



# CHIEFS

The Official Magazine of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



## Marking 20 Years Since 9/11:

How Public Safety Communications  
Has Evolved **Page 08**

Modernizing the  
AAR Process  
Page 11

FRI 2021:  
Recap  
Page 16

Legislative  
Update  
Page 20

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4795 Meadow Wood Lane, Suite 100W  
Chantilly, VA 20151  
Tel: 703.273.0911  
www.iafc.org

**CEO and Executive Director**  
Rob Brown

**Director of Communications**  
Steven Ilchishin

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www.matrixgroupinc.net

**President & CEO**  
Jack Andress

**Operations Manager**  
Shoshana Weinberg  
sweinberg@matrixgroupinc.net

**Senior Publisher**  
Jessica Potter  
publishing@matrixgroupinc.net

**Publisher**  
Julie Welsh

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Shannon Savory  
ssavory@matrixgroupinc.net

**Senior Editor**  
Alexandra Kozub  
akozub@matrixgroupinc.net

**Editor / Social Media Manager**  
Jenna Collignon

**Finance/Administration**  
Lloyd Weinberg, Nathan Redekop  
accounting@matrixgroupinc.net

**Director of Circulation & Distribution**  
Lloyd Weinberg  
distribution@matrixgroupinc.net

**Sales Manager - Winnipeg**  
Neil Gottfred

**Sales Manager - Hamilton**  
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**Matrix Group Publishing Inc. Account Executives**  
Andrew Lee, Brian MacIntyre, Cheryl Klassen, Colleen Bell,  
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**Advertising Design**  
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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

7 A Message from the IAFC President and Board Chair

## COVER STORY

8 Marking 20 Years Since 9/11: How Public Safety Communications Has Evolved

## FEATURES

- 11 Rethinking The After-Action Report Process: Using Iterative Data Gathering to Improve Results
- 16 Fire-Rescue International: A Success!

## REPORT FROM WASHINGTON

20 Legislative Update

## 21 INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE IAFC

22 A Message from CEO and Executive Director, Rob Brown



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# Staying Focused, Moving Forward



**HELLO, FELLOW MEMBERS,** partners, colleagues, and friends. It is my distinct honor and pleasure to bring greetings once again on behalf of the International Association of Fire Chiefs' (IAFC) Board of Directors and staff in this edition of *iCHIEFS*.

As shared in the state of the IAFC address in Charlotte, North Carolina, the IAFC is strong, out front, respected, relevant, leading, and ready to serve its members.

We continue to provide leadership, education, and advocacy for the fire service. We have an engaged membership, competent and capable staff, and never have we demonstrated more the importance of our voice and mission than we have over the past two years.

In our last issue, I discussed the challenges facing the IAFC and what we were doing to meet those challenges head-on. The IAFC has bounced back. Although COVID-19 affected us like many other organizations, we were able to come back strong in Charlotte, North Carolina. I encourage you to read about it in this issue and on the IAFC website at [www.iafc.org](http://www.iafc.org). I plan to be with you at the next Fire-Rescue International conference in 2022.

Hosting Fire-Rescue International in Charlotte was a welcome sign of some normalcy returning to our lives. Although some of our international and Canadian colleagues were unable to be present, the event was very well attended, including some virtual sessions. Staff did an incredible job adjusting to the dynamic situation to provide our

members with a valuable educational conference and a safe environment to network for the first time in over a year.

Now that Fire-Rescue International is over, the board will be engaging our stakeholders as we update our strategic directive to ensure we stay focused on our members' needs and remain relevant in these changing times. Stay tuned for additional information on our engagement strategies post COVID-19.

The summer of 2021 has drawn to a close, and while we are starting to plan beyond COVID-19 for the future, we would be remiss not to mention the anniversary of 9/11.

September 11, 2021, marked the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. On that day, two planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, District of Columbia, and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. This was the most lethal terrorist attack in U.S. history, killing almost 3,000 people; 343 of those people killed were members of the New York City Fire Department. As public safety professionals who work to keep our communities and our firefighters and paramedics safe, it is essential that we take a moment to reflect on the lives lost and the heroism displayed during those difficult hours and days.

