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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

What An Honor

By Gary Ludwig, MS, EMT-P



What an honor and privilege it is to be elected by you as chair of the EMS Section for the International Association of Fire Chiefs. I feel truly blessed in my life for a kid who grew up on the near south side of St. Louis in a working-class neighborhood.

No words can describe the extreme pride I feel that so many of my professional peers in the fire service would have such confidence in me to elect me to this key and vital role.

But before I celebrate too much, I know that I have a major challenge in front of me. The Section chairs who have come before me have set a high standard for this position. The leadership, vision and direction they've provided for the EMS Section puts me in a demanding position. Such previous chairs as Ricky Davidson, MaryBeth Michos, Jack Krakeel, Ken Riddle and John Sinclair have set us on a course of success, and it's up to me to continue advancing the Section and the principles of fire service EMS. I have big shoes to fill.

With the exception of Ricky Davidson, I'm privileged to have served on the Executive Board under all previous chairs. Watching how they achieved their goals and provided leadership and stewardship was an immeasurable experience for me. I'm also appreciative of all the mentoring they provided.

Before I launch into other thoughts, I want to thank John Sinclair, who moves into the role of immediate past chair of the Section. John served four years as chair and put in countless hours serving the membership. John is truly dedicated to fire service EMS and the Section. His ability to make a speech, run a meeting, network with individuals from all sectors of our profession and provide leadership during some rough and controversial times over the past four years won't be forgotten. The Section owes a debt of gratitude to John, and I'm truly appreciative of his energy and friendship.

If I have one theme during the period in which I'll serve, it's service to our members. The other members of the Executive Board and I are here to serve you. Our members make up our Section. My energies and efforts will be focused on aiding you directly or by representing you on numerous projects, in legislation, or with other national fire and EMS organizations. It's my plan to increase communications within the Section and with individual members. I also want to increase the participation of our members within the Section on a range of projects, or by having you represent us at various functions with other national fire and EMS organizations.

I believe transparency is important. It was my mission to get the newsletter you're reading started

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NEAR-MISS REPORTING SITE INCLUDES EMS

By Courtney McCain

In an effort to decrease line-of-duty injuries and deaths, the IAFC has launched an online, "near-miss" reporting system so fire and EMS personnel can share lessons learned from duty-related close calls.

There isn't much braggadocio within the collection of stories. Rather, it's a series of humbling, "there but for the grace of God" anecdotes and lessons learned from those experiences. System organizers hope that reporting those near-misses not only will spur increased safety, but also yield data that can improve

preventative training.

Prompted by the long-term success of the aviation industry's near-miss reporting system and of recent fire and EMS "close call" Web sites, the IAFC launched the National Firefighter Near-Miss Reporting System in 2005, which for the first time obtains data on fire and EMS-related close calls. Now well into its second year, the IAFC's site has already logged more than 1,300 reports from fire personnel across the United States and Canada.

"The information we've learned has been

invaluable," says John Tippet, project manager for firefighternearmiss.com. "Mostly, the contributing factors to near-misses are human errors. There are decision-making and situational awareness lessons to be learned from how these responses were handled."

To date, nearly half of the site's near-miss reports involve fire-related emergency incidents. Another 20% involve EMS and rescue operations. An additional 20% of reports were filed about vehicular occurrences while re-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 6](#) ⇨

TREASURER'S REPORT
REPORT FOR 2007
AS OF 4/30/2007

EMS SECTION: ACCOUNT 605/810

CARRYOVER FROM PREVIOUS YEARS	\$ 307,675
INCOME MEMBERSHIP DUES + (MAILING LIST)	\$ 7,120
INCOME CONFERENCE*	\$ 207,030
TOTAL SECTION EXPENSES*	\$ 130,972
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 390,853

* The Income and Expenses for FRM 2007 will not be complete until the end of August 2007. These are amounts to-date only

Since 1997, the annual conference Fire-Rescue Med has provided an average of \$76,000 per year to the revenue of the EMS Section.

