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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

What Happens in Vegas Doesn't Stay in Vegas When It Comes to Fire-Rescue Med!

By Gary Ludwig, MS, EMT-P



You've probably seen those television commercials where someone gets a little wild and crazy in Las Vegas and the commercial closes with "What Happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." That may be true, but when it comes to Fire-Rescue Med, we like to say, "What happens in Vegas does not stay in Vegas." This is especially true since past attendees at Fire-Rescue Med report that they have learned so much from well-respected speakers and by networking with other professionals that they can't help but take back what they learned to their respective fire departments and implement the ideas.

Fire-Rescue Med is the EMS Section's annual conference held each year in Las Vegas. The 2008 Fire-Rescue Med will be April 21-23, with preconference workshops on April 19-20, at the Orleans Hotel and Casino. The conference this year will be the 11th annual conference.

I am asking all of the approximately 1,300 EMS Section members to make every effort to attend this conference. Fire-Rescue Med is the EMS Section's main source of revenue and is a key venue used to promote and represent fire

service-based EMS systems, with the myriad issues that impact our profession. If we were to rely only on the \$15 cost to join the EMS Section, we wouldn't be able to maintain our reputation and hard work as one of the IAFC's most active sections.

The Fire-Rescue Med planning committee has put together another excellent program for 2008. As I like to tell people, if you are interested in learning how to deal with myocardial infarctions, how to start an IV or some other clinical issue, this is not the conference for you—there are plenty of those types of conference. Fire-Rescue Med focuses strictly on the management and leadership involved in fire service-based EMS systems.

Preconference workshops include a two-day workshop for the designated infection-control officer by the infectious-disease control guru Katherine West. Another two-day preconference workshop deals with developing and leading with ambulance medical strike teams. Other preconference workshops include the EMS Leadership Academy taught by many fine chief officers from California, an EMS mock trial, a survival course on leading and managing people by Jeff Dyar, and conducting

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MAINTAINING STATION MORALE IN A MEDIA STORM

By Courtney McCain

In a hypercompetitive media age, any deluge of journalists covering a major incident can increase the casualty count by shining their intoxicating spotlight on individual "heroes." Disaster may sell, but saved-from-death tales also become front-page news. Reporters constantly seek to pad their stories with quotes from rescuers directly involved in newsworthy incidents. But if left unchecked, media attention can be seductive for rescuers unaccustomed to fame.

Midland's cautionary tale

"These individuals who are put out there as

heroes—it can be very stressful for them, because the limelight brings a unique pressure," said Chief Jeffrey Lindsey, of Estero Fire-Rescue in Florida. "If these situations aren't handled appropriately, there are high rates of depression, there can be substance abuse and a few rescuers actually have committed suicide."

One of the most tragic examples of media overkill occurred in Midland, Tex., after the rescue of 18-month-old Jessica McClure from a well in 1987. At a time when comparatively few rescues were broadcast live,

this event and its aftermath exhibited how the spotlight can blind those in its glare.

Initially, there was jubilation: Major players in the Baby Jessica rescue were lauded worldwide and they granted interviews to anyone who requested them (reporters often called their homes). After months of near-constant media attention, internal sniping took hold within Midland's public-safety agencies, and squabbles erupted across town over competing movie deals.

Midland paramedic Robert O'Donnell,

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TREASURER'S REPORT

REPORT FOR 2007
AS OF 10/31/2007

EMS SECTION: ACCOUNT 605

CARRYOVER FROM PREVIOUS YEARS	\$ 307,675
INCOME MEMBERSHIP DUES + (MAILING LIST)	\$ 14,860
OTHER INCOME	\$ 480
TOTAL SECTION EXPENSES	\$ 118,344
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	\$ 204,671

2007 FIRE-RESCUE MED CONFERENCE: ACCOUNT 810

TOTAL INCOME	\$ 275,648
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 256,070
NET ASSETS	\$ 19,578
TOTAL ASSETS (ACCOUNTS 605 / 810)	\$ 224,249

Submitted by: Rob Brown
EMS Section Treasurer

EVENTS, LEGISLATION, NEWS & NOTES

THIS SPOT IS RESERVED for best practices, news, events and legislative activities. 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 email to Gary.Ludwig@memphistn.gov.

