



# ADVOCATING FOR A NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE POLICY

*Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11*

*Columbus, OH*

*May 2018*

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July 31, 2018

Dear Reader:

It is my honor as Executive Director of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to transmit this report supporting Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 which states: ***National standards for emergency response policies should be developed and championed.*** The information in this document reflects the thinking of 30 fire service subject matter experts who contributed their knowledge to the topic and, more importantly, their commitment to championing eventual emergency response policies for every fire department in the United States.


These experts, representing all aspects of fire service response policies, gathered in Columbus, Ohio from May 16-18, 2018. There, they began the process of determining where the nation's fire departments presently stand on the topic and sought to develop realistic goals that could be achieved in the relatively near future. Columbus Public Safety Director and (former) Fire Chief Ned Pettus, Jr. delivered an excellent keynote address, which helped focus the group for the task at hand.

In the end, there was rousing and unanimous support for the development of national response policy standards. This support was grounded, first and foremost, in the belief that such standards will help reduce firefighter injuries and preventable fatalities. Citizens, it was noted, are also victims of apparatus tragedies due to insufficient response policies, and standardization will help with this challenge.

The NFFF supports and champions this effort. The 17 recommendations contained in this report will guide the process of developing a national standard related to the gamut of issues converging on responding to emergencies. They also offer both long-range solutions and comments on policies departments can immediately institute at the local level.

Every fire department is ethically bound to have and to enforce emergency response policies to protect our firefighters and the citizens they are all sworn to protect.

Sincerely,



Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki

Executive Director

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation



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## Executive Summary

In May 2018, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) hosted a conference of subject matter experts to examine issues related to Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11: National standards for emergency response policies should be developed and championed. The meeting was held in Columbus, Ohio and hosted by Columbus Professional Fire Fighters Local #67. Funding for the event was provided by the FEMA – DHS Assistance to Firefighters Fire Prevention and Safety grant directorate.

Attendees (henceforth referred to as the working group) were tasked with reviewing the current state of response policies within the United States and discerning a position for the NFFF regarding future advocacy for a national emergency response policy. The working group affirmed the need for such a standard and developed a series of recommendations to move the effort forward. They encourage working within the NFPA technical committee structure to draft the standard and asked the NFFF to take a leading role in organizing the process.

The initial step will be to develop a matrix of stakeholder organizations to be represented on the technical committee; support implementation and integration of the standard into credentialing processes; and provide resources and marketing support for the effort. They also recommend continuing to involve the wildland firefighting community, which was represented at the Columbus meeting. It was noted that wildland fire regional policy organizational structures can serve as models or tem-

plates for structural fire policies and procedures in the standard. Additionally, there is considerable overlap in some areas of the proposed standard. One example is driving: both domains contain a wide variety of parallel policies on driving that could serve as the initial effort into a national standard.

The group acknowledges the original intent of Initiative #11 was to provide governance and reduce risk to personnel when responding to the emergency. This is perceived to be an area that can be immediately impacted by consistent application of uniform policies and procedures based on best practices, including certification requirements for driving emergency response vehicles, safe driving practices, and mandatory seatbelt use for all operators and passengers. The group also identified the need to define what constitutes an emergency response and provide clear guidelines for use of lights and sirens, behavior at intersections, speed limit compliance, operations while backing, and during other high-risk endeavors. In light of the emerging issue of occupational cancers among firefighters, the group agreed the standard should also cover decontamination of the apparatus cab and equipment carried in the vehicle.

The group further recommended broadening the scope of Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 to include other operational policies and procedures, as well as automatic and mutual aid. The group notes that data-driven model policies and procedures based on best practices already exist in several parts of the country. These models can be adapted, as needed, to fit local variants in geography, climate, and other factors to advance



our response capabilities as a nation. The standard, which can draw from the work of regional response coalitions across the country, will be of particular value to smaller departments that lack the resources and staffing to develop their own policies. The group also endorsed decades-old recommendations to adopt plain language by all agencies for day-to-day operations. This act alone will exponentially facilitate collaborative response and interoperability during normal and disaster operations.

They also identified the need to discern minimum levels of personnel qualifications, noting that agencies must have a level of confidence in the skills and abilities of those who are coming to assist. This was viewed as a high priority for the proposed standard and will be most effective if/when integrated into all credentialing processes. An extension of the qualifications dialogue included incorporating a mental and physical wellness component. This element would serve as an additional opportunity to advocate for national, state, and local policies aimed at increasing the survivability and longevity of firefighters. NFPA 1582 physical examinations that identify risk factors for physical disease and assess mental wellness have consistently demonstrated efficacy in protecting the health of firefighters.

Clearly, this is an ambitious agenda. The working group acknowledges that pursuing a national response policy standard will require a huge investment of resources and effort on the part of all stakeholders. They recognize that even if the effort is fast-tracked, it will take years to bring to fruition. The working group sees an immediate need for departments to take action to establish policies and procedures that safeguard their firefighters given the current response environment and responders' increasing levels of risk exposure. To facilitate this process, the working group developed guidelines for domains to be included in each department's response policies. These guidelines are included in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

There is a strong sense of urgency within the recommendations proffered by this working group. Decisive action supporting Initiative #11 has been deferred for too long. Attendees in Columbus enthusiastically support advancing this effort, and emphasize that, ultimately, a national standard for response policies will serve as a uniting force for the American fire service. They stress that having such a standard in place will support operational excellence and enable us to consistently provide the highest level of selfless service to our communities. Even more importantly, it will reduce risk and increase the health and safety of our greatest asset – our firefighters.

*Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 – National standards for emergency response policies should be developed and championed.*





# Recommendations for Development of a National Response Policy

## Initiative #11: Addressing a National Emergency Response Policy Columbus, Ohio – May 2018

**Recommendation 1:** The NFFF should advocate for development of a national emergency response standard promoting the creation of operational policies minimizing preventable occupational exposures to hazardous conditions that can result in medical or traumatic tragedies to firefighters.

**Recommendation 2:** All fire departments and agencies must develop, implement, and enforce response policies that support the health and safety of their members.

**Recommendation 3:** The NFPA technical committee process should be used to develop the national standard.

**Recommendation 4:** All policies and procedures that are developed must be research-oriented and data driven.

**Recommendation 5:** The technical committee should include members of the wildland community to build on established best practices for collaborative response, and for input regarding development of policies and procedures that are applicable to both domains.

**Recommendation 6:** The national standard should include operational policies and procedures for safe emergency vehicle responses to local emergencies based on the level of risk associated with the type of incident.

**Recommendation 7:** All response policies should be developed at the national level with the flexibility to be refined by local/regional level working groups for implementation.

**Recommendation 8:** Standard operational policies and sample SOPs/SOGs should be developed across a range of incidents.



**Recommendation 9:** Common communications terminology (i.e., “plain talk”) should be adopted for day to day use by all emergency responders.

**Recommendation 10:** Standard operational policies that ensure common strategies and tactics at the regional level should be developed. Language within the standard should require sharing of policies among all types of organizations involved in any collaborative response.

**Recommendation 11:** Standardize training levels, certification qualifications, and health and wellness standards for all fire service personnel.

**Recommendation 12:** Guidelines should be included to ensure the safe use of new and emerging technologies.

**Recommendation 13:** NFFF should develop a matrix of proposed technical committee members based upon skills, experience, and organizational affiliation, building on the working group reviewing Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11.

**Recommendation 14:** The technical committee should include partners to build compliance with the proposed standard into credentialing processes, training development, insurance coverage, and awarding of grants.

**Recommendation 15:** The NFFF and the working group should identify partners that are able to help support this effort financially or through in-kind contributions.

**Recommendation 16:** The NFFF should develop a comprehensive marketing plan to educate stakeholders throughout the standards pre-development, development, review and acceptance, and implementation processes.

**Recommendation 17:** The working group should identify potential barriers to standards adoption and develop strategies to counter and overcome such barriers.



## Introduction

The NFFF hosted a conference of local, state, and national subject matter experts in May of 2018, to examine the current state of issues within the American fire service related to ***Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11: National standards for emergency response policies should be developed and championed.*** The objectives of this meeting were to uncover how attitudes toward response policies have evolved over the past decade, especially those changes which have contributed to reducing injuries and fatalities to citizens and firefighters, and to discern a position regarding future advocacy for a national response standard.

Participants (henceforth referred to as the “working group”) reviewed response policies from across the country. These policies often differ greatly within individual states and down to the regional and local levels. Speakers from progressive departments and regional response organizations presented information regarding innovative solutions to their local circumstances. Two case studies were also presented, and three panel discussions focused on special topics. Small groups discussed and deliberated the data presented from pre-conference work, panel discussions, and case studies. Attendees within the small groups explored potential components for a national response policy standard, compiling a series of recommendations that, together, could guide the road ahead. A summary of these recommendations is available on page 6 of this document.

