

# *The Command Post*

The Bergen County Fire Chiefs Association eNewsletter

*"Never Forget 9-11"*

[www.bergenfirechiefs.com](http://www.bergenfirechiefs.com)

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Editor: Jack J. Murphy

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

### **ARE WE THE FUTURE**

First and foremost Neal Carroll, Chief's Association Secretary, former Chief of Department, and Firefighter has decided to hang up his quill pen. Neal has been taking minutes, writing letters, sending notices and generally keeping us on the straight and narrow for 20 years. He has simply decided to lighten his load a little as his employer is asking more of him. Neal is always been very quiet about what he's doing at a certain government location in Wharton, NJ, but rest assured the gravity of his work supports all of our interests around the world. When you see Neal take a moment to thank him not just to his years of service to our organization, but to every member of the Fire Service.

The Bergen County Fire Chief's Association has been meeting, for twenty years. Our mission is the same as day one;

- To unite for their mutual benefit current and former chief officers of the County Fire Departments
- To provide an open and recurring forum.
- To address technical, operational and administrative fire service issues.
- To encourage improvements within the fire service.
- To advance the cause of fire safety.
- To support initiatives that will aid in reducing the frequency and severity of fire losses

During those two decades we have continued to be the frontlines of county, state, and federal issues while keeping you the, the Chief of Department, the man in the arena, cognizant of changes to our profession.

Neal's departure has created an obvious void in our organization and identified a greater need; we need to develop a succession plan and not just a replacement plan.

Our plan needs to be for both the organizations leadership and for the many committee members that are part of our organization. Matches need to be made between one's personal

skills and member's knowledge, skills and abilities to the needs of our group. The process can be jumpstarted by identifying potential candidates from our membership and look outside and recruit new members. We need to involve all of our members, at all levels, as you so often know where the hidden talent lies.

If you are interested in joining us or know another member of the fire service and working to make a difference here in Bergen County and beyond, give me a call.

Stay Safe,  
Peter Hodge  
Cell: 201-543-7310

## HOT BOX

### 1. Fire & Life Safety: The Role of Data - Focusing on the Right Need

*Data-driven* is a term that can be overused, misunderstood and even scoffed at sometimes. After all, don't we already know what needs to be fixed and how?

Often, the answer is yes. However, data can be useful in maximizing efficiency and more quickly achieving results. A good example is the goal of reducing fires.

In my former jurisdiction, we all knew that fires in clothes dryers were the most common. However, when we decided to specifically target causes of fire deaths, injuries and property damage, we learned that dryer fires didn't even make the top ten! If we had focused on reducing fires caused by dryers, our efforts, even if entirely successful, would have produced little change in our death, injury and property loss rates.

Data, balanced with the working knowledge and experience of our people, became our friend.

Every program must focus on a specific result and employ good data to be successful. The fire service is rich in programs that are generic in nature, focus on activities rather than results or continue because "we've always done it this way." Valuable resources are wasted as good intentions and effort produce little change.

By using data to define and measure the intended result, we can more efficiently use our limited resources to achieve desired outcomes.

The most important ingredient of a successful program is reliable data, which is used in both identifying a problem and measuring the outputs to determine the result. We typically start with a question, such as, "How can I reduce (property loss, false alarms, falls, etc.)?"

To answer the question, you need to look at your incident data to define the problem in terms of three elements:

- **Cause** – What, specifically, is causing the problem?
- **Reason** – What does it cost (lives, property, resources, etc.)? You're making the case not just for your agency, but for your governing board, community and potential sponsors and partners.

- **Target** – Who’s involved? When and where does it occur?

The more specific the data, the more precise the targets and the more efficiently you’ll achieve the desired outcome. Rather than blanket an entire jurisdiction with a program, you can focus resources on the communities with a particular problem. Even particular demographics within the community can be targeted if census or proprietary data is used.

The sidebar below highlights the result of using data to clearly define a problem—cooking fires—to develop a program that specifically targets the problem’s cause.

Note that data analysis was first used to determine that cooking was the leading cause of fire injuries and deaths (but not property damage) in this jurisdiction. Data was also used in program development to establish and measure indicators (e.g., 40% reduction in injuries over three years) and to determine progress (e.g., residents employ safe cooking techniques, respond to cooking fires appropriately) that would achieve the results (e.g., residential cooking-fire risks and losses are prevented or mitigated).

If your data is incomplete or unreliable, address that immediately with your crews. Their understanding of how it’s being used in your agency and community—the importance factor—combined with ongoing training may help resolve the data issue.

In the interim, talk with your fire investigators; they may have better, more-specific information. Others who share the problem may also be able to offer real or anecdotal data, such as medical professionals and caregivers in the case of falls. You may also garner resources for your program by involving others who benefit from achieving the result.

### **Identified Risk: Cooking Fires in Homes**

In the Orange County Fire Administration (OCFA) jurisdiction, cooking fires are the leading cause of fire injuries and fire deaths.

#### **Causes of the Problem**

##### Residents don’t take necessary precautions when cooking, particularly when using stoves:

They leave their stovetops unwatched, oftentimes for only a few moments.

Objects that can catch fire are left near or on the stove.

##### Residents don’t adequately clean their stoves or ovens:

Oil and grease splatters aren’t immediately cleaned up.

Grease drips or food overflows aren’t cleaned before the oven is used again.

Large quantities of grease drips or food overflows aren’t wiped up before using the oven’s self-cleaning feature, causing fires during the function’s operation.

