

John A. Viniello, President, National Fire Sprinkler Association