



The Official  
Newsletter  
of the IAFC  
EMS Section

# EMS CHIEF ADVISOR

THE LEADERSHIP VOICE OF FIRE SERVICE-BASED EMS Summer 2008 Vol. 3 No. 3

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## FIRE-RESCUE INTERNATIONAL

August 15-16

EMS Section Booth:  
inside the IAFC Pavilion (#338)

EMS Section Business Meeting:  
Thursday, Aug. 14, 1:30-13:30  
Room 110

Colorado Convention Center  
Denver, Colorado

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR EMS Section Grows in Many Ways

By Gary Ludwig, MS, EMT-P



Not only is the EMS Section one of the largest and most active sections in the IAFC, but it continues to grow in many diverse and different ways.

First, Fire-Rescue Med held at the end of April grew in attendance and finances for the first time in several years. This year we had a little over 700 in attendance, and for the first time since 2002, financial reports highlight the conference netting over \$100,000 for the EMS Section. I cannot say enough about all the people from the executive board, our planning committee, our conference coordinator and IAFC staff who worked together to pull off this amazing feat when many fire departments are facing difficult financial times and the first area in budgets that get cut are travel, training and seminars. We also appreciate all the support we received from vendors who exhibited and those who partnered with us to support various components of the conference.

Another area where the EMS Section has grown and will continue to grow is in membership. As I write, we have approximately 1,300 members in the section. Earlier this year, the executive committee decided to provide one-year free trial membership to anyone who attended

Fire-Rescue Med and was an IAFC member, but wasn't a member of the EMS Section. With that said, I recently personally signed over 100 letters letting IAFC members know they are now members of the EMS Section for the one-year trial period. It is our hope that after that one-year period, they will see the benefits of remaining a member of the EMS Section.

We also have plans currently underway to reach out to other IAFC members who aren't members of the EMS Section and encourage them to join. Our strength is our membership and the diversity of talent we can bring to projects.

We also have an opportunity to grow the members of the EMS Section in another way. We recently changed our bylaws to allow affiliate members. This follows the initiative of the IAFC to reach out to company officers to join the IAFC. It is our hope that when they join the IAFC, they will be encouraged to also join the EMS Section.

Another area where the EMS Section continues to grow is in the number of committees and liaisons we have with other national fire and EMS organizations. We have also grown the participation by our members in section activities through these committees and liaison positions. As I write, we have 10 different committees

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## It's the Economy...

By Courtney McCain

After reaping the benefits of past budget windfalls, fire agencies now face an economic downturn, and their chiefs have been left with tough choices.

Departmental budgets are being depleted from both sides: Plummeting property values have led to less property tax revenue for agencies, and skyrocketing oil prices maxed out annual fuel budgets by mid-year. Though services are being affected in different ways, it's happening across the country.

"This crisis is where fire and EMS service

leaders will emerge," said Chief Rob Brown, of the Stafford County (Va.) Fire & Rescue Department. "Now is when true leadership is needed. Checkbook's closed. It's blood, sweat and tears time."

### Mortgage crisis hits stations, staffing

It seemed too good to be true, and of course, it was. Dream houses were sold to buyers who were lulled into adjustable rate mortgages. Now abandoned in foreclosure, thousands of vacant homes are dragging

their neighborhoods down into the valuation abyss.

"We've been severely impacted here," Brown said of his department, located just south of Washington, D.C. "We've got more than 1,200 foreclosures in our county right now, and it's not showing any signs of getting better. Home values in our county have dropped on average 14 percent. So with that, property taxes have been down that much, and that's impacting how much we're receiving."

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## TREASURER'S REPORT

AS OF 5/31/2008

### EMS SECTION: ACCOUNT 605

CARRYOVER FROM PREVIOUS YEARS	\$ 307,675
INCOME MEMBERSHIP DUES + (MAILING LIST)	\$ 8,010
TOTAL SECTION EXPENSES	\$ 53,723
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 261,962

### 2008 FIRE-RESCUE MED CONFERENCE: ACCOUNT 810

TOTAL INCOME	\$ 361,227
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 224,807
NET ASSETS	\$ 135,420
<b>TOTAL ASSETS (ACCOUNTS 605/810)</b>	<b>\$ 398,382</b>

Submitted by: Rob Brown  
EMS Section Treasurer

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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.

EMS CHIEF ADVISOR is published quarterly by the International Association of Fire Chiefs on behalf of the EMS Section.