The working group recognized that a national standard for emergency response will be a significant step forward. Discussion cited changes in the operating environment since the 2004 Firefighter Life Safety Summit that tasks agencies to do more with fewer resources. The recommendations proffered by the group encourage working within the NFPA technical committee process to develop and support implementation of the standard, acknowledging that NFPA standards are more often than not one of the primary reference documents for fire department operations. Members agreed that the end product should be a standard that is applicable, and scalable, for all sizes and types of agencies. This elasticity will enable even the most resource-challenged organization to:

- Attain a level of compliance that will effectively increase the operational efficiency of their department;
- Provide better service to their community; and
- Ultimately improve firefighter life safety.

The goal of protecting our firefighters is paramount. We know that most line-of-duty deaths and injuries are preventable. While the group recognizes that working toward a national standard is the ultimate objective, they also understand it will involve an intensive commitment of time and resources. Hence the group identified a need and expressed an urgency to do something now. This immediacy gave rise to an outline of actionable steps a department or agency can implement to protect personnel. As fire service leaders, the group believed there is a moral obligation for all fire service leaders to





develop, implement, and enforce operational policies, based on mitigation of known risks and vulnerabilities, that will protect the health and safety of firefighters. The department level recommendations are included in [Appendix A](#) of this document.

It is important to note here that operational leaders from the wildland fire community were invited to Columbus and participated in the process along with structural subject matter experts and thought leaders. Traditionally, federal and state natural resource agencies have taken the lead in responding to wildland fire. However, they are now, in many cases, joined on the fireground by multiple other types of organizations. The nature of the today's fire environment, particularly in the wildland-urban interface, routinely incorporates responders from volunteer and career structural fire departments, as well as contractual firefighters, and those from other organizations. These groups are often responding side-by-side but have little knowledge about each other's capabilities or organizational structure. Any relevant national standard developed must, when applicable, address commonalities across these organizations to foster a more cohesive response and better use of resources.

The wildland community has also led the way in terms of standardizing some aspects of response, including minimum standards for training and baseline fitness levels through the standard "pack test," and national coordination of crew and resource deployment and management. All small group session participants at the May 2018 meeting agreed that work done to develop the national response policy standard could draw from wildland community lessons learned.

The working group understands the importance of this undertaking and acknowledges that the key to success will be the collaboration among all of our partners. Ultimately, a national standard for response policies will serve as a uniting force for the breadth of agencies that form the American fire service. Having such a standard in place will support operational excellence and enable us to consistently provide the highest level of emergency services to our communities. Most importantly, though, it will ensure that departments have in place the needed policies and procedures to support the health and safety of firefighters, so that Everyone Goes Home®.



## Background

The pages that follow provide a brief historical review of the NFFF's efforts to-date regarding Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 and related recommendations from previous summits and papers.

### Firefighter Life Safety Summit

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) was established by an act of Congress and incorporated in Maryland in 1992 as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. The NFFF was originally charged with the unfunded mandate to honor and remember America's fallen fire heroes and provide their families with the resources needed to rebuild their lives. In 2004, under the leadership of Executive Director Ronald J. Siarnicki, the NFFF expanded its mission to include the coordination of an industry-wide effort to reduce preventable firefighter fatalities and injuries.

In March of that year, the NFFF held the first Firefighter Life Safety Summit in Tampa, Florida. Representatives of every identifiable fire service sector deliberated over cultural, philosophical, technical, and procedural problems existing within the fire service, and identified the most important causal factors leading to line-of-duty deaths. The outcome of the Summit was development of the Everyone Goes Home<sup>®</sup> program, and definition of 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives to guide its development and implementation.

The ultimate goal of the Everyone Goes Home<sup>®</sup> program is to reduce the number of preventable firefighter line-of-duty deaths and injuries. Participants at the 2004 Summit identified and ex-

pressed a need for cultural change in relation to emergency vehicle operations and response policies. This need is articulated in the form of Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11. It was noted at the time that an average of ten firefighters were killed each year in vehicle accidents while responding to emergency incidents. An even greater number of civilians were dying in collisions involving responding emergency vehicles. These deaths were frequently the result of excessive speed and unsafe driving. These causal factors were tied back to misguided perceptions that the "urgency of the mission" (i.e., all 9-1-1 calls for service are "emergencies") justifies an elevated level of risk to emergency responders and the public. It was noted that far too often the risks created in traveling to the scene at high speeds using emergency lights and sirens exceeded the dangers of the actual incident. Recommendations from the Summit stated, "Cultural change must be based on recognizing that firefighters cannot save lives or property at the scene of an emergency incident unless they arrive safely and there is no justification for causing more harm en route than they can prevent when they arrive."<sup>i</sup>

J. Gordon Routley, currently Division Chief of the Montreal Fire Department, was active in planning the first Firefighter Life Safety Summit, and in artic-



ulating the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives. At the time, he developed related guidelines to assist departments developing their own response policies. This guidance was intended to provide clarity in defining emergency vs. non-emergency response and is available in [Appendix B](#) of this document.

During discussions in Tampa, it was suggested that these policies be either included in the development of a new NFPA standard or added to the scope of one or more existing standards. They noted that these policies should determine when emergency response is and is not appropriate, and include specific directives relating to responding in privately owned vehicles. The first action steps outlined were:

1. Enforcement of existing safe driving protocols by department leaders and supervisors, and
2. Mandatory use of seatbelts by all firefighters.

## White Paper: Initiative #11

As a follow up to the initial gathering, a second Firefighter Life Safety Summit was planned for 2007, to discern specific objectives and implementation strategies for the Everyone Goes Home® program. In preparation, the NFFF contracted with subject matter experts to produce a white paper for each initiative. These documents were to be provided to participants prior to the Summit, to inform them of advances related to the topic, and would serve as a starting point for small group discussions.

The white paper for Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 validated the 2004 recommendations to develop a national standard designed to reduce

Delegates cited recurring fatalities in which firefighters did not use the seatbelts provided in their vehicles (apparatus and private), despite NFPA standards, departmental regulations, and state laws. The failure to follow these existing and basic safety procedures, as well as that of leadership to enforce them, was highlighted as evidence of the urgent need for immediate action and cultural change.

Summit attendees also advocated for, “The adoption of a special classification of driver’s license for emergency vehicle operators, similar to the existing commercial driver’s license program. Instead of providing special exemptions for emergency vehicle operators, regulatory authorities should establish strict training and testing requirements, including medical clearances and periodic review of driving records.” They concluded, “The highest standards should be applied to emergency vehicle operators.”<sup>ii</sup>

risk to firefighters and the public when responding to an incident. However, it also called for broadening the scope of the initiative, asserting that development of uniform national response standards would increase the effectiveness and degree of professionalism of the American fire service.

The paper acknowledges the difficulty of the task, recognizing the vast breadth and composition of the American fire service. It was noted that historically, geographic demands drove the development of local priorities and response policies. This approach has resulted in a patchwork amalgam characterized by massive disparities, which



frequently impeded the overall mission of providing effective emergency response to the American public. Clearly the process of standardizing 30,000+ individual systems would be a huge undertaking. Authors of the white paper did believe the goal was daunting, but attainable given the rise and success of regional automatic aid agreements.

The white paper called for the process to begin by establishing policies and procedures for a minimum set of activities that are universally recognized, and taking action to ensure life safety, regardless of organizational composition or geographic location. Common standards would also provide the added benefit of allowing multiple responding agencies to operate with similar strategic and tactical considerations, regardless of the size and scope of the event. Language in the white paper, written over a decade ago, still resonates in its call to begin work immediately, as well as recognizing the scale and complexity of the effort.

*“The time for the identification and adoption of a national model for emergency response policies has come. We should anticipate resistance along*

*the way. Fire departments across the country are used to developing their own response policies or have adapted to what has been put forth by the jurisdiction having authority over them. So many variables are associated with fire protection—think about the differences between responding to a structural fire in a small town vs. responding to a wildland fire in the West—that local or regional adaptations to any national policies will be expected. Industries who have a focus on life safety have established successful models for the development of minimum standards; some with the support of law, others with compliance based on funding, and still others who come to agreement on broad cultural issues. The fire service will certainly benefit from the development of national emergency response policies and procedures, even if they have to be very broad to accommodate the cultures of over 30,000 constituents. This will be a daunting task! Can we do it? Certainly, it is possible with the application of tremendous focus, knowledge, and skill. If in the end, we have helped lessen firefighter injuries and fatalities, this Herculean effort will certainly have been worth it.”<sup>iii</sup>*



## Second National Firefighter Life Safety Summit

The second major summit was held in Novato, California in 2007. Its objectives were to reaffirm the validity of each of the initiatives, and to review work and develop recommendations based on the white papers that had been prepared in advance. Participants, in small group sessions, were asked to focus on each specific initiative and propose key strategies to achieve results outlined in those documents.

