INSIDE:

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Thanks to all who attended the Firehouse World Conference in San Diego. FSTI did a great job with their training programs as did Firehouse World. Again, it was a very successful international event with many out-of-country firefighters attending, including a large contingency from our friends and neighbors at the Tijuana Fire Department. Los Angeles Fire Department’s Captain Chuck Ruddell received this year’s CSFA Training Officer of the Year honor. Captain Ruddell works tirelessly for the betterment of fire service training for Los Angeles Fire Department. His work not only benefits the Los Angeles Fire Department, but it benefits other neighboring departments as well. Congratulations Chuck!

We also sponsored a fun and very successful Celebrity Poker Tournament at the Hollywood Park Race Track Casino in Inglewood on February 10. Over 80 firefighters participated in the Poker Tournament. In addition notable celebrities who participated included Tony Dow and Jerry Mathers from the classic television show Leave it to Beaver; Christopher Knight of the Brady Bunch and Shannon Elizabeth (American Pie); former Oakland A’s player Jose Conseco, and Erin Moran (Happy Days). The winner of the $10,000 seat at the World Series of Poker was celebrity actor Brian Baumgartner (The Office). To see photos from the event turn to pages 22 and 23.

Another CSFA-sponsored Poker Tournament will be held at the Grand Sierra Casino in Reno on Saturday March 29. Check the CSFA website (www.csfa.net) for details on this upcoming tourney and others that are planned later this year around the state.

This will be our last magazine before we meet at our annual conference in Reno, Nevada. Please sign up, attend, and have a great time. We intentionally moved the CSFA conference permanently out of fire season so more members can attend. We have many notable speakers including State Fire Marshal Kate Dargan. Live fire training in the Northtree Fire Simulator is available to all conference attendees, so bring your turnouts and receive some top notch training while you enjoy Northern Nevada.

The CSFA Conference is a great opportunity for each member and each member department to become more involved in our statewide association. There will be a lot of activity, so if you want a great training and social experience, it is not too late to register. A registration form is printed on page 25 of this month’s magazine. You can also register online at www.csfa.net. I hope to see and meet many of you in Reno.

Stay safe.
Workers' comp: What's new in 2008

By Robert J. Sherwin

In 2007, a new study by an independent agency of the State, made up of appointees by the Governor, again confirmed that injured workers were getting short changed on permanent disability and that ratings were approximately 40 - 70% less than the under the previous system.

Since 2004, I have tried to bring CSFA members up to date on the many changes that have occurred in workers' compensation due to the passage of Senate Bill 899 (aka: the "Workers' Compensation Reform Act of 2004"). I have advised you of the benefits that have been taken away including the limitations on medical care and the drastic reduction of permanent disability compensation. The horror stories that CSFA attorneys have witnessed with their clients are too many to repeat, but many have been cited by the attorneys in articles for readers of The California Fire Service magazine. I have attempted to guide you through the morass of new laws and regulations and advise you how to avoid jeopardizing your rights by wading through these laws on your own.

CSFA attorneys have also been proactive in attempting to change some of the new laws through the legislative process as well as challenging them before the workers' compensation appeals board. Unfortunately both the Governor and the appeals board have not been receptive to many of these challenges and as a result, injured workers have seen little relief since 2004. The Governor has repeatedly said that his reforms are working by saving insurance companies and employers millions of dollars in their workers' compensation costs; therefore, he sees little reason to alter or tinker with his success. Likewise, the workers' compensation appeals board in San Francisco, made up of seven commissioners (all appointed by the Governor) has consistently ruled on behalf of employers in either reversing trial judges or upholding unfavorable decisions against injured workers.

No significant legislation was signed by the Governor in 2005 on workers' compensation. In 2006, the Governor did sign legislation eliminating apportionment of permanent disability to any injury presumed industrial for firefighters (heart trouble, cancer, etc.). This legislation was written by this author and supported by CSFA. It was written in direct response to the effects of SB 899 which allow a doctor to "apportion" permanent disability to pre-existing non industrial factors such as family history, genetics, degenerative changes, etc.

Also introduced in 2006 was a bill to restore permanent disability compensation to the level that existed before 2004. SB 899 created a new permanent disability rating system that is based on the American Medical Association Guides For Impairment. Despite a recommendation by the AMA author that these guides not be used to assess permanent disability in workers' compensation, they were nevertheless adopted as part of the new law because they would save money for insurance carriers. Indeed, it quickly became apparent that injured workers were receiving substantially less in permanent disability compensation as a result of this new system. An initial study completed in 2005 indicated that permanent disability ratings were reduced by 50 - 70% under the new system. Further studies in 2006 confirmed this and based on a promise from the Governor that he would revisit the issue of restoring permanent disability if information supported doing so; a bill was passed in 2006 by the legislature partially restoring permanent disability. The bill called for an increase in permanent disability beginning in 2008. The Governor vetoed the bill stating that further information was necessary to justify altering his reform.

In 2007, a new study by an independent agency of the State, made up of appointees by the Governor, again confirmed that injured workers were getting short changed on permanent disability and that ratings were approximately 40 - 70% less than the under the previous system.

There will also be another bill introduced to restore permanent disability and whether it will meet the same fate as those in 2006 and 2007 remains to be seen. You may be called upon later in the year to contact the Governor to urge him to sign Senator Migden's legislation and any other that seeks to restore the benefits that were taken away from you in 2004. In the meantime, stay safe and healthy.
CSFA News

CSFA, FSTI and LA Fire Marshals launch new communication networks

California State Firefighters’ Association (CSFA) and the Fire Services Training Institute (FSTI), in mutual agreement with the Los Angeles Area Fire Marshal’s Association (LAAFMA), are pleased to announce two new communication networks, FSTINet and CalArsonNet. These two lists will be a free service to fire professionals in California. FSTINet will address training issues, and the CalArsonNet will focus on arson investigation issues. The new networks join the already successful LAAFMA Discussion List network of with more than 900 members in California.

FSTINet and CalArsonNet will be informational, and communication networks where one member can post an email message via a secure server which is then sent directly to the email inbox of every member within that network. The lists will provide an instant communication tool and resource asset for members on the secure roster of each respective network.

Membership to FSTINet will be aimed primarily at fire and public safety training professionals. The intent is to bring together fire safety professionals, department training officers, public and private safety training personnel, and others under the FSTINet program which is dedicated to coordinating and providing statewide fire training opportunities and assistance via www.cafsti.net

Upon start-up, CalArsonNet will consist of the current members of the LAAFMA ArsonNet list with the intended expansion statewide to other active arson fire investigators, peace officers, forensic personnel, legal entities and specific government agencies that are actively engaged in the investigation and prosecution of arson cases, thus, ArsonNet’s recent name change to CalArsonNet. An approval process of those desiring access to this list will be overseen by the CSFA Arson Committee and LAAFMA.

CSFA and FSTI are proud to join the Los Angeles Area Fire Marshal’s Association in providing these valuable tools to the fire and public safety community. Anyone interested in joining any of the three networks is encouraged to visit the FSTI website at www.cafsti.net and the CSFA website at www.csfa.net. Automated subscribe forms will be available soon.

For more information visit: www.csfa.net

And more than 100 years is a lot of experience. Combined, that’s what these four CSFA-recommended Workers’ Compensation and retirement attorneys have to offer their clients.

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Going up on the roof of any structure to perform vertical ventilation is just not that safe. Think about it; we are walking around on top of a building that is being weakened by the fire conditions inside of it. Besides the fire burning underneath our working platform, and the gravitational pull toward the ground, we have many other hazards to contend with on the actual roof.

To try and increase our odds of a successful operation we need to first make sure our team is mentally prepared to get the job done. The crew must know the plan on the ground and the duties to be performed by each particular member. The crew needs to be comfortable with the assignment, have the skills to carry out the tasks, and be ready to abort the operation if needed.

The crew needs to be fully dressed in turnouts and breathing apparatus. The breathing apparatus needs to be in place prior to the cutting operation in case of wind changes, pressurized smoke evacuating your hole, or in case a member falls through the roof. The condition of each member’s boots needs to be evaluated as well. The boots will give you a “feel” of the roof and provide traction to keep you on the roof. The only thing keeping you attached to the roof is your footing. All the proper tools should be taken to the roof, as well as two saws if available, running with the brakes on. We also have had success with thermal imagers on the roof to locate structural members.