The fiscal year 2009 budget will be released in early February. When released, the section will provide an explanation (at www.iafc.org/emssection) on how the proposed budget impacts EMS departments and what to expect from Congress during 2008.

2008-2009 Executive Committee Nominations Period Opens

Nominations for election to the EMS Section executive committee positions of vice chair, secretary and member-at-large are due to the EMS Section Elections Committee no later than February 22. The 2008 candidate information packet, *Running for IAFC-EMS Section Office*, is available online at www.iafc.org/emssection, under News. It provides essential information about the process of running for an elected-officer position on the EMS Section's executive committee, ensuring all prospective candidates receive the same information regarding the election process and campaigning. The section encourages all members who are interested in running for election to review the candidate information packet online and submit their candidate information today! ❖

Win a Heart Safe Community Award!

The 2008 Heart Safe Community Award has been expanded to better honor fire-service EMS agencies. Existing awards presented for large- and small-agency CPR/AED training programs and PAD awareness will be complemented by an award presented to agencies with creative approaches to sudden cardiac arrest awareness, which includes STEMI management.

The 2008 nomination form and additional information can be found on www.iafc.org/emssection, under Awards. Nominations are due by Friday, March 21, and awards will be presented at Fire-Rescue Med in Las Vegas, April 21-23. The section encourages all members to submit a nomination on behalf of their departments. ❖

EMS CHIEF ADVISOR

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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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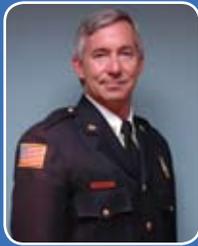
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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

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Chief Dan Hermes

Member Profile

CHIEF DAN HERMES

By Courtney McCain

As a boy growing up in the Chicago area, Dan Hermes had always dreamed of a career in aviation. He did get his pilot's license, but his career took wing in different ways.

Now chief administrator of the Pleasantview Fire Protection District (located in the suburbs west of Chicago), his expertise in finance, attention to detail and myriad interests have led him around the world.

"I was always in love with aviation," Hermes said. He initially wanted to be a corporate pilot, until he realized the type of hours those pilots put in (they were always on call).

The sagging, mid-1970s economy also factored into his decision to seek a different direction. "This was post-Vietnam, and I knew I'd have a better chance of getting a job if I were jack of all trades," Hermes said.

As a supplement to his pilot's license, he obtained aviation maintenance credentials (airframe and engine). Then he was encouraged by his cousin to apply to the Pleasantview Fire Protection District.

"And it was the typical story once I went out on my first calls," Hermes remembered. "Once I got the taste of being on calls, that was it."

Hermes rose quickly up the department ranks and gained accolades across the city and state—he was the first recipient of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association Chief of the Year Award in 2001 and recently was installed as the association president.

Throughout his firefighting career, Hermes continued his formal education, graduating recently from the University of Illinois with a master's degree in public administration. His concentration in statistics and research yielded many benefits for his department along the way.

"One of my strong points is finance," Hermes said. "When you're a municipal chief, you aren't as involved in the financial aspect. But I'm with a fire district, so I'm handling everything."

Through a Chicago-area friend, he even found himself serving as a delegate 10 years ago to the Russian Federation, traveling to Moscow and the surrounding areas and helping to set up a firefighter exchange program. The Chechnyan war and additional unrest within Russia has made recent exchanges too dangerous, but Hermes keeps in frequent touch with his Russian colleagues.

He is also there for administrative colleagues closer to home who have lost a member in the line of duty. A former facilitator and instructor with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, Hermes penned a manual geared specifically toward fire companies mourning the loss of one of their own. He is also a longtime member of the go-team that serves fire personnel in the state of Illinois.

Hermes has lectured across the country about fire-community deaths and has been instrumental in developing modern protocol for those funerals. It's typically the first—and most common question—he hears from chiefs who call for help.