Attendees acknowledged the original limited intent of Initiative #11 and supported related recommendations to develop national model procedures for the operation of emergency vehicles, including training and certification programs for drivers. They also prioritized the development of model criteria for defining when emergency response to an incident is appropriate, as a strategy to reduce unnecessary exposure to the elevated risk of emergency response.

They also endorsed the position of the white paper that called for broadening the scope of Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 to encompass operating policies and procedures, including those for aid across jurisdictions. This was recommended within the context of ensuring that all departments have the appropriate resources to respond safely to emergency incidents. Referencing existing NFPA standards and applying standard operating procedures and guidelines to their emergency operations, departments would now have the resources in place to prioritize firefighter safety:

*“The resource issue ensures that agencies have the personnel and equipment they need to operate safely and effectively at the scene of a fire or other type of emergency incident. This includes the 2-in/2-out policy, the establishment of rapid intervention teams (RITs), the ability to rotate and rehabilitate or replace fatigued crews and the ability to conduct and support effective operations. If the necessary resources are not available, the operational strategy should be limited to those functions that can be performed safely using the resources that are available.*

*The consistent use of standard operating procedures and guidelines and the application of an incident management system to all emergency situations are fundamental to firefighter safety. The discussion emphasized the necessity of ensuring that all fire departments have appropriate levels of training and recognize the importance of operational policies and procedures.”<sup>iv</sup>*



## Second Firefighter Life Safety Summit (Novato 2007) Recommendations

1. Fire departments should incorporate motor vehicle safety programs into their organizational culture:
  - a. Enforce 100% seatbelt use.
  - b. Adopt policies that reinforce obeying traffic laws when responding, including response in privately owned vehicles.
  - c. Require initial and refresher training for all drivers of fire department vehicles in accordance with NFPA 1002.
  - d. Establish requirements for driver training and certification, including specific authorization to drive specific vehicles or classes of vehicles.
  - e. Require routine driver license checks.
  - f. Provide and require wearing ANSI-approved, high-visibility reflective vests on roadway incidents.
2. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation should sponsor the development of a consensus-approved, national best practices document for emergency and nonemergency response procedures that would apply to emergency vehicles and personally owned vehicles. This document should include criteria for determining which incidents qualify for emergency versus non-emergency response.
3. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation should endorse and support implementation of the National Unified Goal for Traffic Incident Management.
4. All fire departments should comply with NFPA Standards 1710 and 1720, as appropriate, with regards to resources and staffing. These documents should be based on the risks that are present in the community and the levels of service that the department is expected to provide.
5. All fire departments should operate within a system of standard operating procedures and/or guidelines and use an incident management system for all emergency incidents and training exercises.





## Tampa2: Carrying the Safety Message Into the Future

At the 10th anniversary of the first Firefighter Life Safety Summit (March 2014), the NFFF convened 300+ stakeholders in Tampa, Florida to assess the decade's progress toward implementing the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives. Tampa2 attendees again cited the benefit of a national response policy to differentiate between emergency response situations and non-emergency incidents.

However, they were ultimately unable to reconcile this model with what was happening at the local level, noting the disparities between departments would be a major impediment towards broad implementation. They did see points of light in terms of progress, and it was recommended that future efforts start small and focus on low-hanging fruit to “get the foot in the door.”

### Tampa2 Recommendations Related to Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11

- Integrate altered response policies into NFPA 1710/1720.
- Mandate the installation of vehicle data recorders on fire apparatus and enforce their use.
- Examine the rationale behind carrying emergency equipment in privately owned vehicles (POVs).
- Examine the rationale behind allowing tankers/tenders to respond as emergency traffic.
- Develop a model for writing standard operating procedures/guidelines.

<sup>i</sup> National Fallen Firefighters Foundation/United States Fire Administration. Firefighter Life Safety Summit Report (2004): 12. <https://bit.ly/2LITf6s>

<sup>ii</sup> NFFF/USFA, 13.

<sup>iii</sup> National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Firefighter Life Safety Initiative White Paper Initiative #11 (2007): 8. <https://bit.ly/2LGhFNQ>

<sup>iv</sup> National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. The 2nd National Firefighter Life Safety Summit Novato, California. (2007): 15-16. <https://bit.ly/2O3n8Lh>

<sup>v</sup> National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Tampa 2: Carrying the Safety Message into the Future. (2015): 25. <https://bit.ly/2k3lha0>



## Initiative #11: Addressing a National Emergency Response Policy

In the decade after Initiative #11 was drafted, little progress had been made in advancing a national emergency response standard. In November 2015, the NFFF hosted a National Research Agenda Symposium to discern priorities for fire service researchers from both the academic and private sectors. While there were multiple recommendations related to both apparatus safety and emergency response, no clear directive regarding a national standard emerged.

Though many departments had individually adopted policies during that time period, NFFF leadership believed that the absence of a national standard leaves firefighters in departments lacking such policies vulnerable to continued occurrences of preventable crashes and incidents that rob the service of its most precious and least expendable element, its responders. So, in May of 2018, NFFF convened a meeting of leading fire service stakeholders focused solely on providing actionable direction on implementing strategies outlined in Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11. The NFFF's Director of Research, Dr. JoEllen Kelly, coordinated the meeting; Kevin Roche served as facilitator. Attendees represented a variety of stakeholders with a broad range of expertise in training, emergency operations, wildland, structural, wildland/structural fire integrated response, safety, incident command, and policy development. A complete list of attendees is available in [Appendix C](#).

John Tippet, Director of Fire Service Programs for the NFFF, welcomed the group. He remarked on the lack of concrete progress toward Initiative #11, noting that definitive work had been deferred for years. Chief Tippet tasked the group assembled with looking at policies and procedures and developing recommendations to move the effort forward. He asked them to look for universally recognized activities, stating that while the US fire service has not been a unified force at the national level, there are commonalities. Seeking standardization of these activities would be the way to begin the process. He looked to the group to make safety recommendations, seek goals, challenge leadership to support the standards, identify means for the “rank and file” to buy in, and answer these key questions:

1. Is this the right time to press on Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11?
2. What elements/operational policies need/can be standardized?
3. Who needs to be at the table to contribute?
4. Who will generate outputs?
5. Who will manage information release?
6. Where will champions be located across the country to keep momentum moving?



## A Local Perspective

Keynote speaker and Columbus Public Safety Director Dr. Ned Pettus welcomed the group to Columbus on behalf of Mayor Andrew Ginther. Dr. Pettus served as chief of the Columbus Fire Department from 2002-2012, assuming the role just six months after 9/11. “Those times changed how fire departments operated,” he stated. In response to rising demands that departments be prepared to respond to new threats such as terrorism, he was able to elevate Columbus Fire Department’s operations by focusing on its strengths, using grant funding to improve equipment and apparatus, and expand training for staff. He acknowledged that, as chief, he alone was ultimately accountable for the health and safety of each responder.

In 2016, after a brief retirement, Dr. Pettus accepted the position of Columbus Director of Public Safety, overseeing a cadre of 3,900 employees. The city’s fire, EMS, and police departments under his authority are now all nationally accredited. He understands that his current position requires him to take a different, more global viewpoint, and to be “constantly taking the temperature of department.”

## A Review of the Existing Emergency Response Policy Environment

Having established the need, the next question was that of how to develop the recommended standard. Mike Wieder, IFSTA Executive Director, provided a brief historical perspective on standards. Within the United States, he noted, fire department standards are for the most part volun-

While the city of Columbus has made great strides in terms of preparation, Dr. Pettus acknowledged that they still don’t have all the answers. Ultimately, though, his goal and that of his agency is to ensure that everyone goes home. He stressed, “We all have responsibility. Even driving can be dangerous. We need to look at LODDs, learn lessons, and change the way we operate.” He cited current success stories and noted how fire operations in Columbus have changed as a result of lessons learned from LODDs in other jurisdictions.

“The time to look at Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11 is now,” Dr. Pettus concluded. “Those of us in management positions sometimes need to force the issue.” He stressed a need to increase training, interagency cooperation, and management-labor partnerships to enhance collaboration and response. As an industry, the fire service must also address occupational cancer, exposures, and decontamination procedures, and advocate for presumptive legislation. And, as culture changes and threats evolve, so should our techniques, and in so doing we must involve the community.

tary, developed through consensus. The ultimate authority is the jurisdiction: they determine adoption – some by law, others because “it’s the right thing to do,” and standards may be adapted to fit the resources, geography, and special needs of the organization and the community.