Submitted by: David S Becker
EMS Section Treasurer
May 29, 2007

EVENTS, LEGISLATION, NEWS & NOTES

THIS SPOT IS RESERVED for best practices, news, events and legislative activities. Please send us a brief description of any of the above, and we'll feature them in the newsletter. If you think your organization is doing something we all need to know about, let us know so we can get the information out and help your peers. This is a conduit and flows both ways; it's most effective if you contribute. Send an e-mail to Gary.Ludwig@memphistn.gov.

EMS SECTION ELECTION RESULTS

By Mark Lockhart

The EMS Section conducted an election of officers in April, and the results were announced at the Section meeting in Las Vegas on April 29. Gary Ludwig was unopposed in the election for Section Chairman and was declared elected by acclamation at the Section meeting.

Three candidates ran for the office of Treasurer: David Becker, Mark Bradford and Rick Patrick. A total of 390 valid ballots were cast and eight additional ballots were declared invalid because they were received after the election deadline. The Elections Committee met on Sunday, April 29, to tally the votes. Committee Chair and Chief Mark Lockhart of Maryland Heights (Mo.) Fire Protection District, Division Chief Norris Croom of Castle Rock (Colo.) Fire and Rescue, Chief Bob DiPoli (ret.) of Needham (Mass.) Fire Department and EMS Section Staff Liaison Lucian Deaton opened the ballots, verified a valid membership number, and counted and recorded the vote. As required by the Section's Election Policy, Chief Jeff Johnson (Ore.) served as a neutral observer and assisted with the vote tally.

Once the votes were counted, an automatic recount was done as required by Section policy. The Tellers Report was prepared and then given to then-Chair John Sinclair and announced at the Section meeting. Chief Becker received 224 votes, Chief Bradford 118 votes, and Chief Patrick 47 votes. There was one write-in vote for a candidate who had not been nominated. Chief Becker was declared the frontrunner and re-elected to a two-year term as treasurer.

The Section's current bylaws provide for the election of the chair and the treasurer in odd-numbered years and the vice chair, secretary, and director-at-large in even-numbered years. The office of vice chair is currently vacant and will be filled by appointment of the Executive Committee.

Nominations for the offices of vice chair, secretary and director-at-large will open in January 2008. A prospective candidate packet with the election policy, campaign protocol and 2008 election timeline is being prepared and will be released in August. Prospective candidates will find this year's election information at www.iafc.org/ems, or they may contact Lucian Deaton at ldaeton@iafc.org to receive a copy of the revised material when it's released. 



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The IAFC EMS Section promotes fire-based EMS by providing a forum for addressing fire service EMS issues, providing guidance and direction to the IAFC board and membership on fire service EMS issues, and representing fire-based EMS issues before the federal government and other EMS interest groups.

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FIRE-RESCUE MED CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

By Ken Riddle

The EMS Section held its 10th Anniversary Fire-Rescue Med Conference April 30–May 2 at the Orleans Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. This year's conference was a great success in terms of the topics presented and activities in support of fire-based EMS. More than 500 chief officers, EMS managers and others associated with fire-based EMS were in attendance.

The pre-conferences were held on April 28–29 and included a two-day course for designated infection control officers, presented by Katherine West, BSN, MSED, CIC, and James R.



Robbins

Cross, JD. Legal issues focusing on conducting personnel investigations were also presented by two attorneys with years of fire-based EMS experience, Winnie Maggiore, EMT-P, JD, and Chief John Murphy. In addition to these presentations, attendees had six other programs from which they could choose.

The general sessions were well attended with Steve L. Robbins, PhD, opening the conference on Monday. His presentation, "Unintentional Intolerance," was well received, and attendees talked about his message throughout the conference. The opening general session also included the presentation of the James O. Page EMS Achievement Award given to Battalion Chief Pete Lawrence from the Oceanside (Calif.) Fire Department. Chief Lawrence has been a long-time supporter of the EMS Section and has

spoken on EMS billing issues at Fire-Rescue Med every year except for one. Lawrence said he was "completely honored" to win the award, adding that he had known Jim Page. "To think of the people who have come before me and received this award is just amazing," he said.