"The initial concern that most chiefs have is what's protocol and what is not," Hermes said. "They're very conscious of the traditions, and they want everything done right."

Hermes has attended to the needs of fire personnel and their families for 252 funerals.

He is a member of numerous local,

"We'd better start waking up, because in 10 years, the increased needs of our population are going to run us over unless we're proactive."

regional and state advisory boards—some of which he chairs—and has received appointments to the Illinois Health & Safety Task Force and Illinois Building Commission.

Although Hermes allowed his pilot's license to expire in 2000 ("no time," he said), his maintenance license remains good for life. He is also a longtime Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader. Hermes and his wife, Kathy, have three grown sons—Dustin, Brandon and Colin—and at least one is showing interest in a firefighting career.

He has high hopes for another project he initiated three years ago, in which department paramedics will help nurses with area home health care. He said he hopes nurses who may have once felt threatened by a perceived intrusion into their scope of practice will appreciate EMS personnel who can help with increasing numbers of patients.

"EMS in this country continues to be the bastard stepchild, and we can't keep treating it that way," he said. "We'd better start waking up, because in 10 years, the increased needs of our population are going to run us over unless we're proactive. And this steamroller is coming, with 80 million baby boomers who've just begun qualifying for social security." ❖

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 kemsnews@everestkc.net.

INFORMATION SHARING IN FIRE AND EMS

By Division Chief Norris Croom and Major Brenda Leffler, Colorado State Patrol, Director, Office of Preparedness and Security

As we continue to learn from events around us, one of the key areas that continues to be a challenge in fire and EMS is information sharing. While we typically share information between ourselves, information sharing between fire and EMS and other public-safety agencies remains poor. Why is information sharing important? Because information and intelligence can directly impact the way we respond to incidents.

In October 2007, the White House released the National Strategy for Information Sharing (www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/infosharing/). While this is a far-reaching document about how information should be shared at all levels, it emphasizes the need for information sharing at the local and state levels. Not only are first responders critical to the efforts of prevention and response, but we are also in the best position to identify potential threats within our communities. Remember that information sharing is a two way street. Fire and EMS needs to ensure information flows up with the intent of gaining a good information flow back down.

One method of sharing information is through the state fusion centers. There are 58 fusion centers nationwide that are either operational or in the process of being established, and these centers provide an excellent opportunity for fire and EMS agencies to become involved.

Fusion centers are critical to the effective sharing of intelligence information among state, local and federal agencies. Today's terrorist and criminal threats are increasing, and it is critical that local and state agencies have the ability to act on valid intelligence information.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, a fusion center is a collaborative effort of two or more agencies that provide resources, expertise and information with the goal of maximizing the ability to detect, prevent, apprehend and respond to criminal and terrorist activity. The intelligence component of a fusion center focuses on the process in which information is collected, integrated, evaluated, analyzed and disseminated. Nontraditional collectors of intelligence, such as public-safety entities and private-sector organizations, possess important information that can be fused with law enforcement data to provide meaningful information about threats and criminal activity.

Some fire and EMS agencies are actively involved in their state fusion centers. California,

Arizona, Colorado and Georgia are just a few of the states that have fire and EMS participation. Addressing issues that range from hazardous materials to public health to all-hazards analysis, the fire and EMS component offers a unique, and sometimes missed, perspective of the information gathering and sharing process.

The IAFC, with other fire-service organizations and government leaders, is working to ensure the presence of fire personnel at state and local fusion centers. Fire- and emergency-service engagement in the centers provides awareness that can be used to enhance response and preparedness efforts in the field. Fire personnel in the fusion centers can contribute unique knowledge and experiences to the analysis of data and information, making the intelligence process more effective and efficient. Fire and EMS personnel can also offer the fusion center a connection to personnel in the field. This can be accomplished by implementing the Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) program.

