



Maryland Fire Chiefs Association

Safety and Health Committee

Minutes of meeting held January 26, 2026

The Safety and Health Committee of the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association met on January 26, 2026, via Zoom.

Members of the committee present were

David Lewis, Chairman
Dick Devore
David Black
David Reid
Pete Mellits

The meeting was scheduled to select a focus area for the April edition of Back Step Talks and assign writers for articles related to that area.

After considerable discussion, the committee narrowed down the focus area to "Changes to Firefighter Safety Over the Last 40 Years." The focus will review changes to the fire service safety culture that seasoned firefighters have experienced and want to share with new firefighters.

Some of the topics selected for inclusion in this issue will be:

- The evolution of a safety culture – Dave Lewis
- Changes in apparatus design – Pete Mellits
- Changes in PPE/SCBA design – Dave Reid
- An increased emphasis on health and nutrition – We will ask Rhonda to write this
- An increased focus on mental wellness – Dave Black

Since several committee members were not online for the meeting, I am asking them to consider offering an article to be included. What changes have you seen and would like to tell the new firefighter how things are much safer now? Please let us know via a reply to these minutes.

As a bonus, we will blast out an email to MFCA members to ask them, "What changes to firefighter safety have you experienced? and "What would you tell a new member in the fire service about safety?" We will ask for responses from our MFCA members and select some quotes to be included in callout boxes in the Back Step Talks.

I am still concerned about the drop in participation in our committee. Has three years of producing Back Step Talks become a boring task? Do we need to address safety in a different manner? There is a small number of us putting considerable effort into each edition of Back Step Talks, but this is a whole

committee effort, and we need your participation. If you no longer wish to be a part of the committee, please let me know, and I will remove you from the roster. Otherwise, I hope that you will revisit your commitment to the committee and participate in the coming year. Please let me know your thoughts.

Schedule for the next edition of Back Step Talks:

- Articles are due March 15(Sunday)
- Committee will meet to review/approve the draft on March 30 (Monday)
- Back Step Talks released on April 1

We will meet next on Monday, March 30, at 7 pm, via Zoom. I will send a meeting invite prior to the meeting.

With best wishes for the new year,

Submitted by: David Lewis, Chairman