

2009

The Rural Firefighter, Issue 04-09--November 2009

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1969

40th Anniversary of The Rural Firefighter

2009

THE RURAL FIREFIGHTER

Issue 04-09—November 2009



Nebraska Forest Service

www.nfs.unl.edu

Firefighter Fitness—Yup, I Said It!

After the celebrations during the holidays, many of us will take a look at the year gone by and resolve to change things, to make our lives better. At the beginning of the New Year, I will again make that recurring promise that this will be THE year to “get back in shape.” It’s like an old friend who visits around the holidays. So I thought I’d share some thoughts on health and fitness. And before you dismiss this as not worth the time, read a little further. I think this will shock you and I hope motivate you (and me) to make 2010 THE year.

Anyone who attends one of my classes knows that at some point, I drag out a large soap box, plant myself squarely in the middle of it, and start spouting off about firefighter fitness. In gathering information, my search led me to Line of Duty Death (LODD) reports. Believe me, it wasn’t a cheerful trip. The most current statistics at the time were for 1999, one of the deadliest years for firefighters in the past 20 years (excluding, of course, September 11, 2001). I knew firefighting was stressful, but the numbers floored me. That year, 112 firefighters – career, volunteer, federal and state – lost their lives in the line of duty. The shocking part? Almost **half** were due to stress or overexertion. I thought that had to be a fluke, an abnormal year, so I went back another year and found the same report. I couldn’t believe it. In 1998, 43% of all firefighter fatalities were directly attributed to heart attack. I looked further and found a study

“I can’t control the fact that I’m male and I can’t stop getting older. But I can control what I eat and how much exercise I get.”

done by the United States Forest Service. That report looked into the cause of death for volunteers fighting wildland fire between 1990 and 1998. During that time, the only cause of death that ranked higher than heart attacks at 42% was vehicle accidents at 44%. I even found an article from 1983 showing that heart attacks accounted for 42% of LODDs in **1982**. And the most recent year, 2008, yet again produced 52 LODD due to stress or overexertion, 44% of the total.

So for at least **27 years**, heart attacks have been the leading cause of death in the fire service, accounting for more than 40% of all deaths annually. I couldn’t believe that! Where was the public outrage? Where were the lead fire service organizations and agencies? Somebody should do something about this! And what about that fat guy staring back at me in the mirror...?

That’s where the solution lies. Physical fitness is an individual responsibility and the “somebody” best suited to do something about this is you. And I’m not just wagging my finger at everyone else. I love to eat, the only time I run is if someone is chasing me and I’m sure by now I must have paid for a Doritos factory somewhere. That isn’t going to get it done. If I keel over on the fire scene, I’m no longer a part of the solution; I’m part of the problem. But it doesn’t take a huge effort to keep a body reasonably physically fit. According to the Kinesiology Department at

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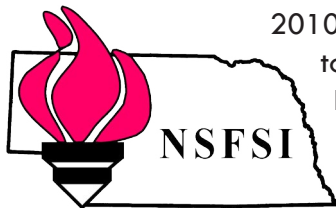
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Les Lukert Conference

The Nebraska Society of Fire Service Instructors will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Les Lukert Winter conference February 19-21, 2010 at the Mid-



town Holiday Inn in Grand Island. Here's a preview.

Training Today's Fire Service

Doug Cline, 28-year. fire service veteran and 1st Vice President of the International Society of Fire Service Instructors.

Mission Focused Tactics

Wes Kitchel, Captain, Santa Rosa Fire Department and Lead Instructor, Firetown Training Specialist.

Developing Fireground Mental Agility

Bobby Halton, editor in chief, Fire Engineering magazine and education director, Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC).

Taking it to the Streets: Building Const., Command Risk Mgmt. and Safety

Christopher J. Naum, Chief of Training, Command Institute, Washington, D.C.

We Don't Teach Subjects...We Teach People!

Keith "Doc" Patterson, Chaplain, Lake County (IL) Honor Guard and Field Programs Coordinator, Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau.

Fireground Responsibility

John Salka, 29-year FDNY veteran, Battalion Commander, 18th Battalion in the Bronx and volunteer firefighter for more than 30 years.

Fire Instructor I

State Fire Marshal Training Division.