In July 2007, the Colorado Information Analysis Center (CIAC) launched a TLO program for law-enforcement and first-responder agencies throughout Colorado to strengthen information sharing and enhance multi-jurisdictional partnerships. The Colorado TLO program mirrors the Arizona Counter Terrorism Intelligence Center (AcTIC) TLO program and has been developed to provide a platform of local representatives to share information related to local and global terrorist and criminal threats and potential incidents. The TLO program creates an expansive, statewide network of personnel by training local emergency personnel and linking them to federal and state assets in order to provide an effective and viable two-way flow of information.

A TLO is a person within a law-enforcement, fire-service, emergency-management or other cooperating agency responsible for coordinating terrorist and other criminal intelligence from their local agency to the CIAC. The information is shared with the FBI and DHS to ensure an inclusive and coordinated information sharing architecture for the state of Colorado.

The inaugural TLO course included 62 law-enforcement, fire-service and communications personnel and emergency managers from across the state. The class was developed by the CIAC staff and taught by a combination of instructors from the CIAC, AcTIC, the Colorado State

Patrol Rubicon Team, the Castle Rock Fire and Rescue Department, DHS and the FBI.

The TLO is the point of contact for the fusion center at the local level and serves as a resource and subject-matter-expert within the local area. At the local level, the TLO can help with:

- Collecting and reporting relevant field intel from the local area to the fusion center
- Helping with local terrorism-awareness training
- Disseminating information to field officers during roll call or team meetings and to specialty task forces or field units
- Providing intelligence briefings to agency executive staff
- Providing intelligence briefings to local representatives with a valid need to know

The need-to-know issue is where most fire-service and EMS agencies lose out. Someone determines that the information is law-enforcement sensitive or for official use only and that fire and EMS aren't in the need-to-know group. Through the TLO program, not only have we become part of the need-to-know group, but now we have the ability to influence information and intelligence dissemination by providing a portal to send information to the fusion center. With fire and EMS personnel in the fusion center, the information is truly analyzed from an all-hazards perspective, and thus we have become part of the need-to-know group.

Some fire agencies, such as Los Angeles, Phoenix and Atlanta, have already overcome this barrier. They are both active in their state fusion centers and involved in publishing monthly fire and EMS homeland-security reports, working directly in the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces or in the Terrorism Early Warning Groups. The positive impact these departments have had in information sharing has set the stage for the rest of the fire service.

So, this brings us back to why information sharing is important to the fire service. Information can directly impact how we respond to incidents. It also allows us to be better prepared for incidents that could potentially occur in our jurisdictions. Regardless of whether you are a major metropolitan area or a rural department in the Mid-West, information and intelligence enhances our knowledge base, and we all know that knowledge is power.

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In the Spotlight

EMS MAY OFFER HOME HEALTH-CARE ASSISTANCE IN THE FUTURE

By Courtney McCain

Personnel with a suburban Chicago fire district are planning to help area home health-care agencies with the expected increase in patients. "Nursing shortages are continuing to get worse," said Chief Dan Hermes, of the Pleasantview Fire Protection District. "Recently, the first baby boomer applied for social security. There are 80 million others who are about to do the same thing."

Acting on numerous brainstorming sessions with friends and colleagues, Hermes asked the department's medical director about extending the area's paramedic scope of practice to include assisting with home health-care assessments. She was enthusiastic about the idea. Area nurses initially were not.

"We approached the area home health-care agency, and at first they balked," Hermes said. "Then they realized we might be on to something and we can act in a sort of partnership."

But what seemed like a simple idea has led to three years of planning, including time lost when the home health-care agency changed owners. But the new owners are warming to the idea of having field assistance with their increasing numbers of patients. "We've got the proposal ready to go," Hermes said. "All we need now is for the agency (an affiliate with Good Samaritan) to give us the green light."

Once that happens, Hermes will need to develop a business plan and establish a training curriculum.

"What's proposed is that we don't even do any billing," Hermes said. "We'll be subcontracting from the home health-care agency to do the services for set fees. They'll pay us direct. When they get a patient, they get X amount of dollars in their budget. So, if they can save more money by using us, that means more for them to continue their mode of care."