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Subscriptions are free for EMS Section members. To see if you qualify, contact Member Services at [membership@iafc.org](mailto:membership@iafc.org) or by phone at 866-385-9110.

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### EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Contact Chief David Becker, Ret., via email at [dsbeckermo@msn.com](mailto:dsbeckermo@msn.com).



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### EMS Chief Advisor Part of an EMS Information Team

The purpose of *EMS Chief Advisor* is to be an informational conduit to members of the EMS Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs from the leadership and active members of the section.

In-depth reviews of contemporary trends, current projects of the section and issues our members are challenged with will be dissected and discussed. *EMS Chief Advisor* strives to present real solutions from the leadership and our members, continuing the tradition of being an invaluable resource for the EMS chief officer, company officer and fire chief.

Two articles from this quarter's edition continue on [www.iafc.org/emsSection](http://www.iafc.org/emsSection), the section's website. There, you can also find timely information on issues affecting the

EMS community. The site's Resource page is also a strong tool for information on section activities and current and past EMS projects.

In addition to *EMS Chief Advisor*, EMS Section members also receive the monthly Message from the Chair via email. This more informal publication provides information on section business, upcoming events and breaking EMS community news.

To make your voice heard, continue the discussions raised in *EMS Chief Advisor* and learn from others about current EMS issues, visit the EMS Forum pages. These are accessible to IAFC members from [www.iafc.org/forums.cfm](http://www.iafc.org/forums.cfm). You can find one forum for EMS issues and a second for discussions of EMS Section projects. ☒



Chief Isaacson

# Member Profile

## A FOCUS ON EMERGING DISEASES

EMS Chief Steve Isaacson, Overland Park, Kansas, Fire Department

By Courtney McCain

Though relatively new to the IAFC's Emerging Diseases Task Force, Steve Isaacson brings with him 34 years of experience in public safety and a track record of fostering amiable relationships between agencies. He is EMS chief of the Overland Park (Kan.) Fire Department, a combination ALS agency in the suburbs of Kansas City.

Isaacson's involvement with the task force began late last year, following a conversation with Kathy West and Jim Cross, friends of Isaacson's who are also experts in infection control. They told Isaacson about the reauthorization of the Ryan White Act and the as-yet-unnoticed omission of provider-notification language. Hoping to alert public-safety personnel, Isaacson contacted the IAFC.

Immediate Past EMS Section Chair John Sinclair suggested that Isaacson present his findings about the new legislation to section membership at the Fire-Rescue Med conference in April.

"Around 30 other agencies have called for more information on the Ryan White Act," Isaacson said. "I always advise people to build relationships between their departments and their area hospitals. It's all about relationships, and I ardently encourage them to develop those. Make the hospitals a part of your team."

He continues battling both retooled Ryan White Act and the constant potential for the newest infectious disease outbreak to test those hard-won relationships between healthcare providers.

According to Isaacson, "We're trying to build our hospital relationships on two fronts: Through me and my staff, and through the occupational-health folks. Occupational health sees the hospitals from a different angle, and holy cow, that has made a huge impact on the ability to coordinate release of that information."

A native of Bloomington, Minn., Isaacson grew up watching his father handle the emotionally hardening work of a police officer.

"I saw what that did to him, and I wanted nothing to do with police work, but I loved everything else about public safety," Isaacson said.

Spurred also by the TV show *Emergency!*, he joined the Bloomington Volunteer Fire Department in 1974 just after graduating high school. He got his EMT certification while attending Bethel University in nearby St. Paul, then left one year early when an opportunity to become a paramedic came up in 1978 through the Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) in Minneapolis. As a paramedic, he worked for HCMC EMS before eventually moving to the Kansas City area in the mid-1980s.

In 1986, he began working for Johnson County MED ACT, an ALS agency that covered the entire county while being stationed in its various municipalities. Isaacson was assigned to work an ambulance based in the suburban city of Overland Park.

"I got absolutely smitten with the culture of the Overland Park Fire Department (OPFD)," Isaacson said. "And working in that station with these people who brought me in—I became part of a family. It absolutely blew me away. We had different jobs but we did them together, we practiced together, we built each other up. I had never seen that before, that culture of family."

Until he began working out of the OPFD station, Isaacson had little desire to get back into firefighting. But as soon as OPFD had an opening, he applied and was hired as a firefighter/EMT. At that time, OPFD was a BLS agency. "I went from being a team leader (lieutenant) on a paramedic truck to being a firefighter/EMT on a BLS ambulance," Isaacson said. "I did that for five years and enjoyed every minute."