Over the past couple of months, IAFC members and their departments have been responding to wildland fires up and down the west coast of North America; they are responding for heavy Urban Search and Rescue deployments in Florida in the U.S. and British Columbia in Canada, they have responded to tornadoes, hurricanes and floods in North Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, New Jersey, Ontario, and Germany, not to mention their day-to-day work in every community across the globe.

COVID-19 is not over yet, and we all may have a new normal, but there is one thing I am confident about: we, as the IAFC, are respected advisors, we are leading through adversity, and we are relevant and evolving because of you, our members, our staff, and our partners.

In closing, I would like to thank our members involved in our divisions, sections, committees, task forces, councils, and our fantastic staff; and, of course, our Board of Directors – without **all of you**, the IAFC could not have made it through this past year.

You are why we exist. Having worked with many of you over the years and witnessing the extraordinary efforts we have achieved together – I am incredibly optimistic about the future of the IAFC and proud to be part of such a great organization.

Together we are better!

Thank you and merci,

**Fire Chief Ken Stuebing**  
IAFC President and Board Chair





# Marking 20 Years Since 9/11: How Public Safety Communications Has Evolved

By Chief Richard Carrizzo, First Responder Network Authority Board

**T**his year marks the 20th anniversary of 9/11, ushering in a wide spectrum of emotion and reflection. Every facet of public safety's emergency response on that day exemplified bravery as first responders gave the utmost sacrifice serving on the frontlines. Tragically, 343 heroic firefighters lost their lives on that day. As the country continues to mourn the loss of thousands of Americans, we will never forget the impact that day has made on the lives of so many, including the public safety community.

In the aftermath, the 9/11 Commission was tasked with preparing a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the attacks. Among its findings, the Commission found fundamental problems with communication systems used by our nation's first responders. The radios relied on by police, fire, and paramedics did not easily operate across different agencies on that day. Land and mobile phone lines were overwhelmed by a

high volume of calls and first responders struggled to communicate with each other during the responses.

To address these problems, the 9/11 Commission Report recommended establishing an interoperable nationwide network exclusively for public safety so they can communicate with each other through disasters, large events, and everyday emergencies.

The public safety community, including members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), led the rallying call for their own broadband network before Congress.

Chief Jeff Johnson, who is a past President of IAFC, was actively involved in public safety advocacy efforts. Chief Johnson, now currently the CEO of the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA), joined other public safety leaders across disciplines to actively push for legislation to establish a nationwide public safety broadband network.

"We were told this was impossible," Chief Johnson says of his time advocating with colleagues for a dedicated broadband network for public safety. "If we would have known how impossible it was, we would have honestly never started. It actually was

the fact that we didn't know it was impossible that allowed us to just keep pushing on. There are lessons to be learned in being constrained by your own beliefs and what we found is that we could exceed our expectations if we stuck together."

Public safety's advocacy did not go unnoticed. In 2012, the *Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act* was signed into law.<sup>1</sup> The law allocated \$7 billion and 20 megahertz of broadband spectrum to establish a network for the nation's public safety workers. It also established the First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet Authority,<sup>2</sup> as an independent government agency solely focused on delivering to public safety what they advocated for – a reliable network that would provide interoperability and innovation.

Today, public safety's nationwide broadband network – FirstNet – is a reality. FirstNet is built through a public-private partnership with AT&T,<sup>3</sup> and in 2018 it launched nationwide. FirstNet continues to expand, and has supported first responders responding to emergencies and incidents, from hurricanes, floods, wildland fires, and tornados, to coping with and confronting

the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Public safety has been quick to adopt the network – reaching more than 2.5 million network connections this year, according to AT&T.

## **EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS**

Technology has changed rapidly for the fire service over the years. Firefighters now have a plethora of applications and devices to use. Location services can help track assets and personnel in the field with 3D precision. During multiagency responses, they can send large files, data, and photos to other agencies. These are all capabilities that the public safety community values and depends on today, thanks to the ubiquity of mobile devices and the agility of broadband.

Chief Johnson believes the legislation establishing FirstNet changed the game for public safety communications. “The FirstNet legislation, known then as the D Block, made public safety relevant and a priority for the wireless carriers,” said Chief Johnson, who went on to serve as the Vice Chair of the FirstNet Authority Board. “Once this legislation passed and we created FirstNet, we completely changed how wireless companies see public safety as a priority customer. We changed the formula and that is undeniable. Whether you use FirstNet or another carrier we have elevated the priority of public safety in their eyes. We’ve changed the device ecosystem and we have begun the migration toward LTE being a push to talk for everything.”