Training EMS personnel to take on some nursing tasks is another issue. Hermes said they are looking at several training programs for paramedics to learn basic nursing skills and the concepts of home health care. Though they will not be performing the entire realm of home

health care, they can supplement their emergency scope of practice by assisting nurses.

"We already do blood draws and EKGs," Hermes said. "What we'll need is training in fall risk assessment and home safety checks. We'll also be looking more at prescription drug compliance monitoring and reviewing. We have to look at this from a different angle now. Not just from emergent, but more preventative."

Crews also will receive further education about diabetes care, anticoagulation therapy, weight monitoring and how to care for tracheostomies and foley catheters. Further training may also include staple and suture removal, dressing changes and perhaps end-of-life comfort care (some private-service paramedics already are assisting hospice in the Chicago area).

Although nursing personnel initially were wary of teaming in their territory with EMS personnel, Hermes said that nurses also realize the gravity of their situation. Of the 120,000 people who live in the Pleasantview Fire Protection District's response area, more than 25 percent qualify as senior citizens.

"They've got too many other issues right now," Hermes said of the nursing shortage. "They know it, and they're worried about it. We're not trying to be in competition; we're not here to steal the Cheerios off their plate. We're here to cover the stuff that they can't cover because they may not have the staff they need to do it."

Hermes is hopeful that other area rescue companies might join Pleasantview's home health-care partnership. He said at least eight area chiefs are interested in the program, but that since they work for municipalities (as opposed to a fire district), they must convince their community managers and government of the program's benefits. They must also receive the blessings of their various medical directors.

"Another good thing also is from a liability standpoint," Hermes said. "As long as we're working under a project medical director with established protocols, our liability insurance doesn't rise at all." ❖

Information Sharing from page 4

Whether the information is on stolen brass couplings on fire-department connections, an outbreak of a communicable disease in a specific population or area or specific threats of an attack, the knowledge gained can affect our daily operations. This knowledge may cause us to purchase a specific piece of equipment, seek out additional training, make contacts with critical infrastructure representatives in our area or just pay closer attention when responding to or returning from calls.

As first responders, we are the eyes and ears of our community. It is our responsibility to help in the flow of information between the local, state and federal levels and not allow it to be stove-piped as it has been in the past. And we need to learn to work better with law-enforcement. We need each other at all levels to prevent the mistakes that have been listed in documents like the 9-11 Report.

Even if you think "it can't happen here," think again. Every agency can be affected.

Norris W. Croom III serves as division chief of operations for the Castle Rock Fire and Rescue Department. He has been in the fire service for 20 years as both a volunteer and a career firefighter. Chief Croom holds an associate's degree in fire-science technology from Red Rocks Community College and is in his second year of the EFO program. He serves as a Planning Committee member for Fire Rescue Med Conference.

Major Brenda Leffler is a 13-year veteran of the Colorado State Patrol and currently serves as the director of the Office of Preparedness and Security. She was active in the development of CIAC and the Colorado Infrastructure Protection Project. She assists in the development of antiterrorism products and lectures in information-sharing, critical infrastructure protection and antiterrorism best practices and strategies. ❖

feted by the media as “Jessica’s rescuer,” had difficulty moving past the days-long incident and the fame it had brought. Within five years, he became debilitated by migraine headaches and painkillers, and quit Midland Fire after refusing to take a drug test. In 1995, televised images of rescuers carrying wounded children from the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City jarred O’Donnell with flashbacks, plus concern for the Oklahoma rescuers. Days later, he committed suicide.

O’Donnell was one of several Midland area personnel whose jobs, marriages and lives unraveled after they helped rescue Jessica. There was no such phrase as post-traumatic stress disorder in the late 1980s, nor any expectation that a successful rescue could be as stressful as a bad call. One legacy of that tense era is the presence of critical-incident stress-management (CISM) teams founded by one of O’Donnell’s coworkers.

“Starting the CISM teams had everything to do with what happened after that rescue,” said Midland Fire District Chief Vaughn Donaldson, who initiated the CISM team in Midland and also one in West Texas in 1995 shortly after O’Donnell took his own life. “No one realized what was going to happen. I think we had to go through a bad one so we could bring the message to others. Don’t ever think this can’t happen in your town and in your department.”