It was a solicitation for agency improvement ideas in 1998 that led to Isaacson's next role with the OPFD. Isaacson wrote a letter including suggestions about how an EMS coordinator could help consolidate tasks. With-

In this profession, I'm often reminded of the importance of living for every day. It is all about relationships.

in days, Isaacson found himself promoted into the very position he'd recommended.

There were bigger changes to come for the department. Overland Park was rapidly expanding, and with a fifth station slated to open soon, OPFD hired 24 people (many of them paramedics). Non-fire trained new hires went through a three-month fire academy, and in 1999 the service transitioned from BLS to ALS.

It wasn't long before transport-related issues began emerging between OPFD and MED ACT. But the usual divisive solutions weren't what either department wanted. "So we came up with a third option, and this was a hybrid partnership that we have today," Isaacson said. "In Overland Park-based MED ACT stations, those ambulances are staffed with one MED ACT paramedic and one OPFD paramedic. They're cross-staffed. The trucks also have both logos on them."

After his EMS-induced exit from Bethel, Isaacson did complete his bachelor's degree (in management of human resources), through Mid-America Nazarene University in nearby Olathe. He has also received EFO ranking from the National Fire Academy.

Isaacson's wife, Janalee, is a professor of nursing at Johnson County Community College. Together with their daughter Anna, the Isaacsons enjoy traveling and spending time together as a family. "I cannot stress enough the importance of my relationship with my family," Isaacson said. "In this profession, I'm often reminded of the importance of living for every day. It is all about relationships." ❏

*Courtney McCain has worked as a paramedic in Kansas and Texas. She works in Kansas City as a freelance writer focusing on public safety issues. Contact her at [kems-news@everestkc.net](mailto:kems-news@everestkc.net).*

# In the Spotlight

## Disease Exposure and Notification

By Courtney McCain

*Originally formed as an information summarizer for fire departments, an IAFC task force now finds itself on a legislative frontline few saw coming.*

The Emerging Diseases Task Force has existed for years beneath several different names (each according to its disease of focus). Today, the task force studies all pathogens, though recent focus has been on pandemic flu and antibiotic-resistant bacteria. It serves as a central hub for IAFC members to get CDC-based information in a format that can be easily distributed to station personnel.

“There’s a lot of bad information in the media,” said John Sinclair, chair of the task force. “We want members to know the truth from the hype. They need immediate, concise and accurate information so they can plan realistically for what might happen.”

But in preparing for the worst diseases, few in public safety envisioned that a contagion of assumption would ultimately doom a federal clause that had been

in place for years. It spread unchecked during a seemingly innocuous committee meeting and quietly snuffed out federal regulations requiring receiving facilities to release to EMS the disease status of recently transported patients.

### Federal responder notification clause has disappeared

Removal of the notification clause occurred during reauthorization of the Ryan White Act and is only the latest legislative loophole for public-safety personnel who were all but forgotten in the rush to enact privacy laws. Five years after the vague Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) plan went into effect, pre-hospital providers still face daily, HIPAA-related squabbles for follow-up information on patients they transported.

Sinclair said that since prehospital providers are an extension of patient-care teams, release of that information should be a no-brainer. For more than 15 years, hospitals were required by federal law to share that information. While HIPAA made

The original Ryan White Act, enacted in 1990, required receiving hospitals to share pathogen-related information with transport agencies.

notification more difficult, EMS agencies still had the Ryan White Act behind them.

The original Ryan White Act, enacted in 1990, required receiving hospitals to share pathogen-related information with transport agencies. But when the Act was reauthorized in 2006, it was approved in its “incomplete form,” said Steve Isaacson, EMS chief with the Overland Park (Kan.) Fire Department and member of the IAFC’s task force.

“What was removed was the whole section on responder notification,” Isaacson said. “And it was removed because the staffers working on that committee felt that the Ryan White Reauthorization Act was a funding mechanism for research and not a mechanism for notification.”

The omission remained unnoticed by public-safety organizations for more than a year before infectious disease specialists Katherine West and Jim Cross found out what had

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### Letter from the Chair continued from page 1

and 13 different liaison positions consisting of many different EMS Section members. Some of these committees cover bylaws, elections, Medicare/Medicaid billing, emerging diseases, the EMSclosecalls.com website, homeland-security preparedness, plus more. We also continue to have members serving as liaisons with such national organizations as the ACEP, NAEMSP, IAFF, AAA, CAAS, FICEMS, Fire Service Based EMS Advocates, NAEMSE, NAEMSO, NAEMT, the James O. Page Foundation, plus others.