Ed Conlin, NFPA Division Manager of Public Fire Protection, gave an overview of how standards and policies are currently developed, adopted, and implemented within the NFPA model (see figure 1.) He stressed that while all standards are developed by technical committee, they incorporate significant input from the nation’s stakeholders, both during the development and review processes. Acknowledging that some flexibility is built into the system, he cited the recently released

NFPA 3000 Standard for an Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER). NFPA 3000 involved the largest committee ever – 46 members, representing the scope of organization types involved during response to such an incident. While the standard doesn’t outline actual tactics, he noted that it does require each affected agency to develop a response plan, and to share their response plan with the other responding organizations.

### The Standards Development Process

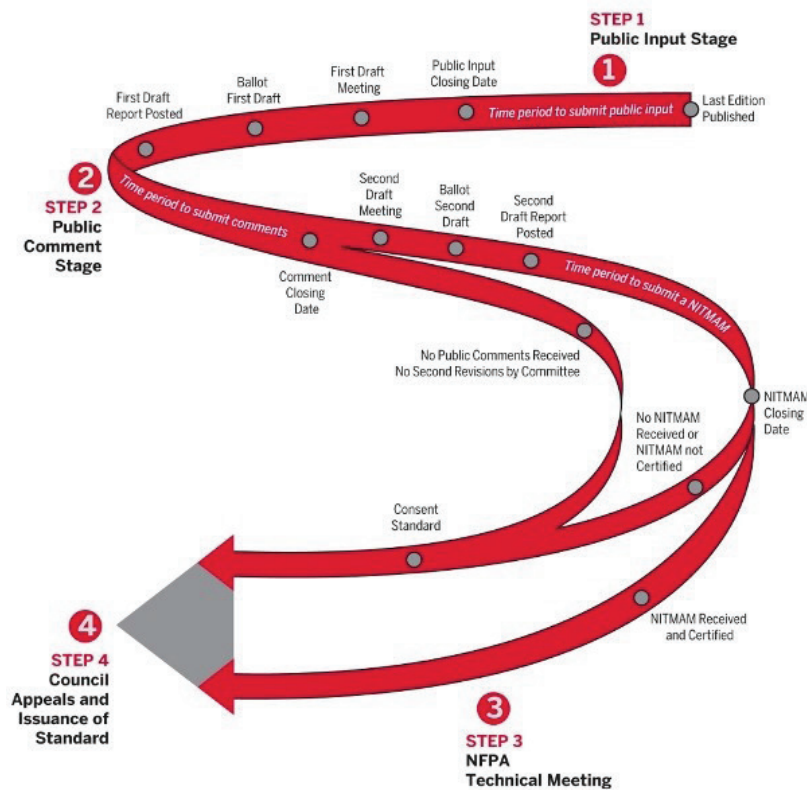


Figure 1. Copyright © 2016, National Fire Protection Association

Both experts acknowledged that standards development is, of course, only the first step. Promoting compliance can be equally or more difficult to navigate. Yet, there are resources and supports that can assist. Mr. Wieder explained, “The ‘should’ or ‘shall’ in NFPA standards tell you what to do –

IFSTA tells you how.” IFSTA uses validation committees to look at the best ways to implement standards, and to develop compliance pathways. The group discussed other strategies that could be used to encourage compliance:



- Integrate compliance into accreditation processes.
- Get buy-in from manufacturers early in development.
- Involve other responding agencies into the process.
- Make compliance achievable financially for departments.
- Integrate compliance into the FEMA – AFG grant application process.

In the ensuing discussion, the group favored using the power of the NFPA to coordinate development and dissemination of the standard. To do so will require selection of a technical committee of subject matter experts to discern core group policies; each member of the group in Columbus was willing to be part of the process. It was also recommended that a new standard be developed, rather than waiting to integrate additional policies into existing standards during their revision cycles.

## The Charleston Experience: Automatic Aid, Mutual Aid and the Development of Policy and Training Programs

Following the national level discussion, it was time to take a look at a case study of a single fire department's journey to develop response policies, albeit driven by tragedy. Chief Tippett began his presentation by stating, "There has to be an easier way to implement policies and procedures than what happened in Charleston."

He gave an overview of the department's history, leading up to the events of June 18, 2007, when nine members died in the Sofa Super Store Fire. What had once been a proud and fiercely independent organization was pilloried for antiquated practices by both the local and fire service media. Independent reports (the "Routley Report", the NIOSH fire fighter fatality investigation report, and an investigation conducted by South Carolina OSHA) called for sweeping changes. A complete change in leadership ensued, and within a year, Chief Thomas Carr from Montgomery County, Maryland had stepped in to move the department in a new direction, guided by the recommenda-

tions within the Routley Report.

It was not a smooth transition. While members of the department openly embraced the recommendations and worked hard to implement new methods, there was resistance from certain circles inside the department. Through "tough love," though, small victories led to giant steps and a literal "rewiring" of the organization. Chief Carr established two overall objectives: 1) get our house in order, and 2) get along with other fire departments. Beginning with an in-depth needs assessment, leadership established performance goals for the department. At the most basic level, instilling discipline, individual accountability, and compliance with new doctrine was a sea change for the department. Chief Tippett noted implementing the changes required patience, perseverance and a very thick skin on the part of those favoring and fostering the transition.



Once the framework for safe operation was in place, it was time to turn their attention to learning to play well with others. A customer service focus and three key questions guided the department's efforts:

- How do we best serve the public?
- How do we best serve each other?
- How do we implement what's best?

Overcoming the territoriality of the region's departments was the initial challenge. Despite geographically intertwined response areas, historically little to no resource sharing took place among departments. Emergency calls were routed to a specific fire department, and vehicles would sometimes pass another department's stations on the way to calls. There were some initial attempts to join forces, such as in 2006 when local departments met to discuss working together. However, no policies or procedures were instituted as a result.

Several high-profile events, including the Super Sofa Store tragedy, provided the impetus for finally instilling change. Between 2009 – 2012, resource sharing accelerated. In 2010, a Consolidated Dispatch Center opened. Two years later, a landmark automatic aid agreement was signed that served as the linchpin for the effort. It delineated response packages and unit assignments, and clearly defined risk assessment values. Most importantly, it instituted the "closest companies respond" rule (regardless of jurisdiction) and began the collaboration of departments on other SOGs.

Five years later, Chief Tippet considers implementation of the plan to still be a work in progress. The department has achieved faster response times

and now has a deeper pool to draw from during out-of-service periods. As a region, they have adopted common terminology across organizations, and additional staffing and resources are now available for incident management. However, the bureaucracy of change has slowed progress, and it has been a challenge to achieve compatibility with agencies that have widely varying funding sources. In closing, Chief Tippet delineated ten "lessons learned" in establishing a more effective response network:

1. Establish compliance expectations early.
2. Building strong and trusting partnerships results in the best service to the community.
3. Partners must have common goals and similar operational philosophies.
4. Be prepared to compromise.
5. Incident AARs (after action reviews) are essential to foster success and affirm expectations.
6. Establish regular collaborative training and meeting schedules.
7. Instill personal and organizational accountability.
8. Seek champions and be prepared to confront naysayers and detractors early and firmly.
9. Survive trying times by learning from them and moving forward.
10. Remain focused on the mission, and on achieving operational excellence across all organizations.





## Response Policies Related to Wildland, WUI, and Multi-Organizational Integrated Response

Wildland fire operations leaders were invited to be part of the working group in Columbus. David Vitwar, retired from Colorado Springs Fire Department, now serves as Branch Chief of Operations for Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. He described his journey as a firefighter and leader, cross-trained to work in both the structural and wildland worlds. This was not unusual in Colorado. He was encouraged by his department to get qualified and work within the qualification system of federal partners, obtaining “red card” certification in recruit school. He noted that this practice is even more important now than 20 years ago, as the wildfire “season” is now year-round, fires are increasing in size and complexity, federal agencies don’t have the personnel to sustain the system, and interagency teams are required to fill the gaps. Across the United States, local departments are training, equipping, and supporting wildland fire teams. In fact, approximately 50% of leaders in interagency response come from municipal departments.

Paul Summerfelt, Fire Management Officer for the city of Flagstaff, Arizona, cited the loss of 14 firefighters on Storm King Mountain in July 1994, as the initial impetus for assessing the qualifications of key decision makers. He noted that the evolution and acceptance of the current system has literally taken a generation. More than two de-

acades later, there is a task book for every position, providing consistency to training, qualifications, and equipment across agencies. The National Interagency Mobilization Guide, which is revised annually, serves as the minimum standard for all responding agencies, firefighter crews, and equipment accessed through the federal wildland fire resource ordering system.