Though Donaldson takes his CISM message to seminars across the country, he rarely speaks in those settings about the time the city of Midland—including its fire department—fell victim to the media and to Hollywood.

“I think we buy into it,” Donaldson said. “I think we’re vulnerable to the hero status, because it feels good to be appreciated and recognized. But we’re setting ourselves up for trouble when we get drawn into it. When individuals are elevated, the team is overlooked. And it isn’t just the rest of the crew that was on that call. It’s the people in the office, the people on other shifts, the people who were out making other runs while this big one was going on.”

“When the media focuses on one or two people as heroes, those people are being isolated from their support group,” Donaldson

said. “The day before, this person was just another member of the department, and now, suddenly, he’s ‘better’ than everyone else. He’s all over the news as a hero.”

It falls to the shift commanders and department chiefs not only to recognize festering morale issues, but also to address them. While there will always be some petty differences in every fire station, newly anointed media darlings can find themselves frozen out and in some cases taken down a peg by colleagues.

“As the chief, you need to be aware of what can happen,” Lindsey said. “You’re the one who needs to do something. Ignoring it and hoping it will wash over is not going to work in these situations. Conflict resolution is what it comes down to.”

Fire department chaplains can be invaluable in helping personnel settle their differences and can provide guidance for those who are having more difficulty than others. Lindsay added that chiefs must not be hesitant to bring in outside assistance as well, if necessary.

Donaldson said it is imperative that commanding officers host a department-wide meeting as soon as possible to “get those issues out in the open. If jealousy is becoming an issue and it isn’t openly addressed, people will go behind each other’s backs, grumbling and grousing, and resentments will build up. Go ahead and talk about that pink elephant that’s in the room and listen to where he’s coming from, too. And nine times out of ten, most people who were jealous are going to wind up saying they’re thankful that they weren’t that person.”

Preparing for a media storm

While departments can’t control what the media reports, they can prevent some misinformation by being more proactive with media relations.

“We do not currently have a media academy, but other agencies have done that with a lot of success,” Lindsey said, adding that Estero Fire-Rescue is in the process of developing an academy-like course for area reporters to learn more about fire/rescue and EMS.

Former IAFC President Tom Siegfried (now fire marshal for Estero Fire-Rescue) developed a program for media covering

Altamonte Springs, Fla., when he was fire chief there. The resulting symbiotic relationship worked well: the media had good access to information, and in turn newspapers and television news programs published safety tips from the department alongside news of related incidents that occurred.

“Fire chiefs need to recognize that need for marketing,” Siegfried said. Working together is especially vital during pre-crisis times (wildfire or hurricane season, for example). Some media outlets have such a good working relationship with their area public-safety agencies that they regularly publish safety tips for free, lending a preventative hand.

“Don’t wait for a major incident to occur for the press to come to you for the first time and want to know everything about your department and its capabilities,” Siegfried said. “It is critically important that every department has a public information officer and that the media knows that person beforehand.”

The Washington, D.C., Area Media Relations Council offers media and public-safety officials from local, state and federal agencies the opportunity meet each other before large-scale incidents occur. The council meets regularly and has fostered an atmosphere of less contentiousness on scenes and during press conferences. “It’s a good way to network,” said Pete Piring, council chair and PIO for Montgomery County Fire & Rescue in Rockville, Md. “It’s been educational for everyone.”

Regular recognition of department personnel also can do a lot for morale, Piring said, by making sure personnel who didn’t receive media attention are not forgotten in the shuffle. Montgomery County Fire & Rescue, a combination department with 2,000 personnel (1,300 of whom are career), has quarterly recognition events, plus a large public-safety awards ceremony.

To avoid any accusations of favoritism, the City of Bangor Fire Department has adopted a press-conference approach to handling the media.

“When we’re on a scene, we don’t do individual interviews,” said Chief Jeff Cammack. “What we’ve found is that if we brief every-

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Maintaining Station Morale continued from page 6

body fairly and equitably, all the same, we get better continuity.”

