



BACK STEP TALKS

SERIES III ISSUE 4 JULY 2024

Life Safety Initiatives #10, 11, & 12

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #10:

Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and procedures and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.

LSI #10 asks that grant processes be reviewed for any opportunities to make improvements to First Responder safety.

Implementing safety practices may be difficult for smaller departments with limited funding. Grants can help fund safety projects/programs for these departments. Also, having a safety requirement within grants can help change the safety culture of the fire service.

[Firefighter Life
Safety Initiative 10](#)



[Firefighter Life
Safety Initiative 11](#)



[Firefighter Life
Safety Initiative 12](#)



Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #11:

National standards for emergency response policies and procedures should be developed and championed.

LSI #11 calls for a small set of procedures/practices to be universally recognized, understood, and followed to meet basic life safety requirements – regardless of location, department, or organization make up.

An example of this is the Incident Command System utilized by the majority of the nation's fire, EMS, forestry, law enforcement, and federal response agencies. Common procedures/ practices allow multiple responding agencies to operate under a similar strategies and tactical considerations, regardless of the event's complexity.

Dave Reid

United Communities VFD

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #12:

National protocols for response to violent incidents should be developed and championed.

LSI #12 seeks to expand the fire service's understanding of how and where first responders can be injured while demonstrating the need for the development of procedures for responding to violent incidents.

Violence in our communities has grown over the past decade. This includes violent actions taken against first responders. Our departments need to adapt strategies and procedures designed to reduce the risk of injury or death when responding to incidents of violence such as riots. Some of these strategies include; expand the roles of dispatchers to reduce risk, improve communications with law enforcement, require the use of the incident Management System, and when violence occurs during the response to leave the scene until it is safe for the responders.

Acquiring Grant Funding to Address Risk and Safety Concerns

Each year, thousands of fire and EMS departments across the U.S. will apply to grant programs to acquire critical equipment, ensure adequate staffing, and to help make their communities safe. It is important to be aware that these grant programs are awarded based on the department's level of risk and an identification of a solution to address that risk. Many applications will not be funded because the department failed to identify the risk and why grant funding is needed to reduce that risk.

Firefighter Life Safety Initiative #10 states that "Grant programs should support the implementation of safe practices and procedures and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility

requirement." This goal is reflected in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program: "The goal of the AFG Program is to enhance the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards."

When developing an application for AFG or other grant programs, it is important that you discard the thought of what you "want" and develop a proposal for what your department "needs" to address safety risks to your community and your members. Need is based on risk and your proposal is the solution to addressing that risk.

Before you begin a grant application, you must first

complete a risk assessment for your department. What injuries or near-miss incidents have occurred in recent years? What activities are you unable to complete due to inadequate equipment or training? How can grant funding best address these risks? Once you have answered these questions, the next step should be to read the program guidance document (the NOFO). Ensure that your risks align to the priorities of the grant program. Then, complete the narratives that describe your risk, your solution, and why grant funding is needed to address your risk and safety concerns.

Grant programs provide departments with funding opportunities to address risk and safety concerns. To be successful in acquiring grant funding requires planning and the willingness to complete a risk assessment of your operational capabilities and how they affect the safety of your community and your members. The time to address these challenges is now. Prepare your department to be ready for the next grant application opportunity. The future of your department is in your hands.

David Lewis

Odenton VFC



Turn out gear obtained through the AFG Grant for Midland Vol. Fire Dept. in Allegany County.

Safety Concerns for Inter-Agency Response

On January 18th, 2024, House Bill (HB) 404 was introduced for consideration during the 2024 Maryland General Assembly's legislative session. This bill, also known as 'Gabriel's Law', outlined new changes to how public safety agencies, specifically law enforcement, handle calls for welfare checks. The bill was crafted as a result of the death of Maryland State Delegate Jamila Woods' son, Gabriel, in September of 2021. Gabriel had a history of seizures and was living in Richmond at the time of his death. On the day of his death, Delegate Woods attempted to call Gabriel but was unable to get through to him. Delegate Woods called 911 to request a welfare check but because she lived in Prince Georges County and she was requesting a welfare check in another state, the request had to be approved by Prince Georges County Police for Richmond Police to conduct the check. By the time the request was sorted, Gabriel was found deceased.