It is clear money has played a large role in incentivizing acceptance of this standardization. The federal government reimburses the direct costs at established rates for people and equipment, whether they are contract wildland firefighters, members of state or local crews, or teams from structural fire departments or other jurisdictions. Federal agencies also drove the original development of ICS in the early 1990s, which has since evolved into Wildland Incident Management System, or WIMS. Both presenters agreed that the standardization of terminology, training, and resources has been critically important to wildland fire operations. Standardization makes it possible for people and resources to be plugged into any environment and know precisely where they fit in, as well as providing incident commanders with knowledge of what they are receiving in terms of capability. This consistency has greatly simplified planning response.



## Emergency Response Technologies

Jack Sullivan, Director of Training for the Emergency Responder Safety Institute (ERSI), provided an overview of his organization's history and mission. ERSI, a committee of the Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association, serves as an informal advisory panel of public safety leaders committed to reducing deaths and injuries among the men and women who respond to emergencies on our nation's streets, roads and highways. They fulfill their mission through five key initiatives:

- Responder Safety Learning Network – providing online safety training to responders;
- National Unified Goal – working collaboratively with other agencies to reduce fatalities and injuries to responders;
- Move Over Law – advocating for state laws and developing model language to require drivers to provide responders with sufficient space to provide medical care and other assistance at highway incidents, as well as clear the scene in an orderly and safe manner;

- High Visibility – advancing research in PPE and equipment such as lights that maximize visibility of responders on the roadways; and
- Traffic Incident Management – discerning best practices, developing SOPs/ SOGs, and providing training to support traffic management practices that reduce risk to responders.

ERSI is also involved in advocacy for physical standards and wellness programs for responders, and development of a public education and awareness campaign that could ultimately be included in driver's education programming. After two decades of work by ERSI, Mr. Sullivan noted that we are starting to see more consistency of materials, and we now have NFPA 1091 Standard for Traffic Control Incident Management Personnel Professional Qualifications identifying core skills and capabilities of incident traffic management. Mr. Sullivan observed there remains much work to be done, including development of standard model SOPs that can be adapted to reflect regional and local traffic problems.

## Policies & Procedures That Won't Collect Dust: Developing Minimum National Response Policies That Survive Implementation

The working group discussed in depth ways to ensure that the policies and procedures (P&Ps) developed to support the standard must be useable AND used. Scott Eskwitt, Operations Manager for Lexipol (a recognized industry leader for policy and procedure development), emphasized policies and procedures need to do more than sit on a shelf or be perceived as mechanisms for manage-

ment to control/discipline employees. He clarified the differences between policies and procedures as an introduction to the rest of his presentation. Agencies will many times blur the distinction between the two, leading to ineffective application, confusion, and outright ignoring on the part of supervisors and work force.



**Policy** – a guiding principle used to set direction in an organization.

**Procedure** – a series of steps to be followed as a consistent and repetitive approach to accomplish an end result.

Policies and procedures need to be viewed as living documents, providing frameworks for defining acceptable risk and outlining how jobs are to be accomplished. They need to be routinely reviewed and updated. Mr. Eskwitt further stated well-written policies and procedures play a major role in risk reduction and need to become embedded in agency practice. He noted any articulation of policies and procedures within the new standard must include: a stated purpose and scope; a concise policy statement; and specific content based on discretion, best practices as determined by NFPA, subject matter experts, and state/federal law.

Policies and procedures constitute “the playbook” for the department. In delineating SOPs/SOGs for a specific type of incident, it is necessary to establish the purpose and scope of the procedure, what should be happening in the first five minutes of response, and the “who, what, how, and why,” including resource deployment, apparatus, personnel, operations, universal practices, and a decision tree. To retain a safety and risk reduction focus, the department should continuously ask while crafting policy whether it supports performing elevated risk tasks without recklessly or imprudently endangering the lives of first responders.

Jennifer Brust, Senior Project Manager for Lex-

ipol, reinforced Mr. Eskwitt’s presentation by noting NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Reports repeatedly cite lack of SOPs/SOGs or failure to follow existing SOPs/SOGs as common contributing factors to preventable firefighter tragedies. Additionally, the significant variation in departmental operations across the nation, regions, and mutual/automatic aid groups impacts organizational interoperability, in turn increasing risk to firefighters. To mitigate that risk, Ms. Brust delineated the process used by Lexipol, which can be adapted for use by departments, jurisdictions, or response networks in developing procedures:

- Literature review, including NIOSH LODD/NFPA/CDC reports
- Gather commonalities, focusing on essential actions, the first five minutes, and command
- Regional reviews with national level SMEs to ensure applicability
- Legal review by internal public safety legal experts
- Ensure alignment with all state and national laws
- Ensure spirit of procedure is to reduce risk for individual and/or fire department
- Quality review

Ultimately, she noted, the challenges related to compliance will come down to a question of resources and backbone. Ensuring the department has the staffing, equipment, and leadership to respond according to the SOPs/SOGs is an issue that must be tackled at the local level.



## External Forces Affecting Response Policies

Denver, Colorado Fire Chief Eric Tade and Ed Mann, former Fire Commissioner for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, discussed the impact of state and local governments on policy and procedure compliance within fire departments. Commissioner Mann stressed the difficulty of working within national or state governments to ensure standards compliance and encourages fire service organizations to take the matter into their own hands. Chief Tade also encouraged jurisdictions to

take the initiative, and “...to do a better job of telling our story.” Using law enforcement as a model, he recommended that fire officials across the country actively seek roles within important decision-making bodies. Fire service leaders must make public, state, and local government officials understand what they are doing and ask for what they need. Both officials agreed that to ensure compliance of a national response policy, we will need to build it into accreditation criteria.

## Aligning Response Policies Across Jurisdictions/Focus on Process

Captain David Santini of the Arlington County (VA) Fire Department is a member of the technical writing group that develops standard SOPs for agencies within the Northern Virginia (NOVA) response network. He discussed the value and complexities of successfully unifying policies across such a diverse region. In NOVA, mutual aid was on demand until 1974, when local fire chiefs saw the opportunity to maximize levels of service based on regional response. By 1977, mutual aid agreements were in place, based on closest unit. The NOVA region now includes 14 total jurisdictions, representing 3,500 career and volunteer firefighters based in 145 fire stations. Together they protect a region of 2,400 square miles, home to 2.8 million people, approximately one-third of the total population of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Members of the NOVA Technical Writing Group are appointed by the operations chief from their respective department. They are responsible for collaboratively drafting SOPs and developing

procedural manuals and training packages that are adopted and used across the region. He noted that jurisdictions can add on but not subtract from the personnel and resources identified within the SOP. Each SOP is subject to an annual review when information can be amended or changed. The revision is then presented to the Fire Operations Board, comprised of chiefs and operations chiefs, for approval. SOPs are rewritten on a four-year cycle. Subject matter experts are tasked with developing SOPs for special subjects, such as RIT. A matrix of SOPs, known as the “NOVA Quick Reference Guide” has been developed to provide organization to the system. The guide can be viewed in [Appendix D](#).

Captain Santini, like the previous presenters, reinforced the clear benefit of having standard SOPs. When jurisdictions are on the same page they operate in a safer, more efficient manner. Additional benefits of broadening response networks include more effective training programs and an expand-



ed pool of evaluators for promotional exams. Drilling together helps promote interjurisdictional play. Police and other agencies are integrated into SOPs if necessary, such as with the active shooter protocol. Captain Santini did note some difficulties, especially in the disparity of resources across

the region and lack of equipment standardization. However, the strength and longevity of NOVA's regional approach has, over time, served to reduce these disparities.

## Recommendations

### Development of a National Emergency Response Policy

The working group present at the May 2018 meeting affirmed the need for a national emergency response standard based upon Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11. They also agreed the standard should follow the content outlined in the 2007 white paper, expanding beyond driving policies to include the need for standardization of policies and procedures, automatic and mutual aid, and the delineation of uniform minimum levels of personnel qualifications.

Attendees acknowledged the scope of the task is vast, but not unachievable, and developed the following series of recommendations to guide the process. The group included recommendations to support compliance, as well as for marketing the suggested standard from the development process through approval and widespread use.

*Recommendation #1: The NFFF should advocate for development of a national emergency response standard promoting the creation of operational policies minimizing preventable occupational exposures to hazardous conditions that can result in medical or traumatic tragedies to firefighters.*

### Immediately Actionable Goals for Local Jurisdictions and Organizations

The working group acknowledged it will take time to develop a national response policy standard. They felt strongly that departments should take immediate action in the interim to put policies and procedures in place to safeguard their firefighters.

Resources and sample SOPs/SOGs are already widely available. The working group developed an outline of what should be included in each department's response policies; this list is included in [Appendix A](#).