## **THE FIRE SERVICE PUTS FIRSTNET TO THE TEST**

Situational awareness is paramount to the fire service and all of public safety. The more information responders have, the more it helps them make informed decisions to keep personnel safe and complete the mission.

The Northwest Interagency Incident Management Team Number 10 in Washington State used FirstNet to enhance situational awareness.<sup>5</sup> The agency relied on a FirstNet mobile cell site to provide cellular connectivity in Glenwood, Washington – a rural area prone to spotty communication.

Throughout the nine-day response, more than 300 wildland personnel battled the fire that ultimately burned approximately 250 acres of brush, logging debris, and timber.

When Lieutenant LeRoy Sisley was deployed to the fire, he noticed his phone did not have cellular coverage about 20 miles from the area. Once he arrived at incident command, Sisley called FirstNet for assistance. Three hours later, a Satellite Cell on Light Truck (SatCOLT) arrived at the scene to provide coverage in the area. The SatCOLT connected area responders to the tools they needed to check weather reports, receive containment updates, order supplies and equipment, and communicate with other teams.

Keeping the lines of communications open and clear during wildland fires is vital to emergency response. For Sisley, FirstNet’s robust network maintained critical communications to keep firefighters safe and help them protect property.

“I was extremely happy with the quick response and setup of the SatCOLT,” said Lt. Sisley. “The priority service we got with FirstNet was great. Firefighters going out on responses need to take a FirstNet phone with them. In rural areas with traditionally limited coverage, they’ll be connected within hours.”

## **PUBLIC SAFETY HELPS DRIVE FIRSTNET INTO THE FUTURE**

The experiences of public safety agencies using FirstNet are a driving force for the network. This critical input helps the FirstNet Authority ensure that AT&T delivers on the terms of its contract and creates a network that meets the needs of public safety, now and into the future.

Bringing the concerns of the fire service and the public safety community to the table is extremely important. At the FirstNet Authority, we strive to ensure public safety’s broadband needs are being addressed by the network. FirstNet has been and will continue to be built by first responders for first responders.

The FirstNet Authority also directs investments in the network so that it evolves, grows, and innovates based on

public safety’s needs. Our oversight and investment functions are unique to the public-private partnership between the FirstNet Authority and AT&T. No other carrier gives public safety the same level of assurances.

The FirstNet Authority Board first authorized investments in 2020, including initial upgrades to enable access to 5G services and an expanded deployable fleet.<sup>6</sup>

## **INNOVATIONS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

This was a monumental year for public safety’s network. The FirstNet Authority’s investment led to 5G for FirstNet with subscribers now having access to AT&T’s 5G spectrum<sup>3</sup> in a growing number of cities and venues across the country. This is the start of a multi-phase, multi-year journey to deliver full 5G capabilities on FirstNet for public safety.

Access to 5G is a major development for FirstNet, yet this is just scratching the surface of future innovations for first responders. 5G’s next generation technology will provide peak data speeds, higher throughput capability, and improved latency. Through a greater use of video and drones, more accurate location data, and an ecosystem of connected sensors, 5G is changing public safety communications.

The FirstNet Authority’s investments also aided the expansion of FirstNet’s deployable fleet with 15 new assets.<sup>7</sup> These new assets are helping to meet public safety’s increasing demand for deployables with nearly 1,000 requests for FirstNet deployables from January 2020 to date.

This year, the network also launched several new mission ready solutions<sup>8</sup> that public safety asked for, such as Z Axis, HPUE or FirstNet MegaRange, Compact Rapid Deployables, and FirstNet Push-to-Talk. These new tools and technologies are a part of FirstNet’s growing ecosystem of mission-centric applications, helping them respond effectively and efficiently to everyday incidents and major disasters.

Chief Johnson sees the growing ecosystem of apps and software and FirstNet MegaRange having the biggest impact for the fire service in the near

future. “We are going to see broad implementation of MegaRange – the high-power version of FirstNet with 5X the reach and 5X the power – a phenomenal innovation that no other carrier can do except for FirstNet.”

**NEVER FORGET WHY FIRSTNET EXISTS**

Nobody would have predicted the intense challenges facing public safety over the past year. The pandemic hit at a time when natural disasters and manmade incidents tested the resiliency

of the nation, especially for the millions of first responders who serve as lifelines to their communities.