Delegate Woods introduced the legislation to streamline the process for requests for welfare checks in Maryland to be approved and conducted. As the bill navigated both bodies in the Maryland Assembly, several changes were made to the language in the bill as first

responders posed concerns about the fire and EMS response outlined in the bill. The bill passed after three readings and was approved by Governor Wes Moore on May 16th, 2024. The language in the version of the bill that ultimately passed reads that when a request for a welfare check is received by a public safety agency, "a fire, rescue, or emergency medical services entity [will] conduct the wellness check simultaneously with the law enforcement agency if the request concerns a life-threatening condition."

From the earliest stages of first responder training, the concept of 'scene safety' is continuously reinforced. A tragic example of a welfare check without the assistance of law enforcement on the initial response occurred on April 15th, 2016, in Prince Georges County. Prince Georges County Fire Department Paramedic/Firefighter John 'Skillet' Ulmschneider and Volunteer Firefighter Kevin Swain of the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department were shot while operating on the scene of a welfare check. Paramedic/Firefighter Ulmschneider died as a result of his injuries and Firefighter Swain required a prolonged recovery as a result of his injuries. The final language

of the bill considered various testimonies about concerns of earlier version language that would have required fire and EMS personnel to conduct without the protection of law enforcement.

Personnel operating on incidents with law enforcement personnel should ensure clear communication among the members on scene. If operating on a welfare check incident, a coordinated plan on completing the check should be formulated before any crew action by fire, EMS, or law enforcement. This plan should also include actions in the case of a 'worst case scenario' – an active assailant or other act of violence toward first responders. Crew integrity must be maintained throughout the course of the call. Personnel should always position themselves so that they have egress that is not obstructed by another person. Finally, company officers should actively be searching the scene for threats – either present or anticipated – to keep their members safe.

Jon Johnson

Odenton VFC

Informing a Safe Response to Acts of Violence

How the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center Supports Firefighter Life Safety Initiative 12 Through Information and Intelligence Sharing

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has identified violent incident response as a national priority for the fire service through adoption of Firefighter Life Safety Initiative 12. In addition to the hundreds of firefighters and EMS clinicians killed and injured as a result of the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, the US Fire Administration lists 28 firefighters who were killed in the line of duty as a result of acts of violence in the US since 1990. According to the FBI, between 2000 and 2019, there were 333 active shooter attacks in the US that resulted in more than 2,800 casualties.

Setting aside the context of mass casualty attacks, fire and EMS responders can themselves become the primary targets of violent actors. In 2016, Lieutenant John “Skillet” Ulmschneider of the Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department was fatally shot and Firefighter Kevin Swain of the Morningside Volunteer Fire Department was shot and injured while responding to a welfare check call. In 2012, two firefighters were killed and two others were injured in upstate New York after being shot while responding to a residential structure fire. The shooter in that case intentionally set the fire in

order to lure first responders into an ambush.

Additionally, as the emergency services community as a whole continues to develop best practices for responding to active assailant attacks, fire and EMS agencies are more frequently adopting “warm zone” response protocols in which firefighters and EMS clinicians don body armor and enter scenes that have not been fully secured by law enforcement. These protocols and the current threat environment require fire and EMS agencies to take on a higher level of risk than was historically acceptable. With this increased risk comes a need for chief officers to have access to better quality information to develop standard operating guidelines, identify the necessary personal protective equipment, and develop training for violent incident response.

The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC), is the entity in Maryland responsible for sharing terrorism and criminal-related information with local, state, federal, and private sector partners in order to help those partners prevent and prepare for terrorist attacks and other acts of violence. Oversight of the MCAC is provided by the Anti-Terrorism

Advisory Council of Maryland. The fire service has representation on the ATAC through three key partner organizations: Maryland State Firemen’s Association, Maryland Fire Chiefs, and the Metro Fire Chiefs Association.