Heart Safe Community Awards were also presented during the conference to a small and large community who have demonstrated how they've improved out-of-hospital resuscitation through various interventions. The 2007 winners of the annual awards, sponsored by Physio-Control, were Cookeville (Tenn.) Fire Rescue/Putnam



Racht

County EMS for the small community category and Montgomery County (Md.) Fire and Rescue for the large community category (see photo, below).

Other general session speakers included Jim Gentil; Paul Pepe, MD; and Ed Racht, MD. Closing general sessions featured two well-known speakers on fire-based EMS, retired Chief Alan Brunacini and star of the TV show "Emergency!," Randolph Mantooth. Both of their presentations were well attended.



Chief Alan Brunacini spoke to attendees about changes in fire-based EMS.

Cason provided information on the new national EMS education project and developing EMS education standards. Chief Jeffrey Lindsey, Estero (Fla.) Fire Rescue, held an interactive session on new EMS products, allowing Fire-Rescue Med exhibitors the opportunity to demonstrate products and answer questions posed by the attendees.

Several meetings were held in conjunction with this year's Fire-Rescue Med, including the



Mantooth

IAFC Board of Directors spring meeting. This was the second time the IAFC Board co-located their meeting with Fire-Rescue Med. The Western Fire Chiefs Association held their second annual Presidents Forum prior to the conference, and several IAFC committee meetings were held as well. Many national fire and EMS organizations have held their meetings before, during or after Fire-Rescue Med.

Plans are already underway for Fire-Rescue Med 2008, which will be held April 21–23, 2008, at the Orleans Hotel and Casino. Pre-conferences are scheduled for April 19–20. The IAFC EMS Section Executive Committee hopes to see you again next year in Las Vegas.

For more information on the conference, visit www.iafc.org/frm.

Ken Riddle is conference chair of the IAFC EMS Section, and recently retired as Deputy Fire Chief of Las Vegas Fire & Rescue after 28 years. He has been a member of the IAFC EMS Section Executive Committee for the past 16 years.



From left: EMS Section Immediate Past Chair John Sinclair; Lt. Jon Fiedler and Assistant Chief Mike McAdams, Montgomery County (Md.) Fire and Rescue; Assistant Director Tommy Copeland and Director Randy Porter, Putnam County (Tenn.) EMS; Chief John Kendrick, Cookeville (Tenn.) Fire Department; Section Chair Gary Ludwig; Section Conference Chair Ken Riddle; Section Treasurer David Becker.

EMS SECTION BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES FROM FRI 2006

The following minutes from the EMS Section meeting on Sept. 14, 2006, at Fire-Rescue International in Dallas were approved by Section members in attendance at the general business meeting in Las Vegas on April 29, 2007.

Introductions

Candidacy statement by Jack Parrow for 2nd VP

Treasurer's report presented by Dave Becker Reports from each board member including past board members

Committee reports

Bylaws: Discussion of revisions to the Section bylaws by Dave Becker. Discussion of each Section's changes was presented before those present. Motion made and seconded to accept the bylaws. Discussion ensued as follows:

- Article III, Section 2: Concern was raised from the floor regarding the requirement for a person to run for the chair's position to be a section member for four years and an executive committee member for at least four years. Motion made to require only membership of both the association and the EMS Section with NO requirement for longevity. Seconded and discussion ensued. Additional discussion was offered for the need for a degree of experience on the board to be eligible for the chair versus the converse argument that the assessment of experience should be up to the section members' discernment during the voting process. Additional amendment was offered by Larry Geroud to re-

quire election to the executive committee or a member of a standing committee for at least one year prior to running for chair. Proposed language as follows: "However, candidates for the office of chair must have been elected to the executive committee for at least one year." Question called and passed 16 to 13.

- 2.2.3, discussion about lifetime membership. Specifically, can the life member be allowed to vote but not allowed to hold office. Motion made and seconded not to allow lifetime members to hold office. Proposed language as follows: Lifetime membership in the EMS Section may be awarded to all past chairs of the EMS Section when they complete their term as immediate past chair. Lifetime membership in the EMS Section may also be awarded by a majority vote of the executive committee to any EMS Section regular member deemed deserving of such an honor. Lifetime members are not eligible to hold office in the EMS Section and vote on all EMS Section Ballots. The membership fee for lifetime members is waived. Vote carried with one nay vote.