From Good to Great: Taking your EMS Education to the Next Level

Heather Davis, UCLA-Daniel Freeman Paramedic Education Program.

Check www.nfsi.com for updates.



Tips From Tex

As I travel around the state and speak with folks either at mutual aid, rural board or fire department meetings, I'm still finding a lack of knowledge when it comes to the Volunteer Emergency Responders Job Protection Act (state statute 35-1401 – 35-1408) that took effect July 18, 2008. It's not the issue of not knowing about it as it is a complete and full understanding of it.

In the shortened definition of it, we all know that this law protects emergency workers from being fired from their jobs should they report late to work due to being on an emergency call. But how many fire chiefs realize that they must provide a written letter to the volunteer's employer stating that they are a member of a volunteer fire / rescue service? I know some of you are saying this isn't needed because most employers know which of their employees are volunteers. But, I'd like to submit this for your consideration:

1. How many employers know of this state statute?
2. If they don't, then how do you plan on protecting your volunteers?
3. With the economy and recession the way it is, how long before we have an incident and cannot protect our volunteers because we failed to do our job?
4. Failure to do our job or ignorance of the law is not a viable excuse for our volunteers or in a court of law.

For those who need help, I have placed on the NFS website (www.nfs.unl.edu) under "Resources & Links" on the Wildland Fire Protection page a sample letter you can download, fill in the blanks and give to your volunteers.

Also on the website is the state statute which I recommend you attach to the letter so the employer is informed and understands the law. I also recommend that you make a second copy of the letter, have the employer sign and date it and then place it in the volunteer's file at the fire station. If you have any questions or need any further assistance, please give me a call.

I know this may cause a little extra work on your part as the fire chief, but with the recruiting and retention issues we currently have in the fire service, a few extra hours of work would be considered priceless if we can keep our volunteers active in the department and employed.

The 2009 legislative session is over and I have been able to update the "Blue Book" as it is known across the state. The Selected Laws Pertaining To Nebraska Firefighters & Fire Departments is now online and can be downloaded from the Nebraska Forest Service website at www.nfs.unl.edu/publications.asp.

Like everything else that is happening across the state and country with budget cuts, this book will no longer be printed as we have known it. It will be available online and I will have hard copies for students attending the Elected Officials class at fire school.

As we enter the winter months and holiday seasons, remember to check your equipment and clothing prior to needing them. Look out for each other during lengthy fire ground operations and especially during roadway incidents. Be careful out there and have a safe and happy holiday season.

Until next time, stay safe.

George J. (Tex) Teixeira II
Fire Resource Manager

Nugget of the Day

Never give an order that can't be obeyed.

- General Douglas MacArthur -

Fire Prevention: A Marketable Product

Fire prevention is an intangible product...you cannot see it, smell it, taste it or feel it...but you can sell it! Moreover, you can measure results!

THE MARKET

Yes! There is a market for this product in your community with your friends, neighbors and relatives. Fire prevention, just like fire suppression, affects every part of your community.

- *People:* Men, women and children.
- *Places:* Homes, businesses, farms, crops and ranches.
- *Things:* Animals, furnishings, clothing, artifacts and memorabilia.

THE MESSAGE

How do we get the message across in a way people will listen and want to do fire prevention? It is through radio, television, newspaper, presentations, personal talks, placemats in cafes, roadside signs, table talkers, handouts, pamphlets, posters in public buildings, etc. The message is delivered by a multitude of ways and ideas, taking advantage of teachable moments or showing a need, etc. The list of ways to deliver the message is endless.

But...the real key to success is YOU! Without YOU, nothing happens. I could talk or write all day about you and the success of the program. However, right now, let us take a closer look at YOU—the firefighter—and the past.

It is time to build bridges to the people in your community with prevention messages and public education, **instead of putting up barriers**. Are you sending out the message, "I am the firefighter, and this is our fire station—keep out?"

In the not so distant past, many firefighters felt this way about people who did not belong to the fire department. Yes, the firefighter is a special person, caring, dedicated, and if need be, heroic, and they are part of the community. A community consisting of:

- People
- City ordinances
- Rural fire districts
- Taxpayers (where the money for operations comes from)

To function effectively, there has to be accountability! When the firefighters and the community are close, there is accountability.