Another national organization we hoped to be aligned with in the near future is the Committee on Accreditation of Educational

Programs for the EMS Profession. We have applied for and hope to gain a seat on the board of directors in the near future. With EMS education a main foundation of the EMS profession, it’s important that the IAFC participate where these important decisions are being made and offer our expertise.

Our work grows in other important areas also. We formed a working group, bringing together voices from across the EMS community, to deal with the Ryan White Reauthorization Act. This legislation is important to ensuring that those performing EMS are notified or have the ability to determine if a source patient has an infectious disease.

Again, I am limited by the space in this column from mentioning all the other exciting things where the EMS Section continues grow, but our strength is in the many fine people who sit on the executive board and many of the EMS Section members who unselfishly contribute their time and talents. I am deeply appreciative of all their efforts. ✦

*Gary Ludwig, MS, EMT-P, is a 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. He is vice chair of the EMS Section for the International Association of Fire Chiefs and can be reached online at [www.garyludwig.com](http://www.garyludwig.com).*

happened. The Virginia-based couple (she's a nurse, he's an attorney) operate a consulting firm called Infection Control/Emerging Concepts and often receive related queries from agencies and organizations.

During reauthorizations in years past, nothing had happened to the notification clause, and organizations typically called the firm after the fact to ensure nothing had changed.

"And this last go-around, we got our usual call," West recalled. "So Jim made some calls and discovered that it had been deleted, but he kept getting conflicting information. He spent probably two to three weeks confirming that, in fact, that subtitle was gone.

"The reason it happened was that groups of staffers had been sitting in the reauthorization meeting and wondered why (the subtitle) was there," West said. "Instead of calling the original people involved in the bill, they just deleted it. Nobody was there to speak up for it. We couldn't believe it."

### Telling the troops, defending the right to know

West and Cross notified various public-safety organizations, including longtime friend Isaacson and the IAFC. After the shock and knee-jerk anger wore off in the prehospital realm, there was initial concern about the hospitals finding out and suddenly refusing to release information.

While most facilities are doing "the right thing" as West put it, and are releasing necessary information to providers, some have refused under the reauthorization and behind their interpretation of HIPAA.

After Isaacson presented those realities to the EMS Section at the Fire-Rescue Med conference in April, the section created a Ryan White working group and has joined forces with other prehospital-affiliated national organizations working toward a new or rewritten law.

"Everyone's happy to be in this collabora-

*We'll be doing a lot of education, and letting [members of Congress] know why that notification was necessary and why it should be replaced.*

tive process, working together for the best solution to get this changed," Lucian Deaton, IAFC government relations manager,

said. "We are all on the same page."

The IAFC is soliciting anecdotes from chiefs across the country, detailing specific, refusal-to-notify situations that have occurred at receiving facilities (see sidebar).

"We'll be going to members of the House and Senate, and showing them what's happening in their districts," Deaton said. "We'll be doing a lot of education and letting them know why that notification was necessary and why it should be replaced."

In the meantime, West is adamant that prehospital providers be honest about what has happened to the Ryan White Act, especially if confronted with it by hospital personnel.

"You cannot tell people that a law exists when it doesn't," West said. "You cannot be dishonest in your representation."

Traditionally, it's easier to remove a law than it is to reinstate it. And merely tacking the original language back onto the Ryan White Act during the next reauthorization "is shortsighted," she said. "I think it should be a separate law. It needs to be stand-alone law so we don't risk this happening again."

### Moving forward with an improved law

In an attempt to redirect grumbling from prehospital ranks after news broke of the notification law's fate, the IAFC is taking a "let's move forward" stance.

"No fingers should be pointed," Isaacson said. "We just need to learn from what happened and how it was missed. The legislative process is so convoluted, and I don't know how we can have someone everywhere, but we have to learn from this and be ever-vigilant in all aspects of government affairs that are going to affect us."

Sinclair is certain that while more attention will be paid toward legislative matters in the future, it isn't practical to assume fire/EMS can be everywhere at once.

"You can go blind reading the Federal Register," Sinclair said. "This didn't come to our attention for a year. But here we were, thinking (the notification section) was there, but it got omitted. Some people think it was omitted on purpose, that it was more than a technical mistake. I don't really care about the causation. What's more important is that we're working toward fixing it and keeping this from happening again."