FirstNet was designed to meet the needs of the public safety community in everyday use and for every emergency. The lessons learned from communication challenges of the past, like the 9/11 terrorist attacks, helped shape the FirstNet network. We will never forget why FirstNet exists today.

The FirstNet Authority Board is committed to ensuring that public safety’s voice continues to drive the

future of the network. Together, the FirstNet Authority, the fire service, IAFC, and the entire public safety community must continue to work hand-in-hand to ensure the network evolves with our critical communications needs now and in the future. 🔥

*Chief Richard Carizzo is the Vice Chair for the First Responder Network Authority Board.*

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# Rethinking The After-Action Report Process: Using Iterative Data Gathering to Improve Results

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) leads the nation's operable and interoperable public safety and national security and emergency preparedness (NS/EP) communications efforts. CISA provides training, coordination, tools, and guidance to help its federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, and industry partners develop their emergency communications capabilities. CISA's programs and services coordinate emergency communications planning, preparation and evaluation to ensure safer, better-prepared communities nationwide. In the fall of 2020, CISA conducted interviews with several emergency communications stakeholders to identify lessons learned regarding iterative after-action reports (AAR). The following article summarizes the findings of the interviews and outlines emerging best practices.

The past year introduced unexpected and extraordinary challenges to public safety agencies – from massive wildfires burning concurrently across multiple states to ongoing pandemic response and recovery. Many first responders must now respond to larger and more frequent incidents, all while managing daily emergency response and recovery activities. An increasing demand for limited resources means leaders must make critical and timely decisions to maximize response capabilities. Decisions must be quick, decisive, and often made simultaneously. Leaders must weigh the benefits and drawbacks to each choice

and consider immediate and long-term ramifications, all while preserving the safety of personnel and minimizing impacts on resources and budget.

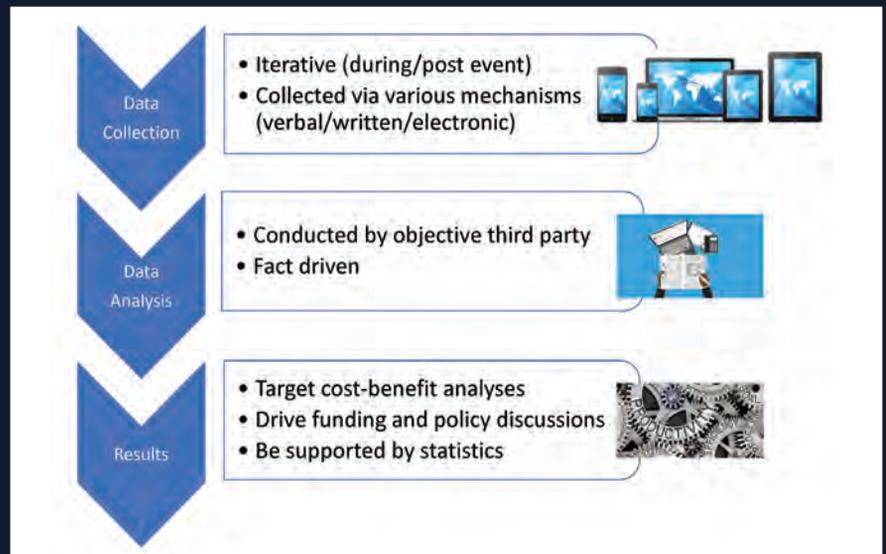
To aid in this decision-making process, the AAR is used to capture activities and lessons learned, while identifying resource gaps and opportunities for improving future response efforts. The current AAR process may be considered antiquated since data capture typically occurs after completion of an event. This timing presents challenges during multiple, simultaneous events, or when events extend over long periods of time. In response, agencies are shifting their focus and identifying opportunities to modernize the AAR process to minimize data loss, include the response community, and capture more accurate and actionable results.

## ITERATIVE AAR OVERVIEW

Historically, many key decisions, including those related to budgets and funding, were made following verbal discussions and based on personal relationships. However, in today's data-driven world, statistics are more heavily relied upon to provide justifications for policy decisions, funding requests, and resource allocation, and agencies are held directly accountable to financial decision-makers who may not have direct public safety experience.