Once the crew is dressed for success, we need to get on the roof. Whether the “Big Stick” is used, or ground ladders, there needs to be at least two ways to get off the roof. A secondary means of escape could be another building, a different section of the roof, or a second ladder. If ground ladders are used, make sure they are extended high enough above the roofline so they are easily seen. Also remember to always ladder away from the fire, at the corners if possible, and on opposite sides of the building if time permits. If the roof is steep, and you think you may need a roof ladder, than by all means use one. Like I said earlier, the only thing keeping you on the roof is your footing.

The first member up the ladder will be doing the sounding and should be experienced enough to provide a quick size-up and good travel path. The sounder will keep the crew in a straight line as they move across the roof and hopefully across large structural members.

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The first member up the ladder will be doing the sounding and should be experienced enough to provide a quick size-up and good travel path. The sounder will keep the crew in a straight line as they move across the roof and hopefully across large structural members or strong areas close to outside walls. This member should sound the roof before ever leaving the safety of the ladder. Once that member steps onto the roof he will sound around the ladder to provide a safe area for his crew to huddle up.

The crew will then start sizing up the roof. This is where the escape routes will need to be checked. Make sure the entire crew is on the same page for the operation and possibly a hasty retreat. Once you are on the roof, the following need to be evaluated:
Weather/time of day
Is it bright, dusk or dark outside? Will the light be changing as the operation progresses?
Is it windy up on the roof? In California we do get some extreme conditions like the “Santa Ana’s”. Is the wind at your back? Is the wind blowing toward exposures?
Is the roof wet from rain or morning dew? Is it covered with snow?

Hazards of the roof surface
Do you have access to the area you need to vent or are there obstructions?
Are there heavy objects of the roof such as HVAC units or swamp coolers?
Are there wires, pipes, satellite dishes, overhead power lines, solar panels, protruding vents, whirly birds, or tree branches?

Construction of the roof
Lightweight Truss? Conventional Framed? What is the roof covering? How much time do I have?

Fire Conditions
Have they changed? Is the fire moving? Has it vented itself through the roof? How long has it been burning?

Danger Signs
• Melting snow or asphalt.
• No progress being made on the inside of the structure.
• Pipes on the roof are growing due to roof sag.
• Abnormal sounds.
• Smoke under pressure coming out of vents and eves.
• The roof just doesn’t “feel” right.
• Movement of HVAC units on the roof.
• Loss of visibility.
• Fire is venting through the roof.
• Tunnel vision setting in and the loss of situational awareness.

Do Not’s
• Vent between you and your exit point.
• Cross-country across the roof without sounding.
• Move around on the roof without visibility.
• Cut structural members.
• “Sheppard the roof” This is done by holding your roof hook up like a staff and admiring your vent holes like sheep in a field.
• Jump onto the roof off the ladder without sounding first.
• Cut with the saw towards your body or close to your body.
• Stand in your cut.
• Swing away with an axe prior to checking the area above and around you.
• Accept an assignment you or your crew cannot safely handle.

References:

About the author: Captain, Shawn Millerick of the San Bernardino County Fire Department works in one of the busiest fire-houses in the 35 station department.
He is a Certified State Instructor for auto extrication, RIC, and Fire Control 3 (Structure), and a senior lead instructor at Crafton Hill Fire Academy in Yucaipa for forcible entry, RIC, salvage/overhaul, and Fire Control 3. Mr. Millerick teaches various truck operations in his own and surrounding departments. He has been in the fire service since 1993, and he holds a BA in History from California State University, Fullerton. He is also a certified state paramedic. He is also Department Field Public Information Officer and a member of the Fire Safety Team at the California Speedway. To reach Mr. Millerick e-mail smillerick@sbcfire.org.
On March 3rd, 1857 a group of Folsom citizens, greatly concerned with the increasing number of destructive fires in the area, decided to organize a group of volunteers who were dedicated to fighting the fires that threatened their homes, businesses and lives. The group of citizens, headed by H.D. Waddilove, voted on that day to form the “Folsom Hook & Ladder Co.” It was the beginning of a long and proud tradition of fire service to the citizens of Folsom.

In 1866, a fire known as the “Whiskey Row” fire nearly destroyed the town of Folsom. The determination and spirit of the citizens to not only rebuild the town but to increase the capabilities of the fire protection company, proved to be a turning point for saving the growing town. The citizens expanded their fire protection company by adding to the number of volunteers, acquiring up to date equipment and increased their knowledge in how to prevent against the spread of fires. A few years later, Folsom town officials contracted with the Natomas Mining Company to purchase fire plugs to attach to the wooden pipelines that would furnish water on each city block to prevent any future disasters. This was seen as an innovative and advanced approach to saving the properties of the town at that time in history.

The bucket brigade that started in the gold rush era was eventually replaced by hand drawn hose carts and horse drawn fire wagons. In the 1920’s a Model T fire engine was purchased to enhance the Company’s ability to respond to the need for fire protection. This proved to be a valuable asset as the town began to grow and the Hook & Ladder Company was able to respond to outlying properties as needed. In the early 1930’s, the Folsom Fire Department took possession of an American LaFrance fire engine which served the department for many years. This unit is currently housed by the fire department in a public display room and is used for parades and special events.

A reminder of the past is evident in front of today’s main station in the presence of a large bell. The bell dates back to the 1800’s where it first served as a church bell and then as a school bell. It found a home at the original Fireman’s Hall in the late 1800’s and has been a part of the fire service ever since. Volunteers rushed to a fire scene when pressed into service as the bell rung out to sound the alarm. From atop the bell tower at the main station in the 1900’s it called out to volunteers on many occasions in the line of service. The bell is currently mounted at an accessible level, bolted on a concrete pad and is still used, with the original clapper in place, for special ceremonies held by the department.

The Folsom Fire Department strives to progressively improve itself through training and educational programs in order to protect the safety and welfare of employees and the citizens that they serve. Currently, the department employs 76 line and administrative employees. The department serves a 24 square mile area with four stations, four fire engines, one ladder truck and two medic units. The department provides quality fire fighting and safety services with the inclusion of thermal imaging cameras on all fire units, the addition of a swift water rescue boat, two fully outfitted grass units, an ATV medic unit (used for street fairs, the rodeo and other crowded venues where a regular Medic can’t maneuver easily) and the continuing purchase of state of the art fire equipment and apparatus. The process is currently underway to add a fifth station to service the east area of the city which has grown considerably over the last few years. To maintain a high quality of service, the department is currently using a modified constant staffing model to provide full coverage at all times. Additionally, this has brought a second engine company on line at the main station in order to better serve the citizens of Folsom.

The Administrative area of the department includes the Training, Fire Prevention and EMS Divisions. Training is responsible for the training and education of department personnel,
monthly drills and maintaining certification records. The division ensures that employees are trained to be able to respond quickly and mitigate any and all emergencies in an efficient and professional manner. The Fire Prevention Division is responsible for fire/arson investigation, fire code enforcement, public education, fireworks, fire plan checks, and inspections. The Fire Marshal is in charge of the division and staff includes a full time Fire Protection Engineer and a part time Inspector.

The EMS Division has grown considerably over the last 20 years. All apparatus are staffed with at least one paramedic at all times and the department has transitioned from BLS to ALS. Technology wise, the department’s EMS program takes pride in being the first in Sacramento County to have the 12-lead EKG equipment in use on both medic units. The medics are also equipped with motorized gurneys, a completely computerized patient care reporting system for records and billing. The medics also have the capability for using the new technique of bone drills for medications and intravenous fluids. This is a major innovation and enables Folsom paramedics to provide emergency care to those patients who need this specialized technique.

The Administrative staff provides support to the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief and other Chief Officers. The staff handles the general functions of the department. These responsibilities include preparation of the annual budget, the purchasing of the department supplies and equipment, payroll/personnel, public information, and ambulance billing and collections. The Fire Mechanic is also part of Administration and is in charge of the maintenance of all equipment and apparatus.

