



Maryland Fire Chiefs Association

Safety and Health Committee

Minutes of meeting held January 27, 2025

The Safety and Health Committee of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association met on January 27, 2025, via Zoom.

Members of the committee present were

David Lewis, Chairman
David Black
Rhonda Cohen
Dick Devore
Pete Mellits
Heather Miller
Jon Johnson

The meeting was scheduled to identify topics for the April edition of Back Step Talks. It was previously agreed that our April edition would focus on live fire safety, both operationally and in training. Chairman Lewis previously distributed a set of suggested article topics, and the committee agreed to work against this list. After discussion, the following topics and writing assignments were agreed:

- Cover article – The Need for Safety During live fire operations – David Lewis
- Be Combat Ready – Understanding the Enemy – Jon Johnson
- The importance of Rehab – John Long
- Be a Good Sport – Prepare Like an Athlete – Rhonda Cohen
- We Can't Save You If We Can't Get There – Driving Safety – Dave Black
- Live Fire Training – Safety is Still Important – Dave Reid

****Note:** John Long and Dave Reid were not present for the meeting, but their writing assignments were confirmed post-meeting.

The following schedule was agreed for the April publication:

- Monday, February 24, Committee status meeting
- Sunday, March 9, all draft articles due to Dick Devore
- Monday, March 24, draft newsletter distributed for committee review
- Wednesday, March 26, committee meeting to review/approve newsletter for distribution

It was noted that MSFA/MFCA provided scholarships for 13 members to attend FDSOA in January. Although a special edition of Back Step Talks is not planned for this year's conference, we hope that good information will be brought back and shared with their departments and others.

The MSFA/MFCA will also award scholarships for up to 20 members to attend the First Responder Conference on March 24-25 in Ocean City. We also received approval to sponsor up to 6 members to attend the Fire Service Mental Wellness & Suicide Prevention Symposium on March 19-21, 2025, in Nashville, TN. This event is hosted by the NFFF First Responder Center for Excellence (FRCE).

We envision that some good information will be brought back that can be disseminated to the MFCA membership. We must keep our sights set on the mental health issues that exist in the first responder community and as leaders, we must take be able to recognize the signs of mental stress and direct our members (or ourselves) to resources when mental stress impacts family or work life.

The committee will meet again (via Zoom) on Monday, February 24, at 7pm. An invite from the Zoom account will be sent out before the meeting.

Thanks again for everyone's continued support and participation.

Submitted by: David Lewis, Chairman

Recommended topics for Back Step Talks - April 2025

Cover page – discuss the need for safety during live fire operations

Cite NFPA statistics - [United States Firefighter Injuries | NFPA Research](#)

Fatalities - [Firefighter fatalities in the United States | NFPA](#)

Be Combat Ready - Understanding the enemy

Understand fire behavior and how it affects operations

The Role of the Incident Safety Officer

Reference to the “Five Reads” presentation from FDSOA

[Fire Department Safety Officers Association - The 5 Reads](#)

The importance of rehab

Give your body time to rebound

Medical evaluation during rehab

Importance of rehydration

Reference NFPA standard on rehab (NFPA 1584/1580)

Be a good sport – Prepare like an athlete

The importance of fitness and nutrition on health and safety

We can’t save you if we can’t get there – driving safety

Slow down, obey traffic laws

Arriving one minute later really doesn’t make a difference

Live Fire Training – Safety Is Still Important

Cite statistics on training injuries/deaths

Just because it is training, we can’t leave safety at home

Actions needed to reduce training injuries/deaths

NFPA 1403 and legal consequences of not following it

Mental Health Conference Scholarship Opportunities

The MFCA and MSFA are sponsoring 6 MD Fire service Individuals to attend the Fire Service Mental Wellness and Suicide Prevention Symposium, hosted by the NFFF and First Responder Center for Excellence (FRCE) on March 19-21, 2025, in Nashville, TN.

See <https://www.firehero.org/event/fire-service-mental-wellness-and-suicide-prevention-symposium/>

Priority to scholarship awards will be given to individuals directly involved in mental health and awareness, especially on the topic of suicide. These people should be advocates on a county or state level, i.e., Chaplains, members of the LAST team, Mental Health Taskforce, Peer Support Team members, etc.

Reimbursement will cover air travel to Nashville, local transportation to/from the hotel, up to 3 nights of lodging, and conference registration fee.

The MSFA and MFCA are sponsoring 20 MD fire service individuals to attend the 1st Responder Mental Health & Wellness Conference. March 24-25, 2025 - in Ocean City, MD

See -> <https://app.clearevent.com/eventPortal#event/6f44d386-02dd-4ac6-a941-bcc28ca20fe4/home>

Reimbursement will be for the conference fee, up to TWO nights lodging at \$115/night, and mileage for anyone traveling over 50 miles one way.

To apply for either of these conference scholarship opportunities, complete the application form at <https://mdchief.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Training-and-Conference-Scholarship-Request-Form.pdf>

Your completed Scholarship application form must be emailed to scholarships@mdchief.org

There are also two upcoming roadway safety conferences that you should consider attending. Both are local events and are FREE.

April 23 - Baltimore Regional Traffic Incident Management Conference, held at the Maritime Institute

Register online at [2025 Baltimore Region Traffic Incident Management Conference Tickets, Wed, Apr 23, 2025 at 8:30 AM | Eventbrite](#)

April 29 - Maryland Highway Safety Summit, hosted by the MDOT Safety Office, at the BWI Hilton

Registration opens on January 30, so I don't have a link yet.