By incorporating ongoing, iterative data collection into the AAR process, agencies can collect additional and potentially more accurate "hard" data. This data can be used to develop cost-benefit analyses and drive funding and policy discussions based on fact

*Continued on page 14*



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Continued from page 11 and supported by statistics. However, agencies must also recognize the limitations of data, maintain data integrity, and avoid data manipulation.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES TO THE AAR PROCESS

Agencies may experience a number of challenges throughout the AAR process. The following are commonly encountered hurdles to that process, accompanied by suggested mitigation strategies.

**Data Loss:** A single, post-event data capture approach provides opportunities for key details to be overlooked or forgotten. During the operational period, personnel make an overwhelming number of observations, but may only remember the most recent following the event. Iterative data capture throughout an event helps prevent data loss and promotes more robust and honest feedback.

**Knowledge Base:** Another potential challenge to data capture stems from a team member's comfort level in providing feedback about activities or technology for which they lack technical knowledge or terminology. This is

particularly challenging for data capture pertaining to communications activities and technologies.

In an effort to address this obstacle, the state of Wisconsin conducts Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program-compliant,<sup>1</sup> communications-focused AARs as part of their overall AAR process and encourages incident coordination with the Communications Unit. To ensure cohesive data capture, a designated team of training personnel with an extensive communications background follow a structured, chronological process. Personnel use a messenger application to share information, track resources, and capture data throughout an incident. Use of a collaborative messenger application helps inform post-event AARs since messages and requests are timestamped, facilitating the development of event timelines and inclusion of activity comments. The trainers collect information related to the initial response, early operations, and logistics information in layman's terms and 'translate' it into actionable, technical information.

This process and associated data capture efforts avoid standardized forms, promote a more open and free-flowing discussion, and encourage follow-on data sharing if participants identify additional details later in the process.

**Confusion Around Need For/Use of AARs:** Another challenge for agencies is potential confusion surrounding the AAR process and lack of understanding of the need for and uses of AARs. Ideally, the AAR process should be standardized and well-documented, and personnel should be trained on the process to ensure consistency and mitigate potential inaccurate or partial data capture. AARs are not 'one-size fits all,' and the process should be tailored to suit the event type, severity, and duration. Options for data capture include gathering information in brief, five to 10 minute increments throughout an event to support live coordination, using electronic means such as mobile applications, computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems, or web portals, and providing brief, paper-based surveys. Whenever possible, live capture – whether through traditional or electronic methods – is encouraged to ensure accuracy and validity of the information provided.

**Data Management:** Including a variety of data sources and information types is a key aspect of the modern AAR process, but can also introduce a roadblock to efficient data capture and analysis. For example, Philadelphia uses multiple avenues to include data from CAD, incident reports, videos (e.g., surveillance cameras, closed circuit television, body-worn cameras), social media, and radio traffic to inform AARs. The process also includes virtual one-hour hot washes via a sharing portal to enable immediate, real-time data capture.

Philadelphia Fire Commissioner Adam K. Thiel emphasized, "We do not live in a linear world and iterative data capture supports both short- and long-term event reporting. Data management is a huge logistical issue to manage and a variety of data sources will enable richer, more accurate, transparent, and actionable data capture."

However, the increased availability of data sources, including those provided by new technologies such as Next Generation 9-1-1, may lead to an



### CASE STUDY: CIVIL UNREST IN CALIFORNIA

The California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) employs an extensive and well-documented AAR process as part of the State Emergency Management System (SEMS). The process is codified within state regulations and tailored to the type of event and information to capture, such as data related to communications and the Emergency Support Function -2 (communications) aspects of the response effort. CalOES continually refines the AAR process and recently captured data during civil unrest responses by assigning two personnel to manage all data capture, consolidation, and development of the resulting report. This allows the agency to consolidate efforts and ensure consistent and timely data capture.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR CONDUCTING AARS

- Encourage live data capture, conducted on a regular basis, as opposed to waiting until the event has concluded.
- Develop a standardized, structured, and documented, AAR process and familiarize staff with associated policies and procedures.
- Ensure the AAR process is flexible to adapt to various types and durations of events.
- Utilize specially trained personnel to conduct the AAR.
- Incorporate collaborative applications developed specifically to aid in immediate and long-term data capture.
- Include a variety of data sources in AAR development.
- Carefully consider whether information obtained during the AAR process will be used for administrative, including disciplinary, decisions.
- Determine the audience for the final AAR and tailor the report accordingly.



overload of data, requiring additional personnel to review and analyze, potentially straining current staffing levels.