- 2.2.4, language added and vote carried.

- 4.6.1, discussion ensued about the Section's representative to the Board of Directors of the IAFC and whether this position is appointed by the Board or by a vote of the membership. Motion made and seconded to have the EMS Board appoint the IAFC representative and ratified by the membership for a two-year term. This position will be able to serve upon the ap-

pointment by the EMS Section board and then ratified by the next regularly scheduled meeting. Motion passes 18 to 7. Amendment passes unanimously.

- Question was called for the approval of the bylaws in their entirety with the amendments made and approved above. Approved unanimously.

Comments by IAFC President Jim Harmes and 2nd VP Steve Westerman

Candidacy statement by Larry Geroud for 2nd VP

- Motion made by Gary Ludwig and seconded to support the candidacy of Larry Geroud. Unanimously supported by a vote of those present.

Candidacy statement by Jack Krakeel as Treasurer

Discussion of the HICFA/CMS Fee schedule by Jack Krakeel

- Recommendation is to reengage CMS regarding the weakening of the fee schedule.

Presentation by Ken Bouvier, outgoing president of the NAEMT

Presentation by David Bryson from DOT/NHTSA

Presentation by Deb Cason from NAEMSE Staff report from Lucian Deaton, IAFC New Business

- CMS Parking lot issues. EMS Section will plan to re institute the constituent meetings to deal with changes in the Medicare changes in billing.
- Strengthening Fire Based EMS and the response to the IOM report. 📄

Letter from the Chair continued from page 1

so that we could communicate with our members. Shortly, we'll announce our new and comprehensive Web page, where you'll find several resources available to you. And because I believe in transparency, our Web page of the future will contain all of our latest financial information, minutes from Section meetings, our strategic plan, our bylaws and more. I'm also exploring the possibility of a listserv that members within the Section can use to communicate and network with each other when one member is looking for a solution to a problem and another Section member might have the answer.

I look forward to working with other Section officers, Treasurer Dave Becker, Secretary Mike

Metro, and Director-at-Large Bruce Moeller. Dave, Mike and Bruce are energetic individuals who also wish to see the Section and fire service EMS prosper during our tenure.

Much is on our plate with our strategic plan for 2007. Expect to see more about a campaign to promote fire-based EMS called Advocates for Fire-Service Based EMS. The IAFC has partnered with other professional fire organizations to make known the advantages of fire-based EMS systems. New EMS educational standards are currently being worked on, and the Section will gather some of our members to provide comment on the draft document. The new standards could

have a dramatic impact on future EMS education and could impact the number of paramedics in the workforce.

There's still much more to do. But I want you to know that I'm always accessible to you. Feel free to call me or write me an e-mail. As I said, I'm here to serve you! 📄

Gary Ludwig, MS, EMT-P, is chair of the IAFC EMS Section and deputy fire chief with the Memphis (Tenn.) Fire Department. He has 29 years' experience and previously served 25 years with the city of St. Louis, retiring as the chief paramedic from the St. Louis Fire Department. He can be reached online at www.garyludwig.com.

In the Spotlight



CHIEF LAWRENCE HONORED AT FIRE-RESCUE MED 2007 James O. Page EMS Achievement Award Given by EMS Section

By David S. Becker and Ken Riddle

The IAFC EMS Section selected Battalion Chief Peter H. Lawrence, Oceanside (Calif.) Fire Department as the recipient of the 2007 James O. Page EMS Achievement Award for dedication and active involvement in fire-based EMS. Chief Lawrence was recognized for this achievement at the opening ceremonies at this year's Fire-Rescue Med conference in April.

Award background: In 1994, the IAFC EMS Section created an EMS award and presented it to the television show "Rescue 911." The following year, the award was given to James O. Page in recognition of his years of leadership, vision, and dedication in the promotion of fire-based EMS. The award was subsequently named after him.