*Recommendation #2: All fire departments and agencies must develop, implement, and enforce response policies that support the health and safety of their members.*

## Process

The working group recommends working within the NFPA technical committee structure to draft the standard. Those present willingly offered their service and participation as a starting point. Additionally, the group suggested, the NFFF should host a series of listening sessions across the United States prior to convening the committee. The purpose of these sessions is threefold: to solicit feedback and information from stakeholders, ensure all stakeholders are identified and represented, and establish buy in/early support for the proposed standard.

It was specifically recommended the wildland fire-fighting community continue to be engaged in the effort. There are currently at least three wildland fire regional policy organizational structures that could serve as a models or templates for structural fire policies and procedures. In addition, there is considerable overlap in some areas (such as driving) that will impact both domains.

*Recommendation #3: The NFPA technical committee process should be used to develop the national standard.*

The NFPA is recognized as the pre-eminent organization for fire department standards. While not law, NFPA standards are often cited as core elements of fire department policies and procedures.

The attendees in Columbus believe the NFPA technical committee process is the reasonable location for the standard to be developed.





*Recommendation #4: All policies and procedures that are developed must be research-oriented and data driven.*

At the Columbus meeting, representatives from Lexipol made a strong case for the value and efficacy of policies and procedures developed through research and data. Such documents have

the greatest capability for early acceptance, committed followership, and the ability to withstand scrutiny.

*Recommendation #5: The technical committee should include members of the wildland community to build on established best practices for collaborative response, and for input regarding development of policies and procedures that are applicable to both domains.*

Discussion from other NFFF projects identified many wildland firefighters do not consider themselves part of the “fire service.” Many wildland fire responders are principally land management specialists or “natural resource officers,” called to fight

fires when the need arises. This has led to a perception that for this cohort, firefighting is an ancillary function and has led in many cases to a lack of awareness of the dialogue surrounding firefighter safety.

## Scope of the Standard

Given the broad range of response capabilities of fire service organizations in the United States, scale and scope are key considerations in developing any national consensus standard. General recommendations need to not only reduce risk to firefighters, but must be scalable, affordable, and

achievable to be broadly accepted and used. As with any advancement in health and safety, policies and procedures guided by a standard will only be effective if they are used as a matter of routine, not exception.



*Recommendation #6: The national standard should include operational policies and procedures for safe emergency vehicle responses to local emergencies based on the level of risk associated with the type of incident.*

Driving issues consistently emerge as key issues causing fatalities and injuries. These key issues can be immediately impacted by consistent application of policies and procedures based upon best practices. The first criteria of a standard should require certification for driving emergency response vehicles. Safe driving practices and mandatory seatbelt use for all passengers has to be mandated.

The standard must also delineate what constitutes an emergency response versus non-emergency response. Clear guidelines should be included for use of lights and sirens, as well as policies and procedures for behavior at intersections, speed limit compliance, and vehicle backing operations. The standard should also cover decontamination of the apparatus cab and equipment carried within the vehicle cab.

*Recommendation #7: All response policies should be developed at the national level with the flexibility to be refined by local/regional level working groups for implementation.*

Developing model policies and procedures that can be adapted as needed to fit local variants in geography, climate, and other factors will advance the nation's response capabilities. These policies should encompass high risk response scenarios, including responding on the roadway. The standard can draw from the work of multiple regional coalitions across the country that model this practice.

This effort will be of particular value to smaller departments that lack the resources and staffing to develop their own policies. It will also advance the general strategy of "closest unit goes" in the case of automatic aid, reducing response time and saving resources.

Fire departments rarely respond alone to an incident. Collaboration with other agencies will be critical to the success of standardizing response policies and procedures. It will be important during standard development to get input from the different organizations that will be responding together. The development of NFPA 3000, where fire, police, and local government work together during an active shooter incident is one such example. SOPs/SOGs should also support collaborative training among organizations across geographic, mutual, and automatic aid areas.



***Recommendation #8: Standard operational policies and sample SOPs/SOGs should be developed across a range of incidents.***

This recommendation may at first glance appear to be unattainable. But a survey of attendees in Columbus demonstrated that fire departments are more alike than different. Each jurisdiction will have to conduct an assessment for what works best for them, but it is interesting to note that of the fire departments represented, two from the

West, one from the South and one from the East, were sending the same response assignment to structure fires, vehicle fires, and vehicle collisions. This indicates we may not be as far afield for developing national level standardized SOPs/SOGs as one might think.

***Recommendation #9: Common communications terminology (i.e., “plain talk”) should be adopted for day to day use by all emergency responders.***

“Plain talk” for emergency responders has been emerging since the 1970s. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) issued an alert in 2006 calling for first responder agencies to adopt plain language procedures for emergency operations. In 2010, the Department of Homeland Security published a guide to further promote the use of plain language and dispel arguments against plain language (<https://bit.ly/2AvPX18>). While the document doesn’t mandate an agency use plain talk for

internal use, it does propose agencies adopt plain language for disaster or interoperability events. This recommendation essentially creates two levels of communications, one for “inside” the department and one for “outside” the department. The natural extension of this practice is confusion and inept application in the respective environs. Rather than create two tiers of talking, the committee recommends all agencies adopt plain language to improve communications.



*Recommendation #10: Standard operational policies that ensure common strategies and tactics at the regional level should be developed. Language within the standard should require sharing of policies among all types of organizations involved in any collaborative response.*

There is wide room for discussion in this recommendation that would provide departments with the latitude needed to address local and regional practices. The key with Recommendation #10 revolves around a standard approach to an incident when multiple agencies respond together. The complexity of trying to remember three, four or even two SOPs because of jurisdictional prejudice is neither practical nor professional. In some instances, it will be downright dangerous. The standard would not define specific strategies and tactics but would prescribe overarching

themes that transcend jurisdictional boundaries. Examples include: a defined requirement for incident commanders to consciously perform a risk assessment before engaging in action; ensuring adequate personnel and apparatus are available and deployable to support the strategy selected; developing a generic decision tree/logarithm that commanders can follow to assist with making the right risk decision; advocating the use of recommended best practices coming out of the fire dynamics research community, etc.

*Recommendation #11: Standardize training levels, certification qualifications, and health and wellness standards for all fire service personnel.*

Building on the concept of collaborative response, firefighters and fire officers must have a level of confidence in the skills and abilities of those who are coming to assist. Currently, training requirements and course content vary from state to state, and even from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It is recognized that NFPA standards currently exist outlining the minimal qualifications of different personnel. However, there is no consistent mandate requiring any of this training. Delineating the training needed to respond to an incident as a firefighter, company officer, etc. is a high priority for this

effort, and should be integrated into all credentialing processes. It is also recommended that appropriate levels of risk evaluation education be built into the standard.

Here, we can take a note from the wildland community. All firefighter level personnel, whether from a federal or state natural resource agency or a municipal department, are required to be “red card certified,” having passed the S-130/S-190 basic wildland firefighter course. Similarly, they are all held to the same minimal physical fitness level in being able to pass the Arduous Work Capacity



Test, better known as the “pack test” (hiking three miles in 45 minutes, wearing a 26-pound backpack).

Integrating a mental and physical wellness component into this standard would serve as an additional opportunity to advocate for national, state, and local policies that increase the survivability of firefighters. For decades, approximately 50% of firefighter fatalities have been due to cardiac and medical events. Adding to this statistic, there is an increased awareness of risk of occupational can-

cers to firefighters and an uptick in firefighter suicides. The working group believes chiefs should be actively looking for ways to support the long-term health of their members and believe a national response policy standard could support efforts. NFPA 1582 physical examinations that identify risk factors for physical disease and assess mental wellness are one the most effective tools we have to safeguard our firefighters. The IAFC’s Safety, Health and Survival Section has created a guide to assist physicians. Visit <http://iafcsafety.org/sop-for-firefighter-physicals/> for more details.

*Recommendation #12: Guidelines should be included to ensure the safe use of new and emerging technologies.*

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #8 states: Use available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety. The rapid technological advancements taking place inside and outside our industry can provide departments with tools needed to safely respond and mitigate situations that were not previously possible.

Ten years ago, the use of drones and autonomous vehicles to fight fire was not yet reality. Now they are being more widely used, and fire departments are playing catch up in terms of developing policies and procedures guiding their use. It is critical that any national standard have built within it the inherent capacity to govern the use of technologies yet to be developed, to ensure those technologies are safely used and are not adding additional layers of risk to firefighters.