**Fear of Repercussions:** Agencies should also recognize that personnel may withhold honest AAR feedback and avoid reporting negative information, such as operational failures, in fear of punitive repercussions. In response, agencies should carefully weigh their use of AAR data when making administrative personnel decisions. There are positive ways to use data to inform personnel needs, such as those related to additional training, skill building exercises, and technical resources. However, using AAR data for disciplinary actions may result in future hesitation to participate in information-collection activities.

By focusing AARs on what happened during the event, lessons learned, and how training and policy should be updated to promote more efficient future response, agencies can affect tangible change. For example, in 2007 AAR data identified a need for improved emergency communications during events. This led to the development of the nationally used All-Hazards Communications Unit Leader/Communications Technician training program offered by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.<sup>2</sup>

Agencies should clearly document and regularly train personnel that honest participation in the AAR process will not result in discipline. Agencies may also consider anonymous data reporting methods; however, this option removes the ability for follow-up and clarification discussions. Additionally, information received in a vacuum may be difficult to accurately place within the larger event context.

## ENHANCING AND COMPLETING THE AAR

Traditionally, once data collection is complete, it is analyzed and findings are consolidated into a final AAR. However, iterative reports may help identify areas for improvement during a prolonged incident, allowing immediate corrective action and providing an opportunity for content review prior to delivering a final AAR. Agencies should move past the mindset of 'this is how we've always done

it' and consider fresh approaches to data capture, analysis, and function within a world where hard data drives decision-making, budgets, and resource allocation. The traditional hot wash can miss key data capture. By event end, respondents can face data fatigue, especially after a prolonged response.

Charlie Guddemi, Statewide Interoperability Coordinator for the District of Columbia, explained, "We can be one social media post away from mayhem and as a public safety agency we need to address flexibility in all areas of our response, including our AAR process." He reiterated the need to capture real-time data from first responders directly involved in incident response to ensure timely collection of critical information – good and bad – and that all perspectives are represented in the final analysis.

When drafting AARs, agencies should consider the audience and determine who is responsible for submitting data, completing data analysis, and documenting event accounts and recommendations. Care should be taken to use language that is fact-based and does not appear accusatory or biased toward any entity. Ideally, representatives from all parties involved in the data collection efforts should also be included in the development and review of the final AAR content.

For additional support with developing AARs and follow-on training and exercises, refer to the CISA Tabletop Exercise Package<sup>3</sup> and FEMA Preparedness Toolkit<sup>4</sup> for best practice guides, evaluation, and template resources.

## CONCLUSION

An iterative AAR approach enables leadership to make immediate and long-term decisions during and after an event. Accurate and timely data is needed to support effective planning and decision-making, especially from a resource and budget perspective. The reality that human memory typically focuses on the most recent event details, while forgetting previous items, underscores the need for iterative, live capture of data wherever possible to ensure details and lessons learned are documented for the entire incident.

Data capture should also be tailored to meet the needs of personnel and the challenges posed by the event type and duration. Structured, well-documented AAR processes, templates, and mobile applications or portals for data capture could help minimize data loss, enable virtual and live data capture, and provide a level of anonymity as appropriate to promote candid responses. Focusing AARs on process improvement, planning, and budget and resource allocation will support positive outcomes and strengthen future response efforts. 🔥

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*Thank you to the contributors of this article. Budge Currier is the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC), and National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (NCSWIC) Member. Charlie Guddemi is the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency SWIC, and NCSWIC Member. Chris Lombard is Battalion Chief, Seattle Fire Department, and SAFECOM First Vice Chair. Hank O'Neill is the former California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Chief, and Emergency Communications Division and Deputy Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (Retired). Adam Thiel is Commissioner, Philadelphia Fire Department, and Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association SAFECOM Representative.*

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2. Communications Unit Training Resources: <https://www.cisa.gov/safecom/comu-training-resources>
3. CISA Tabletop Exercise Package: <https://www.cisa.gov/publication/cisa-tabletop-exercise-package>
4. FEMA Preparedness Toolkit: <https://pretoolkit.fema.gov>

# Fire-Rescue International: A Success!



Every summer the IAFC's annual conference and expo, Fire-Rescue International (FRI), connects thousands of the most prominent fire and emergency service leaders, as well as hundreds of exhibitors. Fire service members from across North America and around the globe gather to collaborate, network, and learn from one another, and help uncover solutions to further some of the fire service's most pressing issues.