Co-sponsored by the IAFC EMS Section and Physio-Control, the award is presented annually to an individual who has played a key role in creating or promoting non-clinical innovation and achievements in fire service EMS management and leadership that has had a positive impact nationally.

Individuals selected for this award must be dedicated to creating a positive image for EMS as a whole while being an advocate of the fire service, devoted to making a difference for the overall good of the fire service, and committed to furthering and strengthening the role and image of fire service EMS across the country.

In addition, the individual selected must have enthusiasm and dedication toward fire service EMS, professionalism and vision, desire for achievement and drive for excellence, and exemplary performance and leadership qualities.

The reimbursement pro: Chief Lawrence is the fire-service expert in the area of ambulance service reimbursement. For more than ten years, Lawrence has educated and represented

the fire service in the area of ambulance service reimbursement at the state and national level. He has represented the IAFC EMS Section as a member of the HCFA/Medicare Task Force (Ambulance Fee Schedule Negotiating Team) since 1998. He developed a complex spreadsheet to assist fire departments in estimating the financial impact of the 2002 Ambulance Fee Schedule. He has also presented numerous seminars and workshops on EMS, billing/reimbursement, and legislative strategy at local, state and national conferences.

Chief Lawrence also assisted the EMS Section on the FDA portable oxygen cylinder transfilling issue. He provided written comment on behalf of the IAFC and fire service in response to FDA regulations that would have made it too difficult for fire departments to comply, eliminating a fire department's ability to refill portable oxygen cylinders. Lawrence developed the national model compliance plan for fire and EMS agencies that perform oxygen transfilling in order to comply with the final FDA regulation.

Chief Lawrence has been active at the state level as a member of the California Fire Chiefs' Association (CFCA) EMS Section, serving on the Executive Board from 1993–1998, including two terms as the Southern Division President

and a member of the Legislative Task Force from 1994–1998. He represented the CFCA on the state's Emergency Medical Dispatch Task Force.

Chief Lawrence has been actively involved in the fire service for more than 25 years, 11 as a chief officer. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Irvine, and Chief Officer certification from the state of California.

In his own department, he has served in several areas, including emergency operations, training and safety, communications/dispatch, EMS, finance/ambulance billing, and emergency preparedness.

Chief Lawrence's devotion to the fire service and dedication to creating a positive image for fire-based EMS has earned him the 2007 James O. Page EMS Achievement Award. Congratulations, Chief Lawrence. 🏆

David Becker, MA, EMT-P, is treasurer of the IAFC EMS Section and the EMS program director at Sanford-Brown College in St. Louis, Mo. Contact him via e-mail at dsbeckermo@msn.com.

Ken Riddle is conference chair of the IAFC EMS Section, and recently retired as Deputy Fire Chief of Las Vegas Fire & Rescue after 28 years. He has been a member of the IAFC EMS Section Executive Committee for the past 16 years.

JAMES O. PAGE EMS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNERS

1995	JAMES O. PAGE (WHEN THE AWARD WAS NAMED)
1996	FIRE CHIEF DENNIS MURPHY, SPRINGFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT
1997	FIRE CHIEF ALAN BRUNACINI, PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT
1998	BATTALION CHIEF TIM HYNES, SALT LAKE CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT (POSTHUMOUSLY)
1999	JEFF DYAR, NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY, U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION
2000	BATTALION CHIEF RON BLAUL, ORANGE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
2001	DR. LORI MOORE, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS
2002	ASSISTANT CHIEF DR. DON WALSH, CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT
2003	MARY BETH MICHOS, FIRE CHIEF, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE
2004	GARRY BRIESE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF IAFC
2005	RICKY DAVIDSON, MD, (FORMER) EMS CHIEF SHREVEPORT FIRE DEPARTMENT
2006	JACK J. KRAKEEL, PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR, FAYETTE COUNTY, GA.
2007	BATTALION CHIEF PETER LAWRENCE, OCEANSIDE (CALIF.) FIRE DEPARTMENT

Near-Miss Reporting continued from page 1

sponding to or from a call. The remaining reports revolve around other on-duty events, including training incidents and horseplay.