The Operations Division is committed to furnishing a rapid response to all calls for help. It has made changes in order to maintain a high quality of service to Folsom and the surrounding region. Emergency response handles fire suppression, EMS rescue, and hazardous materials incidents.

Located in eastern Sacramento County, the City of Folsom has grown considerably from the Gold Rush town it was when it was first settled. The city now has a population of approximately 63,000 residents (69,500 including the prison inmates). Folsom once served as a stop along the Pony Express route where riders delivered mail, changed horses and continued along the historic route. Folsom now hosts a number of new techniques and services.

As the department transitions into the next phase of service, a new fire chief has assumed the role of leader. Chief Dan Haverty was passed the symbolic speaking trumpet last July as he assumed command of the department from retiring Fire Chief Eric Dutton. Chief Haverty has 24 years of fire service experience that he brings to the department. Most recently, Haverty concurrently served as the Chief Assistant Deputy Director for the Training and Exercises Division with the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and as an Assistant Chief with the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District. He also served as an Urban Search and Rescue Specialist. Chief Haverty’s message at the Change of Command Ceremony was strong and clear that he will lead the department in continued service to the community and asked the employees to stand with him to show their support in this renewed dedication to Folsom’s citizens. The message and unity shown by the department members was punctuated by the ringing of the bell during the ceremony.

The important values of service, integrity, honor, and courage are evident among the members of the department as they go about the every day business of protecting the lives and property of the citizens of Folsom. They are dedicated to enhancing and protecting the quality of life for all citizens and visitors to Folsom as well as its employees. As the volunteers of the Folsom Hook & Ladder Co. that came before them, the current members of the Folsom Fire Department take pride in living up to the department’s mission statement of “Working Together to Provide Superior Services in a Safe, Thorough and Efficient Manner.”

Debbie Wickern is an Accounting Technician in charge of the Fire Department budget and ambulance billing. She has been with the City for 12 years.
Montebello Fire Department beefs up swiftwater rescue with specialize equipment

The City of Montebello is located approximately six miles east of downtown Los Angeles and covers an area of eight square miles. The Montebello Fire Department’s Swiftwater Rescue response area includes the Whitter Narrows Flood Control Dam, Six miles of concrete lined Flood Control Channel (Rio Hondo River) and several square miles of water reclamation spreading grounds that are operated by the Los Angeles County Flood Control Department. The tow vehicle is a retired Paramedic Squad that was reconfigured to meet Swiftwater Rescue capabilities. The trailer is a 20’ Haulmark ‘Kodiak’ utility trailer that was also reconfigured to meet Swiftwater Rescue needs. The fabrication and conversion of both vehicles was performed by Firefighter Randy Sherrick and Captain Frank O’Farrell who is the Director of the Department’s Mechanics program.

Tow Vehicle Features:
1. Scene Lighting
2. Swiftwater Rescue Equipment Storage
3. Crew Carrying Capability

Swiftwater Trailer Features:
1. Scene and Boat Launch Lighting
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3. Boat Bunks
4. Domenic Two Step Awning
California Emergency Equipment Showcase

Wednesday, March 19, 2008
Thursday, March 20, 2008
11:00 am ~ 5:00 pm

McClellan Business Park
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Don’t miss out on the only fire apparatus and equipment showcase held in Northern California.

Admission is FREE!
No more firefighter safety lip service

By Paul Stein

The above are just a few of the many firefighter fatalities that can be found on the NIOSH Web site. Isn’t it about time we stop giving firefighter safety lip service?

It’s tragic and heart-breaking to learn that last July six Charleston firefighters died at a fire then, shortly after two more FDNY firefighters died at an abandoned building close to Ground Zero. I watched the memorials for our fallen brothers and felt a profound sadness. They were called heroes a number of times. They were definitely heroes who gave the ultimate price.

The question we have to ask ourselves is “what do we have to do to avoid firefighter fatalities in the future?” It’s time for fire departments to stop bringing victims to the incident. After 31 years of a fire service career, going through the ranks from firefighter to fire chief, and having conducted thousands of lectures on leadership and firefighter safety, I know that “firefighters should not put themselves in extremely dangerous situations while attempting to save property.” We should only take a big risk when human life is in jeopardy. This is the basic risk vs. benefit concept that has been around the fire service for many years. The concept is titled, “Firefighter Safety and Survival Benchmarks.” It basically states the following:

- We will take a big risk in a calculated manner to save people.
- We will take less of a risk in a calculated manner to save property.
- We will take little or no risk to try to save people or property that is already lost.

This firefighter safety concept is so simple, and it boggles my mind that we still lose firefighters in abandoned buildings and in buildings where there is nothing of value to save. If the fire service would adhere to this safety concept, there is a very good possibility that annual firefighter deaths and injuries would be reduced.

Many will say “danger is part of the job and the customer expects us to do our job.” I don’t disagree that danger is part of our job, and the customer expects us to do our job. However, the customer doesn’t expect us to kill ourselves in the process. They would rather, lose their building versus firefighters losing their lives.

I know what I’m going to say will irritate some people, but it really needs to be said. In reality no organization, person, or thing is to blame for the tragedies in Charleston and New York. I don’t believe in “Monday Morning Quarterbacking.” Anyone who has had the responsibility of leading a fire department or to be in charge of a dynamic emergency incident, like the sofa factory fire in Charleston, realizes that it is an extremely difficult and dangerous job. Firefighting is not a static process. Fire dynamics create serious challenges to anyone who has had the responsibility to mitigate an incident.

There is no such thing as the perfect fire officer or firefighter. All Incident Commanders try to mitigate fire incidents in an effective, efficient, and safe manner. Yet, sometimes it just doesn’t happen. However, when all fire service fatalities are reviewed in many cases the outcome is that the fatalities could have been prevented. In wildland fires where fatalities occur, usually the 10 standing orders or the 18 conditions that shout “watch out” are violated. During structural firefighting it is often found that fatalities occur when unnecessary risks are taken, or the firefighter safety mad survival benchmarks are ignored. The sad part is that we can predict bad outcomes when standard safety practices or sound strategy and tactical procedures are violated. If we can predict bad outcomes, we should definitely be able to prevent them.

One of the best learning tools to prevent firefighter fatalities is the NIOSH reports of firefighter fatalities. The NIOSH report is a complete review of the incident and the contributing factors that led to the fatality. The NIOSH report also includes recommendations to prevent similar fatal incidents. The discouraging aspect of the NIOSH report is that in many cases the same recommendations are on every report. The idea behind the report and recommendations is for fire officers to review the “lessons learned” and prevent similar firefighter fatalities. The question is, why aren’t we doing just that? An analysis of each NIOSH report allows us to predict potential life threatening emergency situations that we might encounter. So, with the ability to review NIOSH reports and many other resources that are available regarding firefighter safety and survival, why do we still lose firefighters in places we shouldn’t?

The following is my opinion.

Throughout the national fire service we have been giving lip service to training and firefighter safety for many years. I have often heard, “our people are our most important asset” and “firefighter safety is our most important concern.” In my experience I find this to be words not supported by action.

If politicians really believed that firefighter safety was their most important concern they would allow fire chiefs to staff their engines and trucks in accordance with the NFPA recommendations. If politicians really believed that firefighter safety is their most important concern, they wouldn’t require fire department budget cuts that force fire chiefs to cut important positions as in the training division. When the fire chief protests, the politicians inform the chief to “just do it” or they will get someone in the position that will.

If fire department leaders really believe that training and firefighter safety is their highest priority, they would demand and ensure that appropriate training and firefighter safety requirements were achieved throughout the department.

If mid level chief officers really believe that firefighter training and firefighter safety was their highest priority they would get out from behind their desks and spend more time training with their companies.

If first line supervisors really believe that training and firefighter safety is their highest priority, they would make sure their people are prepared for any emergency incident, and this includes doing everything in their power to be technically competent and make sure that their team members are technically competent.
If firefighter unions and associations really believe that training and firefighter safety was their highest priority, they would review and revise their platforms on fire department promotions, and other provisions in the union contract that could inhibit quality leadership and technical ability.