MCAC’s Emergency Services, Health, and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Branch is specifically tasked with supporting the information and intelligence needs of Maryland’s fire and EMS responders. The Branch’s goals in engaging with fire/EMS are:

1. Ensure that first responders are aware of threats to their safety and the safety of their communities,
2. Share information that allows fire/EMS agencies to better plan and prepare for acts of terrorism and mass violence in their communities, and
3. Educate first responders on behaviors and activities that could indicate someone is planning to commit an act of violence and encourage responders to report those activities and behaviors to law enforcement and the MCAC.

Our team produces written intelligence and information

Informing a Safe Response to Acts of Violence *cont....*

bulletins on a variety of homeland security and safety topics relevant to fire and EMS personnel. Additionally, members of the team provide in person and/or virtual threat briefings at fire/EMS stations, fire/EMS association meetings, and conferences.

Some of the recent reports our Branch has published specifically for the fire/EMS community include

- Recognition and Reporting of Injuries Associated with

Homemade Explosives Manufacturing

- Incendiary Attacks Targeting Immigration-Related Facilities
- Increase in Arson During Tactical Incidents from 2013-2023
- Recent Thefts of Fire Department Equipment (joint product with Anne Arundel County Fire Dept.)

Branch Chief
Alex Cardella,
Md Coordination and
Analysis Center

[Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center](#)



[Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group](#)



[Fire and EMS Suspicious Activity Reporting](#)



[Firefighter Life Safety Initiative 12](#)



Arrive Safely or Don't Go

I have been in the Fire Service just shy of 43 years and have been involved, investigated incidents and witnessed the driving abilities of many Fire and EMS professionals. It is not a secret that driver operators are their own worst enemies, when the radio starts talking, the sirens blaring and the air horns blowing and the officer giving guidance but the adrenaline starts pumping when responding. The problem is this sometimes overwhelms a driver and risky habits take over. The driver operator has the responsibility to get the crew to the scene in an affective manner to mitigate the incident **SAFELY**. If the driver operator cannot do that then, do not climb into the position and

put the crew at risk. Some of the challenges faced by driver operators are below.

1. Ensure all driver operators are certified and authorized to drive. Some examples are proper courses, proper license, test drives, pumping evolutions. Have a program in place.

2. Understand the physical characteristics of apparatus to be driven. All apparatus is a little different with handling, weight distribution, braking etc.

3. Put your seat belt on and lead by example. Check to make sure everyone is seat belted.

4. Drive speeds for road conditions and what is appropriate for type of incident.

5. Be familiar with the road network within jurisdiction. Examples: very sharp curves, known flooding areas and areas high wind could hamper vehicle control are just a few.

6. Follow traffic laws and regulations

7. Ask for assistance to navigate if not familiar with address do not use your wireless device while driving.

These are the seven items found in most reports involving responding apparatus. Take the time and review this list with driver operators. These reminders just may prevent an apparatus incident.

Jon Black

The AAIWG's Role in Protecting Maryland's First Responders

Formally authorized as a public body in 2018 by Governor's Executive Order 01.01.2018.08, the Maryland Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group (AAIWG) takes a multidisciplinary approach to identifying, updating, and sharing best practices and current active assailant preparedness activities. The AAIWG membership is diverse, with representation from law enforcement, fire and rescue, emergency medical services (EMS), health and human services, schools and higher education, and other community-facing professionals at the state and local levels, in addition to participation from federal partners. The depth in perspectives allows the AAIWG to take a whole community approach to promoting best practices and vetted guidance related to active assailant preparedness, prevention, response and recovery. The AAIWG is supported by three subcommittees, First Responder Guidelines, Community Outreach/Website, and Emergency People Search and Recovery, which focus on specific aspects of active assailant activities and promoting resources compiled by the work group.

Of particular interest to Maryland's first responders, the AAIWG maintains a website, where users can learn more about the AAIWG and access resources, including guidance documents developed by members of the work group. The following resources are available for download via the AAIWG website.