THE PRODUCT

To forge a closer relationship, launch a fire prevention program in your community. **Tear down barriers; build new bridges and new relationships**. Go out among the people and deliver/market a prevention message that will definitely make their lives better. (NO FIRES)

Get personal. Show the community how they can provide a safer way of life in the home, on the farm and in the business place. Preach the fire prevention message to the masses. When you believe what you are teaching, the product will sell.

THE IMAGE

An image is a symbol, a concept or a mental picture of a person or product held by the public; it is often one deliberately created. Work to create an image of yourself and your product—fire prevention—that people are interested in and will look up to. An image viewed with respect and trust. Two excellent examples of a positive image are Wal-Mart and UPS.

As you enter the door of a Wal-Mart store, you are greeted with a smile and "Welcome to Wal-Mart." They have you smiling as soon as you enter the door. They have generated an atmosphere even before you start shopping. They have an image of great prices and quality.

How many times have you seen a UPS man running to deliver a package? He is always on the go. He never saunters up to a door and his vehicle is always clean. He may have just sat quietly for an hour eating lunch, but the minute he enters his truck, he is on the run.

What kind of image do you present as a fire prevention leader?

1. Appearance
2. Knowledge
3. Sincerity
4. Message (that can make life better)
5. Do you practice what you speak?

Fire prevention is a job. A job only YOU can do. Be the fire prevention leader in your community. If you are not leading... the view is always the same.

FIRE PREVENTION

The Market
plus

The Message
plus

The Product
plus

The Image
plus

YOU (last, but not least)
equals



**S
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S**

Bob E. Vogltance
Prevention, Public Fire Education



Sandy's Corner



Sandy is out of the office dealing with a death in her family, so her regular feature will

take this issue off. Please keep Sandy in your thoughts and prayers as she works through this difficult time.



"Fitness" continued from page 1

Kansas State University, studies by the American College of Sports Medicine show the key to exercise is to find a balance between three components: frequency, duration and intensity. Think about it like this. Frequency, duration and intensity add up to a number, let's say 10. The goal of your workout should be to make sure that the numbers always add up to 10. So for example, take the recommended standard to maintain your current level of fitness, that being to make it into the gym (or garage, living room or out on the streets) 2-3 times a week for 30-45 minutes each time. Find an exercise that suits your interests and do it at a level around 50% of your maximum effort.

That creates a baseline, your 10. If the demands of your life increase so that you can only get to the gym twice, you can still reach your 10 by increasing the amount of time spent in the gym or working at a higher intensity level.

Now obviously, if you've been out of the swing for a while, don't jump back in at full speed. Schedule a time to sit down with your doctor and talk about a workout routine. Also, diet and fitness are a package deal, so ask about foods that can help you reach your goal. Increase your activity slowly, and soon you'll find you have more energy to carry you through the day. You're running a little farther, tossing the kids in the air easily and breezing up stairs that used to make you huff and puff.

By now you may be saying, "That sounds good in theory but I just don't have the time." Welcome aboard, sailor. We're all in that boat. But firefighters are athletes, and when we are called on to perform, we don't have 20 minutes to warm up. We have to prepare ourselves for that as much as we can. It's no secret that heart attacks are usually more common in males than females. A friend of mine made a comment on fitness during a class once that sums it up. He said, "I can't control the fact that

I'm male and I can't stop getting older. But I can control what I eat and how much exercise I get." That statement has something we all can use. I get fightin' mad every year when I read the reports that so many firefighters are lost to heart attacks and vehicle accidents. It's my opinion that being physically fit will help a firefighter better manage both the stress and adrenaline that go with the territory and bring both of those numbers down. And there's only one-way to prove that—who's going to make a resolution with me?



Calendar of Events

- January 4-10 Colorado Wildfire Academy, Greeley, CO
- January 5-8 S130/S190/L180 class Hardin Hall, UNL
- February 7 Central Nebraska Mutual Aid Association Winter Fire School, Holdrege
- Feb 19-21 NSFSI Les Lukert Winter Conf., Grand Island
- March 6, 7 & 13, 14 S130/S190/L180 class Springfield Fire Dept. Springfield, NE
- April 10-18 Third Annual Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, Fort Robinson State Park

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Happy Holidays!
from all of us at the
Nebraska Forest Service