So, let’s start from the top. I believe all will agree that, with the exception of emergency response, the most important fire department priority is training. Yet, when budget cuts are necessary, the first department division that usually gets the budget axe is the training division.

If fire chiefs really wanted to send the message that firefighter safety is their highest priority they should prove it by action not words. Fire chiefs need to develop and insist on an organizational culture that maintains the highest level of firefighter safety. They need to make sure their chief officers and first line officers adhere to this safety concept.

I’m amazed to learn that many fire departments do not even have an established position for Safety Officer. How could any fire chief ignore the safety officer recommendations identified in NFPA 1500? The same concept goes for up-to-date standard operating procedures, basic hose and ladder evolution efficiency standards, organizational accountability, personnel performance evaluations, an effective fire officer probationary procedure, a process for post emergency analysis and an organizational strategic plan.

For example, in order to become a paramedic it requires approximately 6 months of intensive training. Compare that to the training most departments require before becoming a fire officer.

There is no doubt that over the years, and especially post 9-11, the roles and responsibilities of fire departments have expanded. Fire department roles and responsibilities have expanded to the point that we have become a “jack of all trades and a master of none.” It is my opinion that many fire departments have...
not kept up with the training requirements of the organization. Or they have not prioritized the organization’s training needs. We are all too busy doing superfluous stuff. And when we get too busy, what suffers, training.

Department members can obtain training through several methods; hit-or-miss, sink-or-swim, trial-and-error, or structured and systematic. Unfortunately, many departments utilize a combination of the first three to train their team members. It is obvious that the only dependable way to enhance the knowledge of the department members is to utilize the structured and systematic method. This method should be based on a careful review of the responsibilities of the position in terms of knowledge and skills. Then it involves an orderly and timely period of instruction provided by a trainer who is familiar with the job, well versed in training techniques, and aware of the learning process.

The fire chief has the responsibility to make sure there are organizational procedures and designs that ensure firefighter safety like the “firefighter safety and survival benchmarks.”

All fire departments should stand down for a period of time and brain storm, then plan ways to improve the safety design and culture of their department. Then commit to that plan.

Let’s discuss the battalion chiefs. If you look at NIOSH reports on firefighter fatalities you will commonly find a recommendation that the battalion chiefs should spend more time training with their companies. The battalion chiefs are usually bogged down with committees and paper work. Many of them lose touch with basic firefighting skills, command confidence, and the people under the command. Consequently, the troop’s loose faith and confidence in their battalion chief’s ability to command the emergency incident.

I also find that the battalion chiefs have the least amount of organizational accountability. I know this one department that calls their battalion chiefs the “free roaming vapors” because besides taking around the mail nobody knows what they are doing. Don’t get me started on organizational accountability. Everybody in the organization needs to be held accountable. That’s another article.

Unions also have to assume some responsibility with firefighter safety. I have been a union and association leader and member my entire career. Even after my retirement I served on the California State Firefighters’ Association for four years as an Executive Board Director. I believe in unions and what they represent. However, I know there are still departments that by union rule, promote by seniority only and allow people to stay on the job that in reality don’t belong there. This is no way to run an organization especially when it jeopardizes safety. The people in all supervisory positions should be the most qualified and not just the most senior. I believe it is just wrong when a union defends a firefighter who can’t meet the minimum technical or physical requirements of the position. This is especially true when this firefighter might jeopardize the safety of other firefighters.

Summary:

After reading this article it might appear that there are many difficult challenges within the national fire service. This is not the case. These are typical challenges that many fire departments throughout the country face. What is required is a systematic approach to attack the identified challenges. As I indicated earlier, no one person or organization is to blame for the recent tragedies in Charleston and New York. Collectively, all fire departments should take steps to prevent unnecessary firefighter fatalities and keep our nations firefighters safe.

I also said this article might irritate some people. I hope it does. I hope it irritates many in order to start some serious dialog regarding firefighter safety. Let’s stop the firefighter safety lip service and really start taking some affirmative steps to prevent similar incidents like Charleston and New York.

Firefighters are already heroes in the eye of the public. We don’t have to die to prove it.

Paul Stein a nationally known fire instructor, and former CSFA Board member.
I am a dual role Eng./Paramedic for an organization that transports patients. We were dispatched to a mobile home park for a confused elderly patient. We arrived to find an elderly female patient in the back bedroom of a small, cluttered mobile home. This person was walking back and forth and mumbling, but did seem to follow most simple commands. Rather than try to work in this cramped environment, we attempted to walk the patient out of the residence to the gurney at the front door. As we were walking the patient out, she stopped abruptly at a couch and attempted to reach down to grab something at the corner of the couch. I stopped the patient from doing so and then had to physically pick the patient up to continue the forward momentum to the gurney (she was very intent on getting “something” from the couch). After we had loaded the patient in the ambulance, a deputy who was in the area and arrived on scene, notified us that he found a LOADED handgun under the corner of the couch. I don’t know what this patient’s intent was, but I am glad we didn’t have to find out.

LESSONS LEARNED:

This call was in a 55+ mobile home park. We arrived to find an innocent looking "grandma" who did not appear want to cause us harm. We need to never let our guard down. In addition, anytime we are escorting someone out of their residence, if the person needs to get "something" we will usually ask where to find this item and get it for them. I have been in the fire service for 20 yrs and this call in particular raised no red flags. I am just glad I did not allow this confused elderly patient to "get something" from that couch.

Don’t become a pit pull chew toy! I am a firefighter/EMT for a moderately sized city. At 2 am, we responded to a possible stabbing. We were advised that the patient had been stabbed in the abdomen. PD was already en route and we met on the road and they followed us. The scene appeared secure and with the two PD officers watching, we went to the house. The patient was standing at the door. We asked him if he had been stabbed, and he pointed down. We told him we needed to see the wound, and he pulled down his pants to show two lacerations to his genitals. He gave us a fabricated story of getting attacked by a group on the street and somehow he got cut. He agreed to transport after dispute; he was under the impression we should stitch him right there in the house.

While we were in the residence we never left the living, right inside the front door. The residence was quiet and as far as we (and PD) knew the residence was empty with the exception of this man, his adult son, and his grandson. After we moved the patient out of the house, the patient asked very politely that I check with his son to be sure he had his cell phone with him so he could be reached from the hospital. Not seeing any reason not to, I walked back with him to the open front door. As I climbed the steps, the PD officers drove off. As I approached the door, the patient’s son came around the corner. He looked startled and immediately ordered me not to take one more step. I stopped and explained what I was doing. This house was in a VERY poor and crime ridden area, so my self preservation instincts were on full alert. The patient’s son told me to stay where I was and he would check for his phone. While I was standing there (for all of 30 seconds) I realized there was a VERY inhospitable man just outside of my field of view holding the grandson and staring me down. Mystery guest #1. I began to walk out, and then I heard screams and a fight break out in the rear of this tiny house. I then heard two female voices: Mystery guests 2 and 3. I picked up the pace of my retreat when a “ghetto” pit bull walked around the corner and charged me. When I say “ghetto” pit bull, I am referring to a dog that is malnourished; its fur is matted, and is deadly mean. Any readers who work in bad areas have seen these dogs. The dog charged across the porch as I ran for my ambulance. I got lucky as the patient’s son appeared just in time to snag the mutt before I became his new chew toy. I called for PD back to the scene as I should have done as soon as they left, and without waiting, transported my patient to the hospital.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Lessons learned: 1. Always keep in mind where you are and what you are responding to. I was in a particularly bad neighborhood. When even the gang bangers and crackheads avoid this neighborhood, its time you paid attention also. We don’t have the luxury of avoiding it when we get a call but don’t let yourself get complacent. 2. DO NOT EVER LET PD LEAVE YOU. I believed the scene to be secure and that the patient’s son, whom I had spoken with earlier to be a non-hostile person. Wrong! He was only hospitable because PD was there... 3. When intimidating mystery guests pop up and you’re alone without back-up, get the #$&@ out of there! A lousy cell phone was not worth my hide... I try to work with my patients but at 2am in that neighborhood without PD that was not a smart move on my part especially when I knew it to be an assault and most likely not the story given by the patient. 4. Retreat to your ambulance and/or to another area the absolute second you feel that the scene is not safe. As soon as my instincts kicked in and said, “hey bud, look out something ain’t right” I should have turned around and walked away. I hope my experience here might help someone avoid this scare and especially avoid becoming some dog’s chew toy as I nearly did!
A Jan 3 single car accident on Las Posas Rd. in San Marcos. Upon arrival San Marcos Truck 1471 found a single female occupant upside down in the vehicle. She was transported to Palomar Hospital with unknown injuries.