##### Residents are responding improperly to cooking fires:

They try to extinguish oil-based fires with water.

They move flaming dishes to the sink, often spilling the flaming oil.

They don't turn off the heat source before trying to extinguish a fire.

### **Reason It's a Problem**

Year after year, fires involving cooking are a leading cause of fires in homes. Among all fires, it's the leading cause of fire injuries and fire deaths. Cooking equipment fires cause significant property damage. In the OCFA jurisdiction, one in three cooking equipment fires spread to the building or structure, causing significant damage. On average, cooking fires causing \$10,000 or more in damage occur more than once a month.

### **Target**

The cooking risk is not restricted to only those who cook, but includes everyone who live in a building where cooking occurs. However, there are some areas of particular concern.

Adults 20 to 29 years old are most frequently injured. Their injuries represent one-third of all cooking-fire injuries. Older adults (70 and older) are also at risk, as they have the highest per-capita injury rate.

Per capita, City A, City B, City C and City D have the highest amount of cooking equipment fires, which suggests that targeting these cities will have the most impact. (City F also has a high per-capita frequency of cooking equipment fires. However, their small population—about 2,000—and lack of any cooking-equipment fire injurie doesn't merit mitigation targeting.)

City B also has the highest per-capita fire injuries caused by cooking equipment fires; more than half of City B's accidental hostile fires are caused by cooking. City E experiences less cooking fires than City B, though their per-capita injury rates are equivalent.

*Re-printed IAFC Fire & Life Safety Section / Author Laura Blaul: She was the fire marshal and assistant chief (ret.) of the Orange County (CA.) Fire Authority. She's a member of the Fire & Life Safety Section board and has been a member of the IAFC since 2005.*

## **2. Firefighters Code Voice: Local Fire, Tarnished State Image, Voluntary FPS Upgrades**

The new pedestal lightweight construction being erected in New Jersey is being built to exceed the state code requirements, read the article 'Teaneck Planning Board approves AvalonBay housing complex' below.

Many have seen this happen in our state before, '*Local Fire (Edgewater, NJ), a Tarnished State Image and Voluntary Upgrades*'. The life safety mission before the lightweight residential construction and investor communities is that if you are willing to voluntary upgrade fire protection both to an active NPFA-13 full sprinkler system) & erect passive (masonry fire walls) systems beyond the current code requirements in one state why not step up and do the same for the greater good across the nation.

The Firefighters Code Voice needs to be heard in each state and nationally on this life safety matter. As in past code development processes, the fire service is willing to work with the industry to augment life safety measures as well as safe guard our working environment.

### **Teaneck Planning Board approves AvalonBay housing complex**

<http://www.northjersey.com/news/teaneck-planning-board-approves-avalonbay-housing-complex-1.1613690>

For more related topics go to:

<http://www.fireengineering.com/articles/2016/06/firefighters-code-voice-teaneck.html>

Be safe out there,

Jack

## LEGAL BRIEFS FOR FIRE CHIEFS

### **Around the Nation** (*Legal Briefings For Fire Chiefs*)

#### **1. Controversial Fire Chiefs Retires**

#### **2. Contract – Volunteer Department – \$72,000.00**

Town council approves a 1-year contract after 1-year of no contract – The volunteer fire department has been serving the town for over one hundred years. However, the most recent contract expired about one year ago. With the new contract, monies paid by the town can be used to complete a recent construction project for a new fire station and to upgrade certain firefighting and emergency response equipment. Some of the funds have already been distributed to the fire department, and this amount will be deducted from the amount of the new contract. Further, some of these funds will be used to offset certain legal fees related to negotiations for the new contract. One of the more contentious issues here was the eliminating an ambulance service. This service has proved to be a significant drain on available funds. The first quarter has already been made.

#### **3. Settlement \$75,000.00**

A former fire chief who has served over 30-years with the same Department as a firefighter has reached a settlement for his diagnosed heart and hypertension condition. The terms of the settlement provides that the claimant will receive \$15,000.00 per year for 5 consecutive years

## SOG'S & SAFETY ALERTS

**NEW TAB:** To assist county fire chief officers and company officers, a new section has been added to enhance a Department's SOG's along with SAFETY ALERTS. You may find the SOG/Safety Alert Tabs on the Association website. See below



## 200 CLUB OF BERGEN COUNTY



**Valor Awards Reminder:** For the 2016 / 200 Club of Bergen County Valor Awards Ceremony, we remind the Departments that this is an opportunity to recognize the men and women that have given of themselves above and beyond the call of duty in the fire service. If you have such a person who meets the criteria for a Valor Award, Meritorious Service Award, Distinguished Service Award or the John J. Rinaldi Special Recognition Award, go to the website at: [www.200club.org](http://www.200club.org)

## BCFCA 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL "HARVEY" TRAINING

**Mark your calendar, October 15, 2016.** After a successful inaugural "Harvey" Training weekend, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Harvey Training session will be held on Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. Location: Harry P. Becton Regional High School, 120 Paterson Ave, East Rutherford, further details to follow.

## MESSAGE BOARD

**Command Post Update:** Commencing this year the Association eNewsletter will be published 3 times for the periods of: Jan/Apr., May/Aug, and Sept/Dec.

### NEXT COUNTY CHIEFS MEETING

Date: September 19th  
Time: 7:30 PM  
Location: TBA

For directions visit our website under Meetings.