Cammack said that before the department adopted a news conference policy, mixed messages were a continual problem. “The bottom falls out when you have more than one fire-department source giving different messages,” he said. Equally important, Cammack added, is impressing upon department personnel that only designated officers speak with reporters.

All the news

The recent explosion of cable news and Internet news sites has increased demand for immediate information, and competition among journalists is fiercer than ever. If they aren’t getting information from sources on scene, reporters will fan out into the community—and outside the fire department’s relative control.

Reporters looking to shed light on media-shy, “heroic” firefighters might instead glean information from their families and their neighbors. The smaller the area, the more likely its residents are to know their fire personnel. They also tend to know where they live, where their spouses work, where their kids go to school, where the whole family goes to church.

“Incidents like these can have a tremen-

dous impact on the families, because they know their loved one is involved and now they’re watching it live on TV,” Donaldson said. “Sometimes their imaginations are worse than what is actually happening, so it can be extremely stressful for the spouses and children.” Add to that the constant phone calls, the satellite trucks camped at their front curb and the barrage of reporters demanding that family members describe (over and over again) how they felt when they learned what “their hero” had done.

Even when fire personnel exhibit an aw-shucks demeanor for cameras and humbly acknowledge that the rescue could not have happened without a great team, that sound bite must make it past editors and producers before being published. Long-winded responses are likely to be sliced to pieces and rearranged for the final product.

“If you aren’t accustomed to how they ask their questions, your answer actually can have a whole different connotation and create issues within your agency,” Lindsey said. “You also have to be very careful how much you say, because they’ll take a portion of that and use it out of context. Short answers to questions are a lot more effective if they’re well thought-out.”

Lindsey said that when the media requests

to speak with individual rescuers, those personnel are always coached prior to any interviews. Specifically, they are prepared for the types of questions they may be asked. The importance of using the right pronouns is also impressed upon them. “We want to make sure they know to use the word ‘we’ instead of ‘I,’” Lindsey said. “We prepare them, and stay with them during the interview.”

The aftermath

Eventually, the media hordes will move on to the next crisis.

“The media attention is going to go away,” Donaldson said. “And when it does, the people who were singled out are going to be right back with their original group. If there has been any ostracism or shunning from either side, the person who had all the media attention is going to be left with nothing. So much of our self-esteem is related to our job and our relationships at work. We count on each other.”

“If fellow firefighters went down in a building, we would risk our lives to get them out of there,” Donaldson said. “We’d be willing to risk our lives to save theirs. Why would we not do the same thing to help them through readjusting psychologically, getting back to normal?” ❧

Letter from the Chair continued from page 1

a risk assessment to determine staffing and deployment models by Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, assistant to the general president of the IAFF.

The main conference also has a plethora of excellent and well-respected speakers. Monday’s opening general session starts with Colonel Thomas Kolditz, chair of the Department of Behavioral and Leadership at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He will be speaking on In Extremis Leadership: Developing Leaders for a Dangerous World. Two closing sessions on Wednesday morning feature the highly entertaining and informative Gordon Graham; at one, he’ll discuss risk-management strate-

gies for the fire chiefs’ personnel issues and at the other he’ll address risk-management strategies for operational issues.

In between, more general sessions and breakout sessions cover a gamut of topics, including how EMS in the nation’s capital operates and the challenges they have faced, how to develop and implement an innovative field officer training program for firefighter/paramedic recruits, and lessons learned from the private sector and whether there is a place for system status management in the fire service.

There are many reasons you should attend Fire-Rescue Med. The first is the expertise you’ll find among the speakers,

along with 35 different sessions. The second is the cutting-edge information that will keep you progressive with leadership and management ideas. The third is the ability to network with many other fire and emergency service professionals, mostly involved in EMS management and operations within their respective departments. The fourth is great entertainment. After the sessions are over, Las Vegas offers countless opportunities for you to kick back and enjoy your time.

I hope to see you this April at Fire-Rescue Med. To download the brochure, register or learn more, go to www.iafc.org/frm. ❧

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