Photo by Jeff Hall
On February 3 units from the Los Angeles County Fire Department and the Kern County Fire Department responded to a collision on Highway 14 and Avenue B near the Los Angeles Kern County border. CHP units arrived on scene to find a solo vehicle that rolled in the center median with one patient trapped and one ejected. The vehicle was apparently driving north bound when the driver lost control.

Units from the Los Angeles County Fire Department and Kern County Fire Department extricated and treated the patients. Patients were taken to local hospitals due to inclement weather making it unable to fly air ambulances in. Units on scene: LACoFD: Engine 130, Engine 33, Squad 134, EST 33KCFD: Engine 15; AMR: two ambulances

Photo by Orlando Ramos

Montebello Firefighter/Paramedic Scott Morton approaches a fully involved car fire.
Photo by Marc Valentine Montebello Fire Department
I’m starting to get like Wiegel. A fire engine comes driving by and I get all excited! In the past I have mocked him for acting like he’s never seen an engine before, especially when one drives by with its lights and sirens going. However, as my love for the fire service keeps growing, my heart now seems to skip a beat when a fire engine rumbles along my way.

Even though I’ve been part of the Fire Family for almost 20 years, I must admit that I still don’t know all of the differences between the types of engines, or trucks, or whatever. Sure, I understand that different equipment is used for different tasks, but that’s not what lights my fire when I see them out on the road. What sparks my enthusiasm is what they stand for - the symbol of caring compassionate strength that I can trust.

Just yesterday, I drove in front of one of our engines as it was returning to the station after responding to a call. For a few short miles, along one of our winding mountain roads, I felt their presence pushing my Beetle along. A fire engine’s strength isn’t necessarily quiet, because they definitely can be heard above all other traffic, but as they take their place on the road, they command a friendly respect. Not just because they are bigger than my little car, but because of the greatness that they represent.

When an emergency occurs, and the public calls for help, much relief is felt at the very sight of the fire engine and ambulance. We don’t know what to do in those situations, but the people who arrive on scene are trained and equipped to handle whatever they encounter. We put an extreme amount of trust into the hands of each emergency responder. So much trust, that we rarely question their guidance. We place our very lives in their hands; they respond with compassionate help.

Consider the following example. A car crashes into an oak tree. The driver manages to get out of his seat and is walking around. When the crew arrives, they find that the patient is complaining that his neck hurts. They immediately take measures to immobilize his head, hoping to prevent damage to his spinal cord. While explaining the situation to the patient, one responder firmly holds his head straight while others get the C-collar and backboard. After putting the collar in place, they stand the backboard right behind the patient, positioning one responder on each side of him. Then, they each reach under one of his arms and take hold of the backboard. They direct the patient to stay standing, while they lay him down. The final result? A securely fastened patient, lying on a backboard, with C-spine protection, who is ready to be transported to the hospital for further examination and treatment. This is known as The Standing Take-Down Maneuver.

The fire service has earned the trust of the public. When we need help, we have learned that they are coming to assist us. When they arrive, we are secure and we know that they are not going to hurt us, but that they are going to help make the tragic situation better. Just seeing an engine - the symbol of compassionate strength - gives us hope that we can face the situation.

Firefighters: while you’re out on the road, I hope you will do whatever it takes to protect the trust that we’ve put in you. Make us proud to be in your community. Don’t forget to keep your family in the loop, so that you are balanced and not depleted of your caring attitude. Families: the next time you see an engine out on the road, I hope you feel encouraged and protected. Do your part to help your firefighter serve the community. Support your firefighter so that you are confident in their ability to keep themselves safe. Encourage them to train well and be as excellent as they can be.

As part of being in The Fire Family, living with this every day, let’s be sure that we are worthy of the public’s trust, offering compassionate strength to others when they call for help and when we’re out driving along the winding roads.

What kind of fire family situations are YOU facing? Shari would love to hear about your experiences and concerns! To contact her, please visit www.shariwiegel.com. While you’re there, check out her speaking, writing, and other services too. Shari is married to a fire captain/paramedic/chaplain. The Wiegel family lives in Placerville, California, east of Sacramento.
Clovis FD announces promotions

Left to Right: Tim Wilson to engineer, Tony Gomes to engineer, CJ Tisinger to engineer, newly appointed Deputy Chief Rick Bennett, and Fire Chief Mark Aston

Left to Right: Steve Henry to battalion chief, Troy Coleman to fire captain, Brian Torosian to fire captain, Tim Lesmeister to engineer, Darryl Turney to engineer, and Fire Chief Mark Aston

Beverly Hills FD adds three

Jeffery Thomas, Mitch Furman and Randy Marshman recently joined the Beverly Hills Fire Department.
First-ever CSFA poker tourney is a success

Over 80 firefighters competed in the first-ever CSFA Celebrity Poker Tournament at the Hollywood Park Casino in Inglewood on Feb. 10. The Tournament, the first of a several that are planned to be sponsored by CSFA’s training affiliate, the Fire Services Training Institute (FSTI), was a fundraiser designed to help support FSTI’s firefighter training program and the Los Angeles Firemen’s Relief Association and the Los Angeles County Firemen’s Benefit and Welfare Association.

The Grand Prize was a seat at the World Series of Poker even to be held in June in Las Vegas, Nevada.

A host of celebrities mingled and played hands with firefighters for nearly eight hours until the 120 plus players had winnowed down to the final four.

When the last hand was dealt, Actor Brian Baumgartner (The Office) walked away with the grand prize. Second place honors went to actor Brent Estrada, third place honors went to Dave Smith of Lodi Fire Department, Mike Hook of Barona Fire Protection District placed fourth.

Check the FSTI web site www.cafsti.net for information about future firefighter poker tournaments. To see more photos from this event visit www.csfa.net.
Actors Donna Mills (Knots Landing), Erin Moran (Happy Days and Joanie Love Chachi), Shannon Elizabeth (American Pie, Dancing With the Stars) and Jerry Mathers (Leave it to Beaver).

Top three players (left to right): Actors Brent Estrada and Brian Baumgartner and Lodi firefighter Dave Smith.

Dave Smith, a firefighter from Lodi Fire Department placed third in the poker tournament and received an etched vase.

Three poker players from Apple Valley Fire Department (left to right) Firefighter/paramedic Shaun Grover, Firefighter Mark Milson and Engineer/paramedic Craig Malloy.
Bring your turnouts!

Come to the CSFA Conference in Reno and train FREE* in the Northtree Fire Simulator on March 29 and 30

*With your paid CSFA Conference registration.

For other conference activities and training opportunities visit www.csfa.net

OTHER 2008 Conference Training in Reno

California Fuel Cell Partnership - Hydrogen Highway Fire Responder Program

**DESCRIPTION:** The California Fuel Cell Partnership will be presenting the California Hydrogen Highway First Responder Program on Saturday, 09:00 - 12:00. The new Equinox will have high pressure hydrogen cylinders carrying approximately 1,800 cubic feet of hydrogen gas at 10,000 lbs psi. To provide fuel for these new vehicles, high pressure fueling stations are required. These stations and vehicles are coming to your city and jurisdiction - be prepared.

**HOURS:** 4

**CERTIFICATION:** FSTI Certificate

**INSTRUCTORS:** Jennifer Hamilton, Juan Contreras and staff

EMS Continuing Education

**DESCRIPTION:** The first section includes JUMP STAT, start triage principles for pediatric patients. This section is 75 minutes and includes 1.5 ceu hours.