### Needed patient information? Didn't get anywhere with the receiving facility? Tell us about it!

The IAFC is soliciting anecdotes about hospitals not releasing follow-up patient information to providers, specifically involving infection-control issues. If your jurisdiction has faced these issues, please contact the task force or the IAFC office:

Chief John Sinclair  
Emerging Diseases Task Force  
Cell: 273-973-1606  
Email: [sinclairj@kvfr.org](mailto:sinclairj@kvfr.org)

Lucian Deaton  
IAFC Govt. Relations Office  
Phone: 703-273-0911  
Email: [ld Eaton@iafc.org](mailto:ld Eaton@iafc.org)

### Some hospitals already refusing information

"What has occurred up to this point in most systems is that when there's an occupational exposure, the agencies have gone to their local hospitals, worked through it and made it right," Sinclair said. "But all it would take is someone that says, 'We don't have to tell you anything.' That's less likely to happen in more rural environments, but it's highly likely to happen in an urban area. We need to get that protection back."

It's already happened in several urban areas, according to Dr. James Augustine, medical director of Atlanta Fire Rescue. Augustine is a member of the IAFC task force and often works with the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. He reports there have been problems in the Atlanta area with hospitals not sharing information, both before and after the restructured Ryan White Act.

"I've had to use my personal influence to get the results we desperately needed," Augustine said. ❖

**The article continues on the section's website, [www.iafc.org/emsSection](http://www.iafc.org/emsSection), addressing the issues of MRSA, future exposure concerns and the work of the Emerging Diseases Task Force.**

Also find expanded interviews with Emerging Diseases Task Force Members Katherine West and Dr. James Augustine.

Most agencies across the country experienced several years of growth and resulting budget windfall, and Stafford County was no exception. Fire personnel just moved into a new \$35 million headquarters complex, and the county is in the process of installing a \$27 million radio system.

"One of the things we've been preparing for here is that the (U.S. military) base realignment commission is relocating the military's investigative services to Quantico, which is located here in Stafford County. So we had been putting our money into capital and human resources, and it was almost like someone just shut the faucet off," Brown said of the economic turnaround. "It wasn't gradual. This housing thing, when it hit, it hit quickly.

Brown, who described fiscal year 2009 planning as a "brutal process," will start preparing FY 2010 in August. Stafford County is a combination paid/volunteer agency, and those volunteer ranks have been a lifesaver for the department itself.

"Having volunteers gives us an opportunity that many agencies don't have," Brown said. "We're holding positions open and reducing overtime, so we're able to cover some of our loss."

Nonetheless, he reluctantly agreed to minimum staffing—three firefighters per truck. "That's pretty much the national average, but for myself as a fire chief I believe four people operate the safest and most efficient engine company," Brown

said. "Going to three people—that keeps me up at night."

Brown has been pleased also by how responsive his personnel have been to the budget crunch.

I'm extremely proud of our organization and our union for the way they've embraced the cuts that had to be made.  
— Chief Rob Brown

"I'm extremely proud of our organization and our union for the way they've embraced the cuts that had to be made," Brown said.

"During the FY-09 budget process, the county board of supervisors had said no more cuts in public safety, but that meant others might lose their jobs in the county. So we went and cut an additional \$300,000 that we weren't required (to cut) so we could save those jobs."

### Balancing anticipated needs

Even the largest agencies have taken budget blows, both to their own agency and through assisting outlying agencies. The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD), which covers 59 cities and its unincorporated area, has not seen any of its 170 stations close. But areas that contract the department's services are taking different approaches as they face lean times to come.

"We're a fire protection district, so we're funded through property tax and through cities that have chosen us to provide life and safety services," said LACoFD Deputy Chief Mike Metro said. "Between the pressures that the state is exerting from sales tax revenues and the property values falling, these cities have begun to have financial

struggles and they may want to renegotiate their service contracts.

"What we're also seeing in these downtimes is cities that have their own fire departments are looking for alternatives, which may include turning over that agency to us," Metro said. "Oftentimes, we can do it cheaper than they can."

Metro said that although there have been some cuts in nonessential items and programs, no LACoFD personnel or fire stations have been affected. During the relative good times several years ago, it may have been tempting to use resulting economic windfall to purchase what they now cannot maintain: personnel or nonessential items. He's seen both extremes.

"One of the cities here needed personnel but opted for contract employees rather than hire permanent positions," Metro said. "That way, when the revenue decreased they could eliminate contract positions rather than lay off people."