The IAFC's reporting system is voluntary, confidential and non-punitive. Each report filed with the system is reviewed and altered to remove (and/or change to generic terms) potentially identifying information, such as names, departments and incident dates. The original submissions (including all optional contact information) are destroyed. But the main gist of the report remains the same, and that information is coded for the database and for Web site searches.

Any member of the fire service community that either is involved in or witnesses an event that would qualify as a near-miss (an unsafe occurrence that could have resulted in death, injury and/or property damage) is encouraged to file a report. Although contact information is optional, Tippet says more than 80% of those filing a report do provide call-back numbers.

"There are two criteria for having an item posted: It must have a narrative and there

must be a lesson learned," Tippet says. "The reporter controls information going into the report. The more detailed the report, the better for people who will be reading and learning from that situation. If reviewers have questions, they do contact the individual who filed the report for clarification."

Reviewers with the near-miss site are all experienced fire and EMS personnel, each with more than 20 years in and currently affiliated with a fire department. Each report is individually reviewed by at least two people within 72 hours of its receipt. In addition to removing identifying characteristics from reports, reviewers are careful to screen out editorial-type comments prior to the incident being posted. The system's strict adherence to anonymity has already been tested, with at least two department chiefs calling the IAFC to demand (unsuccessfully) original reports filed about specific situations.

"We have gone to extensive lengths to assure that these reports are confidential," Tippet notes. "If departmental chiefs and other individuals are on a mission to search the site for punitive reasons, they're missing the point. They're not using it for the right reasons."

The system operates under the direction of an appointed task force, including experts in fire safety and data collection. It's funded by grants from the U.S. Fire Administration and Fireman's Fund Insurance Company. The IAFC has chosen to avoid seeking manufacturer or related funds to avoid any potential of biasing submissions and/or data. When reports are submitted regarding equipment failure, for example, the names of companies are omitted from public view, but those manufacturers are notified by site reviewers of a near-miss involving their product.

According to Tippet, response to the site has been overwhelmingly positive. One of the system's most popular features is a weekly training e-mail (called Report of the Week). An actual situation is chosen by reviewers and expanded to include discussion questions. Subscribing fire companies often add their own, department-specific twists to the scenarios and use them in training.

"Word is spreading about the site," says Gary Ludwig, chair of the IAFC EMS Section. "We've heard very encouraging things about it."

Firefighterclosecalls.com, another popular Web site, serves as a daily news-style alert

board for close calls and catastrophes alike. Developed in 2003 as an offshoot of "The Secret List" (published since 1998 by Deputy Chief Billy Goldfeder, Loveland-Symmes, Ohio), firefighterclosecalls.com is co-owned by Goldfeder and California attorney Gordon Graham. Firefighterclosecalls.com also co-sponsors EMSclosecalls.com with the IAFC, and relies on IAFC EMS Section membership for day-to-day operations (which include fielding submissions and Web searches of EMS news to post on the site).

"The pivotal difference between the two sites is that National Firefighter Near-Miss is analyzing the data," Tippet says. The Web sites are "sister sites," with the close call sites serving in a news and advisory capacity and the near-miss site focusing on data collection. Both Goldfeder and Graham are on the task force that helped develop and now directs the National Fire Fighter Near Miss System.

The Near Miss system received initial funds from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. Tippet says the IAFC is waiting to hear whether a fourth year of funding from the DHS will be granted.

"Right now, we don't have an EMS-specific category on the site, and that probably will change," Tippet says. He adds that the site will undergo additional appearance makeovers in the near future, as well. 📧

Courtney McCain has worked as a paramedic in Kansas and Texas. She now resides in Kansas City as a freelance writer focusing on public safety issues. Contact her via e-mail at kemsnews@everestkc.net.

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Stand Down for Safety

The third annual International Fire and EMS Safety Stand Down takes place June 17–23, 2007.

The theme this year is "Ready 2 Respond." What events does your department have planned to improve firefighter and EMS safety and reduce injuries and LODD deaths?