The second section includes START Triage. This program is a review of the history of triage, a review of adult START principles, followed by a discussion of SACCO Triage. The SACCO Triage approach builds upon the START principles to determine an accurate survivability index for patients. Thus, a treatment or triage officer can accurately determine the transport order of patients. This section is 75 minutes and includes 1.5 ceu.

**HOURS:** 1.75 each

**CERTIFICATION:** FSTI Certificate and 1.5 ceu for each section

**INSTRUCTOR:** Donald L. Hays, M.Ed., M.P.A., Orange County Fire Authority
# 2008 Conference Registration Form

**Grand Sierra Resort and Casino**
2500 East Second Street
Reno, NV 89595
**March 28-30, 2008**

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## Check Appropriate Boxes

- ❑ CSFA Director __________________________ (Title)
- ❑ Department/Association Delegate
- ❑ CSFA Deputy ____________________________ (Division)
- ❑ CSFA Member
- ❑ CSFA Committee Chair ____________________ (Year)
- ❑ Guest (all guests must register)
- ❑ Past President __________________________ (Year)
- ❑ Conference Speaker

### Per Person

- **CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**
  - $275.00 (All inclusive - Meals included)

- **CONFERENCE MEALS ONLY**
  - $175.00 (Includes all Meals during conference)

- **CONFERENCE 1 DAY REGISTRATION**
  - $175.00 (Meals Included) Please select one day only 
  - ☐ 3/28/08
  - ☐ 3/29/08
  - ☐ 3/30/08

- **CHILDREN 16 AND UNDER ATTENDING**
  - NO CHARGE (All Meals during conference)

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- ❑ Cash
- ❑ Check
- ❑ Visa
- ❑ MasterCard

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**Make checks payable to:**

**CSFA**
2701 K Street, Suite 201
Sacramento, CA  95816-5113
Phone (800) 451-2732
Fax (916) 446-9889 or on-line at www.csfa.net
Firefighter response to electrical emergencies

On January 18, 2008 the Los Angeles County Fire Department hosted the SAFER monthly meeting at the San Dimas Sheriff’s Sub-Station, 270 S. Walnut Ave. in San Dimas. Captain Tony Duran, Board Member and Safety Officer for the Los Angeles County Fire Department led the overflowing crowd of attendees in the flag salute and then gave a very enlightening and intellectually stimulating presentation on Firefighter Response to Electrical Emergencies. He was aptly supported in his presentation by Fire Fighter Specialist John Carresi, LA County FD; Captain Dennis Breshears, LA County FD; Jeff Carvau, Los Angeles Department of Water & Power, Trouble/Arc Training Supervisor; Troy Whitman, Fire Management Corporate Security Emergency Preparedness, SCE, Larry Peña, Manager of Corporate Safety Policy and Regulations, SCE; Charles Basham, Manager of Public Safety Corporate Safety, SCE.

A special thank you goes out to Captain Joseph Hartshorne of the San Dimas Sheriff’s Station and to his Secretary Mary Grays for their help and allowing us the use of their wonderful facilities. John Price made arrangements for lunch and in spite of the cook’s wonderful facilities, John made one of the best Philly Steak Sandwiches ever. Thank you John for that.

Captain Duran started his presentation by reminding us of some recent electrical deaths and near death experiences by firefighters engaged in emergency activities. In one case criminal charges were proposed against the IC. This was a very good attention getter by Captain Duran who held our attention throughout the presentation.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS AT FIRES
A. OVERHEAD ELECTRICAL WIRES
1. HIGH VOLTAGE CONDUCTORS: Carry up to 34,500 volts.
   a) High voltage signs on cross arms indicate conductors with more than 750 volts.
2. FUSE or CUTOUTS: act as circuit breakers in high-voltage circuits
3. SERVICE CONDUCTORS: May be high or low voltage. Many commercial and industrial installations have service conductors of 34,500 volts.
   a) Three separate conductors
   b) Three conductors twisted around each other, known as triplex
   c) Three wire- armored cables, used over swimming pools.
   NOTE: The voltage of a conductor cannot be determined by the conductor’s size. Usually, the conductors at the top of the pole carry the highest voltage. The most effective method of identifying different voltages are: 1) High voltage signs on the cross arms
2) The size and shape of insulators
3) The distance between conductors
4) STREET LIGHT: Considered dangerous because it may be fed from conductors carrying up to 4,800 volts
   a) Normally, there is no current flowing in daytime; however, Department of Water & Power workmen considered them to be energized at all times.
   b) The position of these wires on poles is unusual because they are located on lower cross arms.
5) LOW VOLTAGE CONDUCTORS: sometimes called secondaries. They carry 240 or 480 volts.
6) TRANSFORMERS: Reduce high voltage to lower voltage, usually 120 to 480 volts.
   a) In some cases, the low side of a transformer will be 4800 volts. When this occurs, there will be high voltage signs on both sides of the transformer.
7) HIGH VOLTAGE INSULATORS: Used to handle up to 66,000 volts.
   a) Conductors on these insulators must never be cut by firefighters until assurance is received from power company that the conductors are de-energized.
8) LINE SECTIONALIZING SWITCH: Usually used to isolate defective service area and is to be operated by power company patrolman only.
9) RACK SWITCH: Controls the voltage to transformers bank below and is operated by power company patrolman.
10) HIGH LINE SWITCH HANDLES: Never to be operated by firefighters. These switches are not designed to drop a high voltage load. Opening them under load may cause conductors carrying 34,500 volts to fall over an extensive area, creating serious life and fire hazards. There are about 2,000 of these switches in Los Angeles, each one numbered and padlocked.

PROCEDURES AT EMERGENCIES
A. Sagging or downed wires
1. Notify OCDS and give the correct address and a brief description of the conditions
   a) Wires down pole to pole or pole to occupancy
2. Clear the area
   a) Keep people at least one span away from the broken or sagging
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   b) Circuit breakers in these systems are designed to kick out and then kick back in automatically. The circuit will be energized again unless there is a ground or short circuit.
3. Protect exposures
4. CONSIDER ALL CONDUCTORS TO BE ENERGIZED UNTIL THEIR ACTUAL CONDITION IS DETERMINED BY AUTHORIZED PERSONS
   a) Falling conductors often create sparking, after which the conductors appear de-energized. DO NOT BE MISLED
   b) Circuit breakers in these systems are designed to kick out and then kick back in automatically. The circuit will be energized again unless there is a ground or short circuit.
5. Make certain that the conductors are cleared and safe or that you are properly relieved of your responsibility before you leave the scene.
B. Cutting Wires
1. The cutting of wires by firefighters must be confined to low voltage wires 750 volts or less.
2. When there is a need to cut high voltage lines, notify OCDS and have them notify DWP. They will respond to handle the line cutting.
3. All electrical service within Los Angeles is Department of Water and Power, with the exception of some Edison transmission lines.
4. Wires on poles shall not be cut by Firefighters unless there is an immediate life hazard, and then cutting must be confined to low voltage.
C. When cutting wires attached to a building, consider the following steps:
1. Use Mechanical Axe and Rubber Gauntlet Gloves
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ON:LINES have service conductors of 34,500 volts. Swimming pools. OTHER, known as triplex wires in high-voltage circuits carrier conductors with more than 750 volts. Up to 34,500 volts. Poles. Captain Duran who held our attention throughout the presentation. A special thank you goes out to Captain Joseph Hartshorne of the San Dimas Sheriff’s Station and to his Secretary Mary Grays for their help and allowing us the use of their wonderful facilities. John Price made arrangements for lunch and in spite of the cook’s wonderful facilities, made one of the best Philly Steak Sandwiches ever. Thank you John for that.