Departments that had been forced to eliminate contracts or lay off personnel are now facing an earlier-than-normal fire season in the West. Fire investigators across the nation also know that as homeowners get desperate to sell in a stagnant market, vacant homes tend to catch fire, further taxing the resources of departments already straddling the red line.

Areas that contract the department's services are taking different approaches as they face lean times to come.  
— Deputy Chief Mike Metro

### Getting along

Longtime IAFC member Bruce Moeller was recently promoted to city manager from his chief's position with Sunrise Fire-Rescue in the Miami suburbs.

"When police and fire represent approximately 50 percent of a city's budget, there's no way you're going to deal with a 15 percent budget cut without impacting those departments and without impacting personnel," Moeller said. Sunrise has been

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## It's the Economy continued from page 6

forced to eliminate (for the time being) vacant positions in both the police and fire departments, including sworn positions.

"We just don't have a choice," Moeller said. "This is just the beginning of a financial tsunami."

Keeping agencies operating effectively also may involve a lot of pride-swallowing for personnel.

"We've got to continue to provide service, and that may mean partnering with adjacent departments that are also facing tough times," Moeller said. "I'm not advocating for full consolidation, but you can get a functional consolidation by enhancing those automatic aid agreements around you."

Union leaders also recognize that tough financial times means being more selective with their battles.

"The majority of union leaders are more savvy today, and they understand the political and financial realities," Moeller said. "They understand the economic cycles. From a collective bargaining perspective, during good economic times you go for economic enhancement. When the economic downturn occurs, you go for the operational or administrative changes that are beneficial but don't have a dollar value associated."

Metro is insistent that today's economy calls for all involved parties to "put everything on the table" during any negotiations.

"Management needs to be open with labor and show them the books," Metro said. "Here's the money coming in, here's what's going out. And many union leaders already are agreeing with this. They're saying they're not going for the big raises this year. It's neither practical nor reasonable."

### The ripple effect

Many chiefs are concerned about the ripple effect of budget crunches on businesses that rely on public safety.

"One of the other things that worry me is the survival of our suppliers," Brown said. "If departments no longer can afford to purchase new equipment, it could devastate our supplier markets. We've already seen this in the fire truck industry,

when major manufacturers of fire apparatus have gone bankrupt, and on the EMS side we could see the same. We might have equipment on our ambulances that may not have companies to back it up, anymore."

Most agencies that had ambulance rotation/replacement plans now plan to maintain the trucks they have instead. But they still must pay for repairs and labor of their aging ambulances.

"We'll save some money initially, but then we'll see maintenance costs go up, and if (the economic crisis) goes on for a long time, we'll see significant maintenance costs."

### Pain at the pump

It's already expensive to maintain and fuel emergency vehicles. But even plan-savvy chiefs who budgeted more for fuel this year weren't even close to the \$200 fill-ups many ambulance crews do at least once a shift.

"I am already \$100,000 over budget in my fuel line item," Brown said in mid-June. "And I know that beginning in FY-09, the fuel line item that was approved back in December will already produce a \$150,000 budget shortfall at today's fuel prices."

Rural services that have long transport times have been hard hit by steep fuel prices. Crews with Kittitas Valley Fire & Rescue, based in south-central Washington state, burn through a lot of fuel not only on their initial responses, but also on their near-daily inter-hospital transfers either to nearby Yakima or to Seattle, nearly 3 hours and a mountain pass away, said Chief John Sinclair, the immediate past chair of the IAFC's EMS Section.

While fuel is a nondiscretionary item in most budgets, some agencies are limiting



nonresponse-related fuel usage. Territory drives are becoming tabletop map study, and some departments are advising crews to shut their trucks down instead of idling at the ED or on standbys. Posting plans also are being looked at in areas that have system status policies.

But ambulance crews face the additional challenge of needing to maintain constant temperatures in the patient cab so medications won't be altered by heat or cold and so patients will be met with a temperate environment once they reach the ambulance.

### Lessons from recessions

Moeller may be in the city manager's office now, but he has not forgotten his firefighting roots, nor lessons of past eco-

There's a window of opportunity in times like this. And any good chief would be foolish not to look for things they've needed to fix within their department.  
— Bruce Moeller

nomical recessions.

"In economic good times, it's easy to get sloppy," Moeller said. "This is an opportunity for managers to correct some things that they've wanted to fix. You can't just see the badness of these times. There's a window of opportunity in times like this. And any good chief would be foolish not to look for things they've needed to fix within their department. And recognize this is a cycle. It's going to be 3 to 5 years of bad times, then it's going to start getting better." ❖



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