## Fire Service Support

*Recommendation #13: NFFF should develop a matrix of proposed technical committee members based upon skills, experience, and organizational affiliation, building on the working group reviewing Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11.*

Developing and implementing a national response policy standard will require the collaborative efforts of many fire service organizations and individuals. In addition to the NFFF and the NFPA, the working group recommends the following organizations be included in future development activities:

- International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI)
- International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (IABPFF)
- International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- International Association of Women in Fire & Emergency Services (iWomen)
- International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA)

- International Association of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI)
- National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)
- North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD)

Federal government agencies that have previously partnered with the fire service, including the Department of Justice, Department of Transportation, and the National Institutes of Health – Center for Disease Control should also be approached to assist the effort. When/where there is overlap, federal and state wildland fire representatives should be included in the process. State level occupational safety and health authorities should also be asked to participate.

*Recommendation #14: The technical committee should include partners to build compliance with the proposed standard into credentialing processes, training development, insurance coverage, and awarding of grants.*

As was previously mentioned, embedding the new standards into accreditation processes will help to

facilitate widespread implementation. Responsible organizations, including the Insurance Services





Office (ISO) and the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) must be involved with the development process. Reaching out to local government authorities through the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) will be imperative to getting buy-in from municipal officials.

Private industry will be a driver to acceptance of the newly created standards and should be involved in every stage of the standard development process.

Manufacturers of apparatus, PPE, or other equipment that might be affected should be at the table. Insurance companies, such as VFIS, Provident, and California Casualty, should be party to drafting the standards since they can play a key role by incentivizing implementation. Other nonprofits, including the National Safety Council, should be invited to participate in the process based upon ability to serve as subject matter experts.

*Recommendation #15: The NFFF and the working group should identify partners that are able to help support this effort financially or through in-kind contributions.*

FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Fire Prevention & Safety grant program has provided the seed money for this effort. It will be necessary to find additional financial support from corporate or constituency organizations, to continue the momentum and bring this standard to fruition.

The committee recognized many of the entities mentioned in Recommendation #14 could provide a seat at the table, as well as financially support the movement.

*Recommendation #16: The NFFF should develop a comprehensive marketing plan to educate stakeholders throughout the standards pre-development, development, review and acceptance, and implementation processes.*

Among fire service organizations, "marketing" and "branding" are not always seen as high priorities, nor are they perceived as good use of limited resources. However, getting the word out early and often will help to establish buy-in to standards development and adoption. It is critical that prior to any additional work, the steering group addresses

these needs, and with its partners, creates a comprehensive plan to put key strategies into place. The NFFF, with its reputation as a "neutral entity" and experience in uniting disparate entities behind the goal of reducing firefighter fatalities and injuries, should take the lead in this effort.



*Recommendation #17: The working group should identify potential barriers to standards adoption and develop strategies to counter and overcome such barriers.*

It is clear there will be barriers to imposing additional structure on the fire service. At a global level, two barriers exist, a lack of recognition for the need of a national policy, and the actuality that there is currently no governmental plan in place to impose standardized policies and procedures on the existing system. Organizationally, there will be pushback regarding the cost in terms of time and funding to educate and train personnel for compliance. The time required to create policies and procedures may also be viewed as a drain on the already limited resources of many departments. However, there are an abundance of options al-

ready in existence that allow even the most staffing challenged department to “cut and paste” its way into best practices compliance.

Individually, there will be some level of personal resistance among some parties. This resistance may spill over into the negative influencing of others. In other cases, individuals may fear that non-compliance will be used as a disciplinary item. The working group recognizes this and offers the practice of “patience and perseverance” accompanied by emphasized coaching as solutions.

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# Appendix A: Guidelines for Department/Agency Level Policies

1. If you do not have a response policy, write one.

## Driving/Apparatus

2. Develop, institute, and consistently enforce a mandatory seat belt policy that provides ramifications for compliance failure.
3. Develop, institute, and consistently enforce a safe apparatus emergency response policy that is based on the risk versus gain of operating vehicles in an emergency response mode when responding to specific types of incidents.
4. Develop, institute, and consistently enforce an apparatus backing policy that applies to all situations where the vehicle is operated in reverse mode.
5. Develop, institute, and consistently enforce driving policies that clearly state:
  - a. Traffic law exceptions that are allowed, in accordance with applicable state/local regulations, during emergency responses.
  - b. The maximum speed, over the posted speed limit, allowed during an emergency response.
  - c. The authority and conditions for upgrading, downgrading, or canceling incident responses.
  - d. Any traffic law exceptions for POVs that are allowed during emergency responses, including when/if POVs can operate in opposing traffic lanes during an emergency response.
6. Develop, institute, and consistently enforce an apparatus inspection and maintenance policy that ensures all in-service vehicles are in a safe and operable condition. Define out of service criteria and procedures for resolving disagreements over a vehicle's safe operation.
7. Keep data and analyze it regularly regarding ALL apparatus-related crashes, roll-overs, civilian encounters, etc. Enforce all penalties that are established.

## Operations

8. Develop incident operational policies at the regional level that ensure common strategies and tactics are adopted as part of an ongoing effort to minimize illness/injury causing occupational exposures.
9. Identify required resources within your pre-incident plans.
10. Develop, institute, and consistently enforce operational policies for common communications terminology (i.e., "plain talk") among all emergency responders in a region.
11. Schedule and participate in training drills with other response agencies.
12. Schedule and participate in natural disaster response and recovery exercises.
13. Establish guidelines to modify or suspend operations during extreme weather conditions.

## Health

14. Develop, institute, and enforce policies prohibiting personnel from emergency response activities after drinking alcoholic beverages or having a blood alcohol above 0.0.
15. Establish a regular schedule of NFPA 1582 compliant physicals for all firefighters.



## Appendix B: Defining the “Emergency Response”

By J. Gordon Routley

*Purpose: To define the types of situations for which organizational policy authorizes emergency response, within the constraints and limitations established by highway codes and motor vehicle laws.*

Each fire department should adopt an official policy establishing the types of situation for which emergency response is authorized. Emergency response refers to the operation of emergency vehicles with visible and audible warning devices activated.

Emergency response should be authorized for situations where there is an immediate threat to public safety, to the health and safety of a person or persons, to property or to the environment. This includes situations where this type of situation is believed to exist, based on the information that is available.

Emergency response should only be authorized for those situations where timely response is likely to have a significant positive impact on the outcome. Emergency response should not be authorized when the difference in travel time between emergency and non-emergency response will have no impact on the outcome of the incident or the health and safety of persons involved in the incident.

Emergency response should be authorized for units responding to fires and hazardous situations that are known or believed to involve a significant risk to public safety, where there may be persons at risk of death or injury and where the situation is likely to become more serious or to cause more harm if the response is delayed.

For medical incidents, the determination should be based on whether the difference in response time between emergency and non-emergency response is likely to make a difference in the patient’s condition. These factors are already incorporated into the triage models that are widely used by Fire and EMS communication centers.

The department shall establish a policy for response to automatic fire alarm incidents, where there is no indication of a fire other than the alarm condition. This policy shall define which units (if any) will respond in an emergency mode and which units (if any) will respond in a non-emergency mode.

In any situation where the first arriving units determine that emergency response is not appropriate for units that have not yet arrived, those units shall be advised to discontinue emergency response.



The types of situations where emergency response should not be authorized include:

- Automatic fire alarm system activations where the person reporting the incident is on the scene and reports no evidence of a fire or emergency, other than the alarm sounding. This applies equally to a situation where the caller indicates that the cause of the alarm activation is known and is not a true emergency. It also applies to alarm systems that are indicating a “trouble condition” as opposed to an “alarm” condition.
- Residential smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms, where the caller indicates that the alarm has activated, but there is no evidence of an emergency situation. This includes “beeping” which indicates the need for battery replacement.
- Public service calls where the problem is not a danger to public safety and is not at risk of becoming more severe within a short time period (i.e. water leaks).
- Removal of occupants from disabled elevators, when the occupants are in no immediate distress.
- Units responding to evaluate potentially hazardous conditions, where the hazard does not create an imminent risk to public safety.
- Units responding to relieve other units at the scene of a fire or any other type of incident, where the incident is under control.
- Units responding to fires and other types of incidents to perform support functions that do not justify emergency response.
- Response of vehicles that are unsuitable for emergency response due to their design, weight, dimensions, or other factors (i.e. large capacity water tenders).
- The response policy adopted by a fire department should provide clear guidelines, while providing a limited margin for the application of judgement for exceptional situations.

Emergency response shall be authorized only within the limits established by highway traffic codes and other applicable laws and within the safety constraints that are documented in NFPA Standard 1500.