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   a) Falling conductors often create sparking, after which the conductors appear de-energized. DO NOT BE MISLED
   b) Circuit breakers in these systems are designed to kick out and then kick back in automatically. The circuit will be energized again unless there is a ground or short circuit.
5. Make certain that the conductors are cleared and safe or that you are properly relieved of your responsibility before you leave the scene.
B. Cutting Wires
1. The cutting of wires by firefighters must be confined to low voltage wires 750 volts or less.
2. When there is a need to cut high voltage lines, notify OCDS and have them notify DWP. They will respond to handle the line cutting.
3. All electrical service within Los Angeles is Department of Water and Power, with the exception of some Edison transmission lines.
4. Wires on poles shall not be cut by Firefighters unless there is an immediate life hazard, and then cutting must be confined to low voltage.
C. When cutting wires attached to a building, consider the following steps:
1. Use Mechanical Axe and Rubber Gauntlet Gloves
   a) Falling conductors often create sparking, after which the conductors appear de-energized. DO NOT BE MISLED
   b) Circuit breakers in these systems are designed to kick out and then kick back in automatically. The circuit will be energized again unless there is a ground or short circuit.
5. Make certain that the conductors are cleared and safe or that you are properly relieved of your responsibility before you leave the scene.
every 60 days by DWP. They are exchanged on a company basis through the Battalion Staff Assistant.

2. Stand on a dry object. Lock in when working on a ladder.

3. When possible cut at the loops attached to the service head.

4. Be sure to cut close to the service bracket in order to make all loose ends dead.

5. Do not reach over charged wires, cut the closest conductor first.

6. When cutting do not touch another conductor or a ground.

7. After cutters are in place, turn head to protect eyes from flash and sparks.

8. Be sure all insulated wires leading to the service head are cut.

D. Cutting Triplex

1. Triplex is three wires wound around each other.

2. Do not cut triplex cables unless they are separated and cut individually.

If you cut triplex it will cause a short circuit, which will destroy the blades of the mechanical axe and may cause personal injury. When possible, the loops should be cut at the service head. If it is necessary to cut at the pole, cut one wire at a time before it goes into the triplex. Do not cut the bare wire in triplex unless there is danger of it falling, or if there is a possibility that it has become energized. It is a ground wire and normally will present no problem. If all three wires in a triplex cable are insulated, consider them all energized.

E. Safety Precautions

1. The fact that wires on the ground do not spark or sputter is no indication that they

Continued on page 31
CSFA RECOMMENDED ATTORNEYS

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Linda J. Brown (Greenbrae) ................................................. (415) 925-9212
Richard Elder (Concord) ................................................. (925) 676-7991 or (800) 242-COMP
Michael Lewis, Alan Marenstein or Robert Sherwin
(Woodland Hills) ................................................................. (818) 703-6000
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Stephen Silver (Santa Monica) .............................................. (310) 393-1486
Daniel Kodam (Murrieta) ..................................................... (951) 296-2336

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March 2008

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To be listed in the Fire Service Databank, send death and retirement information to: The California Fire Service, Attn: Membership Coordinator, 2701 K Street, Suite 201, Sacramento, CA 95816 or e-mail jsueoka@csfa.net or fax to (916) 446-9889. Attn: Membership Coordinator.

Fire Service Calendar

Training/Workshops

March 10 - 14: Command 2C. IEC Training Center, San Carlos. For more information call (650) 508-9008.

April 7 - 9: Low Angle Rope Rescue Operational, State Fire Certified, Dixon Fire Department. For more information call (707) 678-7060.

April 14 - 18: Command 2D. IEC Training Center, San Carlos. For more information call (650) 508-9008.

April 28 - May 2: Command 2E. IEC Training Center, San Carlos. For more information call (650) 508-9008.

May 5 - 9: Rescue Systems 1, State Fire Certified, Dixon Fire Department. For more information call (707) 678-7060

June 19 - 20: Trench Rescue, State Fire Certified, Dixon Fire Department. For more information call (707) 678-7060.

July 7 - 11: Confined Space Rescue Technician, State Fire Certified, Dixon Fire Department. For more information call (707) 678-7060.

July 14 - 18: Rescue Systems 1, State Fire Certified, Dixon Fire Department. For more information call (707) 678-7060.

Conferences/Meetings

March 19 - 20: California Emergency Equipment Showcase, Sacramento For more information call (916) 727-7019.


March 31: CSFA Deputy Director Training, Reno. For more information call (800) 451-2732.

May 1 - 2: 78th Annual Wildland Fire Training and Safety Conference, Camp Pilgrim Pines. For more information visit www.scaf-fw.org


Special events

April 19, 2008: Celebrity Wine Cruise with Andy Isolano of NYFD. 8 nights; ports of call: Astoria, Seattle, Victoria, Vancouver; winery tours available. For more information call Kent Burkhart at (559) 906-2971.

SAFETY MEETINGS
SAFER Meets third Friday of every month.
For more information visit www.safer.org

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W ith health care quickly skyrocketing to the top of the list of domestic issues in the presidential election, the trickle-down effect is hitting California in the form of various health care reform issues. Everyone from Governor Schwarzenegger to most of the presidential candidates have expressed support for the concept of requiring individuals to either obtain health coverage or face a penalty.

Many of our volunteer firefighter and EMS members go uninsured on health care. As we know, the number one reason for not buying health insurance is its high cost. Even if you can offer a major medical plan for $100 per month, this can be a huge hit in a personal budget.

For those of you who are provided health insurance as a fire department/district benefit, even you have felt the effects of rising health insurance premiums. Municipalities are either cutting their monthly contribution or reducing plan benefits, or both. What can you do?

It has been two years since CSFEWBC and CSFA endorsed the Anderson-Shea Insurance Agency and Health Net to provide health insurance options for CSFA members. Kelly Redden and the office staff have worked with several departments to provide quality benefits for individual CSFA members, such as volunteers without coverage, and departments/districts on group health insurance plans.

Here are a few examples of how the CSFA Health Insurance plan has increased benefits and saved money for our members.

San Diego Fireman’s Relief Association - The City of San Diego reduced benefits and contributions last year and the SDFRA reacted quickly to provide their members with plans that are richer in benefits with lower premiums. The SDFRA is now offering health, dental, and vision insurance plans for members who would like additional options versus the City of San Diego programs.

The CSFEWBC and our endorsed health insurance broker, the Anderson-Shea Insurance Agency, recommend these affordable quality health insurance options for member departments, volunteers, retired members, and dependents of Career Firefighters to fit each individual’s specific needs and budget. Please call the Anderson-Shea staff at 1-877-448-4800 or email andersonshea@qwest.net to learn more.

Health Net and Safeguard were selected for their networks, service, and lower premiums. The SDFRA Dental and Vision plans are both a group policy and open to every SDFRA member regardless of age or health history. CSFA gained new members by providing this benefit through Anderson-Shea.

El Centro Firefighters Association - The City of El Centro cut benefits and increased the monthly firefighter contribution in their contract negotiations with ECFA. The ECFA met with Anderson-Shea and designed a richer benefit plan that would save each firefighter approximately $218 per month.

Mandatory firefighter fitness programs have generated lower premiums for firefighters versus other city employees.

The ECFA was able to use the CSFA Member Health Net plan to negotiate a better contract with the city and provide their members with increased benefits.

Foresthill Fire District - Chief Kurt Snyder was looking for a way to provide his full-time staff with major medical health insurance for the first time. Budget constraints dictated the level of benefits, but Anderson-Shea introduced the Health Savings Account concept to Foresthill to help contain costs.

The Health Savings Account (HSA) is owned by the employee, who can use it for medical, dental, vision, and prescription expenses. It is established on a pre-tax basis, providing a great advantage to the employee and/or employer should they decide to fund the account. It must be coupled with a high-deductible health plan, which will not cover any medical expenses, except preventive care, until the insured fulfills the plan’s deductible. The premium savings are substantial due to the fact the plans provide no first-dollar coverage, but once the deductible is met 100 percent of most expenses are paid by Health Net.

Foresthill provides their staff with a quality health care package, saves premium dollars each month, and the staff stays involved in their health care spending decisions.

El Cajon Fire - The City of El Cajon made the decision to provide a monthly set amount to employees who decided to purchase their health insurance elsewhere. Since firefighters have become a healthier risk, Anderson-Shea was able to provide richer benefits through Health Net for a lower monthly premium to these El Cajon firefighters. Most of these monthly premiums are less than the City stipend. Younger, healthier firefighters use their health care less than your average City employee, resulting in lower monthly premiums.