For more information and to learn how to submit photos from your activities this year, visit www.iafc.org/standdown.



Chief Shimer

Member Profile

CHRIS SHIMER STRIVES TO END EMS CLOSE CALLS

By Courtney McCain

It isn't a new trend to publish near-miss accounts from public safety officers, but a Web site that focuses specifically on EMS close calls is gaining a lot of attention, thanks in part to a lot of work by IAFC EMS section member and Deputy Chief Chris Shimer.

EMSclosecalls.com reads like a bulletin board of ambulance calls gone bad. It's updated almost daily with links to news stories or with personalized accounts. Some of the stories feature photos of ambulances wrapped around trees, rolled into ditches and crushed in head-on collisions. There are video feeds and safety guidelines from EMS educators. Shimer hopes even EMS veterans who believe "it'll never happen to me" will spend time reading the site.

The Web site, operating as a partnership between the IAFC and Chief Billy Goldfeder (who with public safety expert Gordon Graham operates a similar site, firefighter-closecalls.com), was launched last year in an effort to focus more attention on EMS-specific near-misses. After Goldfeder approached the IAFC about co-sponsoring EMSclosecalls.com, IAFC EMS Section Chair Gary Ludwig contacted fellow section members for volunteer assistance with managing the Web site. Shimer was one of those who answered that call, and since then has proven his dedication with daily updates to the site.

Since November, Shimer has scanned the Internet and news sources for EMS-related incidents. He also posts e-mails he's received from EMS personnel who want others to avoid what befell them.

"What I saw really amazed me," Shimer says. "When I first started doing this, I really didn't think I would find as much as I did. But almost daily, something has happened to somebody. I'm astounded by the number of serious injuries and deaths that are occurring because EMS workers don't put on their own seat belts."

Shimer says situational awareness is another big factor in line-of-duty injuries and deaths. Lulled by a relative feeling of safety while working another wreck, EMS personnel have stepped into the paths of detouring vehicles. They've also been shot, stabbed and beaten after charging into scenes that weren't cleared first by law enforcement.

He says it's also humbling to realize what he isn't finding in the mainstream media, about incidents that doom many EMS providers but rarely make headlines: back injuries, shredded shoulders and knees, accidental needle sticks and contagion exposure—to name a few.

Shimer adds that it's always disheartening also to find news of EMS personnel who have been caught

committing criminal offenses.

"Some of this stuff is occurring on duty," Shimer says of publicized allegations of theft, sexual assault, domestic battery and driving under the influence. "This is a slap in the face of every EMS worker. I take a great deal of pride in this profession, and the criminal acts are very disturbing."

A third-generation firefighter, Shimer is originally from Cumberland, Md. He grew up further west, in the Appalachian Mountain community of Westernport. But after three major industries shut down there in the 1970s, Shimer took a job with the growing Howard County Department of Fire & Rescue, based in Columbia, Md. Now a 28-year veteran of the department, Shimer is deputy chief of EMS and training.

Shimer became a paramedic in 1980, eventually advancing to training officer status (he maintains his National Registry as a paramedic). His original life plan included retiring after 25 years on the job and then moving to Florida. In the midst of teaching new generations of fire/EMS personnel, he attended school himself, and became an RN in 1999. He also obtained his associate's degree in Fire Protection Technology and is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program.

His retirement plans changed when he was promoted to deputy chief and also got married. Shimer and his wife, Bobbie, are the parents of three grown children (one of whom is pursuing a fire service career), and have one grandchild. Now he's decided to stay in Howard County, but travels often with his family. His administrative status with Howard County keeps him very busy.

Though Shimer isn't in the traditional classroom much anymore, his influence via virtual classroom at EMSclosecalls.com is impacting multiple generations of EMS providers. The collection of EMS horror stories serve as humbling lessons in scene safety that are hard for anyone—rookies or veterans alike—to forget.

EMSclosecalls.com welcomes personalized accounts from EMS personnel that will help educate fellow professionals. The incidents need not be recent to be included, and although contact information is required, it is kept confidential. 🔒

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