## Appendix C: Working Group

### Initiative #11: Addressing a National Emergency Response Policy

Columbus, Ohio May 16-18, 2018

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International Society of  
Fire Service Instructors

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Prevention and Control

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*Chief Executive Officer*

Emergency Vehicle Response





# Appendix D: NOVA Quick Reference Guide

(Revised October 2016)

NOVA Quick Reference Guide (Revised October 2016)

UNIT	SINGLE FAMILY	TOWNHOUSE	STRIP SHOPPING/ COMMERCIAL	GARDEN APARTMENT	HIGHRISE	MIDRISE	METRO
1st Engine	Side A, supply lines, initial attack line, command decision, complete RECON lap, visualize Side C and announce findings	Side A, supply lines, initial attack line, command decision, complete RECON lap, visualize Side C and announce findings	Side A, supply lines, initial attack line, command decision, complete RECON lap, visualize Side C (if possible) and announce findings	Side A, supply lines, initial attack line, command decision, complete RECON lap, visualize Side C (if possible) and announce findings	Abandon apparatus, entire crew inside, Knox box, check FAC, retrieve keys, recall elevators, identify fire floor, identify attack stairwell	Abandon apparatus, entire crew inside, Knox box, check FAC, retrieve keys, recall elevators, identify fire floor, identify attack stairwell	Best position for RECON. Conduct RECON. meet with Senior Metro Official, gather pertinent information (location/nature, 3 <sup>rd</sup> fall power, train movement status, provide situation report. Form RECON group at KIOSK (1 <sup>st</sup> E, 2 <sup>nd</sup> E, 3 <sup>rd</sup> E, 4 <sup>th</sup> E). Proceed to incident, report findings. Take action to mitigate.
2nd Engine	Water supply for 1st Engine, ensure first line is in service and operating, second line/backup line/line above	Water supply for 1st Engine, ensure first line is in service and operating, second line/backup line/line above	Water supply for 1st Engine, ensure first line is in service and operating, second line/backup line, FDC if on Side A	Water supply for 1st Engine, ensure first line is in service and operating, second line/backup line/line above	Supply FDC, check FAC for changes, assist with placing 1st Engine's hoseline in service, second line/backup line	Supply FDC, check FAC for changes, assist with placing 1st Engine's hoseline in service, second line/backup line	Assist first due engine with recon, fire attack, passenger evacuation, and/or patient treatment and triage.
3rd Engine	Position for second water supply, check Side C, check for extension, exposure line	Position for second water supply and Side C coverage, check Side C, check for extension, exposure line	Position on Side C, water supply, hoseline operation and support rescue and truck, FDC if on Side C	Position for second water supply, check Side C, check for extension, exposure line	Water supply to secondary FDC if present, floor above with 2nd Truck	Water supply to secondary FDC if present, floor above with 2nd Truck	Coordinate water supply based on recon information. Officer may become water supply group supervisor. Consider assigning crew to another company.
4th Engine	RTT, driver to supply 3rd Engine as needed	RTT, driver to supply 3rd Engine as needed	RTT, driver supply 3rd Engine as needed	RTT, driver to supply 3rd Engine as needed	RTT attack stairwell (one floor below fire floor)	RTT attack stairwell (one floor below fire floor)	RTT, report to command.
5th Engine					Report to Command Post, assume Lobby Control	Report to Command Post, assume Lobby Control	Assume Command at mezzanine/Kiosk area. Crew commence kiosk control group operations. Officer becomes kiosk control group supervisor following command transfer.
1st Truck/Tower	Side A, force entry, Search, Ventilation, ladders (ventilation and utilities if after rescue)	Side A, force entry, Search, Ventilation, ladders (ventilation and utilities if after rescue)	Side A, force entry, Search, Ventilation, ladders (ventilation and utilities if after rescue)	Side A, force entry, Search, Ventilation, ladders (ventilation and utilities if after rescue)	Side A, driver to stay with unit if fire is in reach of aerial, crew with 1st Engine, forcible entry, primary search	Side A, driver to stay with unit if fire is in reach of aerial, crew with 1st Engine, forcible entry, primary search	Operate within RECON group, perform and monitor safety functions. WSAD placements as available.
2nd Truck/Tower	Assure Side C is covered, IC's Determination	Side C coverage	Side C, roof access, vertical ventilation	Side C coverage	Position for use at fire floor, crew to floor above with 3rd Engine	Position for use at fire floor, crew to floor above with 3rd Engine	Report to Command for assignment
1st Rescue	Position out of way, ventilation, force entry and search, (ladders, ventilation and utilities if after truck/tower)	Position out of way, ventilation, force entry and search, (ladders, ventilation and utilities if after truck/tower)	Position on Side C, primarily responsible for gaining access to uninvolved occupancy and immediate exposure	Position out of way, ventilation, force entry and search, (ladders, ventilation and utilities if after truck/tower)	If arriving before 1st Truck assume 1st Truck tasks - if arriving after, tagline on fire floor, forcible entry on adjacent units, identify alternative fire attack options, assist in deployment of 2 1/2 inch hoseline	If arriving before 1st Truck assume 1st Truck tasks - if arriving after, tagline on fire floor, forcible entry on adjacent units, identify alternative fire attack options, assist in deployment of 2 1/2 inch hoseline	Place first 2 WSADs, number rail cars, report to the RECON Group Supervisor for assignment.
TRT							Report to the incident commander for assignment.
1st Transport Unit	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients	Position for rapid egress, treatment of initial patients, Report to Command for assignment
1st EMS Sup/Command Aide	Cmd. Aide, other duties as assigned	Cmd. Aide, other duties as assigned	Cmd. Aide, other duties as assigned	Cmd. Aide, other duties as assigned	Cmd. Aide, other duties as assigned	Cmd. Aide, other duties as assigned	Cmd. Aide, EMS Branch Supervisor, other duties as assigned
1st Battalion Chief	Assume Command	Assume Command	Assume Command	Assume Command	Assume Command	Assume Command	Assume Command, ACRE Strategy (Access, Control, Rescue, Evacuate/EMS)
2nd Battalion Chief	Tactical Command, other duties as assigned	Tactical Command, other duties as assigned	Tactical Command, other duties as assigned	Tactical Command, other duties as assigned	Fire floor division supervisor	Fire floor division supervisor	Operational tasks as directed by command, assume Operations Chief section or a position as a Branch Director.



NOVA Quick Reference Guide (Revised October 2016)

UNIT	GREATER ALARMS	INITIAL RIT 1 (4 personnel preferred, 3 min.)	RIT LEVEL 1	RIT LEVEL 2	RIT LEVEL 3	EMTS/STAFFORCE	MCI ALARM	MANDAY
Engine	3		1	1		2 or	10 or	Call a MANDAY as soon as you realize you are at risk or lost; and your best possible location in the building.
Truck/Tower	1		1 or	1		2 or	10 or	
Rescue	0		1 (preferred)	1	2 or alternative units with structural collapse capability	2	10	<b>MANDAY Transmission should include:</b> 1. Mayday, Mayday, Mayday (i.e. Engine 407, Engine 407, Engine 407) 2. Unit number three times, (i.e. Engine 407, Engine 407) 3. Command acknowledged
Transport Unit	1		1 Added	1		5 (ALS)	10 ALS/BLS (min. 5 ALS)	<b>Once acknowledged by command, provide the following:</b> 1. Position and name 2. Location 3. Nature of emergency 4. Command acknowledge
EWS Supervisor						2	3	
Batt. Chief	1			1		1	1	(Unit, Conditions, Actions, Needs) (Location, Unit, Name, Air, Resources)
Cmd. Aide	1					1	1	
Special Ops Chief							1	<b>If not acknowledged by command, do the following:</b> 1. Emergency Activation Button, if possible 2. Activate PASS, briefly key portable to get attention of others. Deactivate PASS whenever communicating via radio and reactivate once complete 3. Mayday, Mayday, Mayday 4. Transmit unit number three times 5. Location 6. Nature of emergency 7. Mayday, Mayday, Mayday 8. Command acknowledge
Medical Care Support Unit							1	
Ambulance Bus							1	
Bomb Unit								
Command Unit							1	
Light/Air Unit	1							<b>Command Action</b> 1. Acknowledge mayday, immediately deploy RIT to last known location. 2. Make fire ground announcement to communicate emergency traffic only, and all personnel maintain current positions/assignments as applicable. 3. Confirm pertinent information from the downed firefighter (LUNARY/CAN). 4. Request accountability of crew initiating mayday. 5. Ensure dispatch of a RIT Level 2, additional alarms/resources, etc. 6. Initiate PAR check to confirm accountability of all personnel.



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## NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION

[WWW.FIREHERO.ORG](http://WWW.FIREHERO.ORG)

### **EMMITSBURG**

PO DRAWER 498  
EMMITSBURG, MD 21727  
301-447-1365  
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### **CROFTON**

2130 PRIEST BRIDGE DRIVE, SUITE 6  
CROFTON, MD 21114  
410-721-6212  
410-721-6213 (FAX)

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Our mission is to honor and remember America's fallen fire heroes, to provide resources to assist their survivors in rebuilding their lives, and to reduce firefighter deaths and injuries.