The question/answer session was lively and caused some very good information to exchange hands. The conversations carried over into lunch. This was a very good meeting whose subject matter is very important to all of us in the fire service. Please contact Captain Duran at safety@iacofd.org

For any questions or additional information. Remember that the S.A.F.E.R. meetings are held on the third Friday of every month. They start at 09:30 in the morning with a safety training presentation made at each one and an opportunity to meet with vendors and firefighters from many other agencies. The next month’s meeting will be held in Newport Beach and the following month will be in North Las Vegas. Please see the S.A.F.E.R. WEB page at WWW.SAFER.ORG for application information and other meeting locations.

**Safer Notes continued from page 27**

are dead. They may be totally inactive, and yet still be energized and dangerous.

It is not always necessary or possible to cut or de-energize electrical conductors. In all cases, care should be exercised around such hazards. All conductors or cables should be considered energized, even though they are not electrical. A fallen electrical conductor in the vicinity may have energized them.

When there is a possibility that conductors may be down, care should be taken when getting off the apparatus. To step on an energized conductor or allow any part of the apparatus to touch it may cause disaster. At night, examine surroundings with a light. Jumping off the apparatus into a pool of water containing live conductors may be just dangerous as stepping on the conductors itself.

a) By touching an object that is in contact with a live conductor.

b) By direct contact with a live conductor. By an extended aerial ladder coming into contact with a live conductor the apparatus is insulated from the ground by its rubber tires. If there is any chance that the apparatus is in contact with a live conductor, and it is necessary to get off the apparatus do not step off. Get above the running board level and jump clear. If you are on the ground make no attempt to get on an electrically charged apparatus.

Captain Duran went on to discuss Transmission Lines, Underground Vaults, and Distribution Stations. At the conclusion of his presentation the remaining guest speakers assisted with the question/answer period and with demonstrations of the mechanical axe.
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Rescue Techs Needed - NorthTree Fire is seeking qualified candidates for work in California. VCADL, Low/High Angle, Confined space rescue, CPR, First Aid/EMT. Clean drive record/background. Apply to www.northtreefire.com

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The Continuing Challenge Workshop Committee is now accepting Tuition Grant Applications at www.hazmat.org or call 530-848-6311 for a printed application.

Grants cover the tuition/registration fee and are provided through various agencies. The tuition includes: all workshop classes, workshop reference materials, course materials, three lunches and a Wednesday evening barbecue.

Transportation, lodging and any additional expenses are the responsibility of the participant.

Deadline for submission is April 18, 2008

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Visit our Website for the latest information: www.hazmat.org
Role-playing Ideas

- Have one member “role play” the position of Engineer in order to provide a solution.
- You can also divide members into groups in order to develop solutions.
- Solutions should be submitted via email to thg@lafdtraining.org.
- Solutions from the field can be viewed online at www.lafdtraining.org.

You are an Engineer assigned to Engine 41. It is 0730 hours and you have completed the morning pre-check of the apparatus. Your relief informs you that the apparatus is full of fuel, water and that all inventory is accounted for. At 0930 hours Engine 41, RA 41, RA 841, Task Force 27, Task Force 61, EMS 5 and Battalion 5 are dispatched to a structure fire in the Mount Olympus area. As you are responding down Sunset Blvd you observe a large “loom up” in the hills of the Mount Olympus area.

Your Captain pulls out the map to assist with directions and hydrant location. Traffic is clear. When you arrive on scene you spot a 2 1/2” by 4” hydrant located in front of the incident address. You connect to the 4” outlet with your soft suction. You fully open the hydrant and observe the soft suction fill with water. You return to the apparatus to open the suction inlet valve. The soft suction soon fills with static pressure. As you open the suction inlet valve there is no increase on the inlet pressure gauge. Your soft suction is still hard with static pressure. Your crew has established an 1 3/4” firefighting line and is waiting for water.

Engineer Guidelines

- Troubleshoot and identify the problem
- What immediate actions do you take to remedy the problem?
- What verbal communications will you provide to your crew?
- What non-verbal actions can you take to notify your crew that there may be a problem with water?
Every lap dog gets its day...

The Jeopardy category is “Those Wacky Californians”, and, as Alex Trebek would smartly intone, “the answer is: ‘Applying makeup, eating a Big Mac, stirring my latte, texting my boyfriend.’

The correct response: “What is ‘what Californians do while driving.’”

We’ve all seen this and more while driving in the Golden State. On my short commute from Placer County into Sacramento each morning, I’ve also seen shaving, newspaper reading and, near as I can tell, drivers having some animated conversations - with passengers - especially little children.

To my short list and the Jeopardy question, you can now add keeping dogs in your lap while driving.

Dogs and driving don’t mix, according to a Central Valley lawmaker who has introduced Assembly Bill 2233 that would make it illegal for motorists to keep pets on their laps.

Assemblyman Bill Maze’s planned bill would make driving with a dog on your lap a crime.

The proposed bill does not detail how drivers would keep pets - defined in the bill as “live animals” - in their place. Like most laws cooked up under the Capitol dome, the devil will be in those particular details.

Now I’m all for making the streets and highways safer, but it seems we are headed down a slippery slope here. I mean I’m not sure we need a specific law aimed at every particular stupid act committed by California drivers. After all, while we are outlawing lap dogs while driving we should probably also ban blowing the harmonica, eating watermelon, licking ice cream cones, and playing the banjo while driving too.

This bill is the latest attempt by lawmakers to essentially eliminate stupidity. So although Mr. Maze’s bill is well-intentioned, I’m not sure our esteemed governing body in Sacramento can actually legislate the level of stupidity of California drivers. You cannot legislate away stupidity, no matter how many fines you levy.

Critics call bills like AB 2233, “nanny laws”, and that’s probably a fair assessment.

There is legislation that goes into effect July 1 that bans the use of handheld cell phones while driving. The same day, residents younger than 18 won’t be able to use cell phones of any kind or text messaging devices while driving.

I will admit that from a public safety standpoint, what people are doing when they should be concentrating on their driving is alarming. However, it took State Sen. Joe Simitian, (D-Palo Alto), several years to get the cell phone restrictions passed; but of course, he faced opposition from the cellular phone industry.

Animal rights groups have yet to chime in on Maze’s proposed law, but I’m sure we’ll be hearing from them soon enough, since the proposed law would certainly require some restraint for a live animal in a car.

Nothing in current law prevents pets from roaming freely in an automobile. The only restriction is that pets that are put in the back of a pickup truck must be secured in a cage or by other means.

Of course common sense would dictate that having a live animal moving about in your car would not be the wisest choice as a motorist.

As for myself I drink coffee in the car, and I do occasionally speak briefly on my cell phone, although I will usually pull over to take a lengthy call.

I never have a problem with my dog distracting me when I’m driving, except of course when he’s on his cell phone. (All right, I’m just kidding).

I guess what I’m saying is I do not need a law to protect me in this manner. What I really do need is a law to protect me against the waste of taxpayer’s money. We have people out there driving without insurance or a driver’s license. Guess what? That’s against the law, but what’s stopping them? Nothing, until they are caught. And what’s to stop a person from driving with Spike or Fluffy on their lap? I don’t think police officers will make this a high priority. So in the end I’m not sure this is a law that is really going to save anyone.

By the way, the state government is facing an astronomical budget shortfall. Despite this serious statewide financial meltdown, the news headlines and the buzz recently on California talk radio centered on the fate of the “lap dog bill”. Ah, yes Will Rogers said it best over 60 years ago, “It’s easy being a Humorist when you’ve got the whole government working for you.”

Some people - and I know this is a surprise - are not as bright as other people. It’s sad that this is the case, but that’s genetics folks. Meanwhile, the legislature keeps trying to make laws that attempt to outlaw stupidity.

What I think we really need is just one law.

It will be a simple one, only nine words really. I wrote it this morning while the eggs were cooking. Here’s my bill: “It is against the law to do stupid things.”

Done.
End of debate. Can I have my campaign donations now? 😊

Gary Giacomo is the editor of The California Fire Service magazine. Reach him at gggiacomo@csfa.net or (800) 451-2732 ext. 232.

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