[Incident Command System \(ICS\) Field Operations Guide \(FOG\) for Active Assailant Incidents](#) was designed to aid the initial response elements and command staff responding to an active assailant incident by providing guidance on immediate tasks and scene organization in accordance with ICS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

[Ballistics Protective Equipment Guidance & Recommendations for Fire/Rescue/EMS](#) identifies considerations fire and emergency medical services response organizations may make prior to procuring ballistics protective equipment (i.e., body armor) for active assailant and other high threat/volatile response.

[Active Assailant Exercises – Weapons Guidance](#) includes

considerations for planning, conducting, and evaluating active assailant exercises when weapons (e.g firearms, simunitions, flash bang grenades, etc.) are used as a component of exercise conduct.

[Equipment Guidance & Recommendations](#)

details considerations first responders may make when securing medical supplies and personal protective equipment for active assailant response.

[Support Services for Mass Casualty Incidents: Guidance and Best Practices](#) identifies best practices, resources, and operational considerations relevant for emergency people search (i.e., reunification) and recovery activities for mass casualty events, including active assailant incidents.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the AAIWG, or if you have any questions about resources available on the website, please email aaiwg.mdem@maryland.gov.

Randy Linthicum

MIEMSS

[Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group](#)



New MFCA Officers Installed



The 2024-2025 MFCA officers taking the oath of office.

We would like to take this time to congratulate the newly installed officers of the Maryland Fire Chief's Association. The officers are as follows: President Robert Phillips, First Vice President Robert Dulina, Second Vice President Gary Krichbaum, Secretary Pete Mellits, Assistant Secretary Ron Watkins, Membership Secretary Joseph Chornock, Treasurer Rick L. Hemphill, Assistant Treasurer Hugh D. Owens, Chaplain Richard Chappy Bower, Deputy Chaplain Robin Howard, Immediate Past President Gerald "JJ" Lynott, and Ladies Auxiliary President Teresa Chrisman.

Regional Directors are as follows: Region 1 Director Rick Blair, Region 2 Director Jerry Dorsey, Region 3 Director John McDowell, Region 4 Director Michael Kalck, Region V Director Doug Howard, Region 6 Director Timothy Delehanty, Region 7 Director William Hildebrand, and Region 8 Director Jon Black

Additionally, we would like to congratulate this year's award recipients. They include the following: Amos Edwin "Smoke" Joiner, Chestertown VFD, as the Chief Leslie B. Thompson Memorial Award winner, Paul H Sterling, Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad as the Chief John W. Heglund Fire Service Leadership Award winner, William McCluney and Riley Law, Laurel VFD, with the Chief Leonard T. King Sr. Medal of Valor Award, and Teresa Ann Crisman as the William G. Perry Award winner.

Save the Dates

MFCA General Membership Meeting
Odenton VFC, July 20, 2024 @10 AM Lunch Provided.

MSFA Safety Committee Meeting
Mechanicsville VFD July 21, 2025 @ 11 AM

Cumberland Valley Vol. Firefighters Association Convention
Halfway VFD July 31-August 3, 2024

Fire Rescue International Conference and Expo
Dallas, TX August 14-16, 2024

MSFA Executive Committee Meeting
Union Bridge VFD August 17-18, 2024

MFCA General Membership Meeting
October 19, 2024 @10 AM Lunch Provided.

Federation of Fire Chaplains Annual Conference
Annapolis, MD October 25-31, 2024

Symposium In the Sun
Clearwater Beach, Florida November 14-17, 2024

MFCA General Membership Meeting January 18, 2024
@ 10 AM Lunch Provided

988
**SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE**

30

The number of 1st responder
suicides through
June 30, 2024.

Firefighter Behavioral

27

The number of fallen firefighters
through June 30, 2024.

US Fire Administration

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**Maryland Fire Chiefs
Association**



Firefighter Close Calls



**Maryland State Fire-
fighters Association**



**First Responder
Center for Excellence**



**National Volunteer
Fire Council**



**Back Step Talks
Back Issues**



RESPONDER STRUCK-BY FATALITIES



THIS YEAR (THROUGH) May 30, 2024

2 Fire/EMS
11 Law Enforcement
6 Towing Operators
1 Road Service Technician
0 DOT/SSP

Via [ResponderSafe](https://www.responder-safe.org)