"FRI is the premier, all-inclusive conference in emergency services for national and international leaders in the fire service to connect, network, and share ideas with each other – a process that leads to saving lives, property, and money," says John Morris, Program Manager for IAFC Global Services.

In 2020, COVID-19 kept FRI from taking place in person. This year, the IAFC was excited to welcome attendees to the Queen City, Charlotte, North Carolina, for three days in July. Once again, leaders were able to meet face-to-face for a broad slate of programming, networking, and exhibits.

"It's hard to imagine that any emergency could last for this long, that its impact could touch every single aspect of our operations, and that it would be coupled with one of the most socially and politically



*Images were taken pre-pandemic.*

tumultuous periods I can recall in the three decades I have been a firefighter," says Chief Frederick Kauser of Mifflin Township, Ohio. "Anyone who knows a firefighter knows we do our best to work together, side-by-side. We like to banter, talk, sort things out, and learn from experience. It felt good to be together again; the job isn't always easy but it's definitely easier when we are together."



## **OPENING GENERAL SESSION FEATURED PANEL: TWENTY YEARS SINCE THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS - WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED**

*Panelists: Chris Combs, National Security Executive and Special Agent in Charge at the FBI; FDNY Commissioner (Ret.) Salvatore Cassano; Jim Schwartz, former Fire Chief at Arlington County, Virginia; and Joseph Pfeifer, Harvard Kennedy School*

The opening session of FRI looked back at the tragedy of 9/11. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from members of the IAFC Terrorism and Homeland Security Committee, which was instrumental in operations during the terrorist attacks. This was the first time these fire and law enforcement leaders have come together on stage to share their experiences of that day. Together they discussed the hard lessons learned in 2001 and they also shared how the fire service has improved its preparedness in the decades since, as well as laid out the work that still lies ahead.

After the 9/11 panel discussion, FDNY Lt. (Ret.) Joe Minogue, who now serves as the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation liaison to the FDNY, led a memorial ceremony to 9/11.

"The opening ceremony was a punch in the gut and a wakeup from the slumber of COVID-19 and the realities we face as a service," says Kauser. "The remembrance of 9/11 through the faces, voices, words, and emotions of our esteemed panel pulled us back into focus. We learned a lot, but we still have work to do as a profession and as a community. We were with them, and they were with us in that room."

## **GENERAL SESSION DAY TWO CHIEF CHAT: THE FUTURE LOOKS A LOT LIKE TODAY. EXCEPT IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT**

*Keynote Speaker: Chief John Oates of East Hartford (CT) Fire Department*

Chief John Oates gave attendees a quick look at the myriad issues, challenges, and opportunities that need to reside on every fire chief's to-do list; noting that none of them are easy, but all of them are critical.

## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

*Keynote Speaker: Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, President and CEO at the International Public Safety Data Institute in Fairfax, Virginia*

While it is true that COVID-19 made it difficult for fire service leaders to implement policies, ensure resources, and protect their people, the fire service found ways to step up to the challenge with innovation and tenacity. But now that a post-pandemic world is within reach, where does the fire service go? During this general session Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell spoke to attendees about the diligence required to not regress to pre-pandemic behaviors, policies, and positions. She also stressed that out of crisis comes new opportunities to transform the way we work in the fire and emergency service.

## **GENERAL SESSION DAY THREE ANIRBAN BASU AND THE CHAMBER OF DATA**

*Keynote Speaker: Anirban Basu, MPP, MA, JD, Ph.D.*

There was no better way to close out FRI 2021 than by taking an insightful and entertaining look at the road ahead with Anirban Basu, the CEO of Sage Policy Group and one of the country's leading economic consultants. As always, Basu regaled attendees with a glimpse into the future based upon the economic trends occurring before and during the pandemic, and what to expect in the

future, focusing on those markets that impact fire and EMS agencies.

"The pandemic has been a catastrophe without a playbook and the way to manage such an event is with the knowledge, support, and sharing of best practices that occurs most effectively when the participants are in the same room with each other," says IAFC Medical Director, James Augustine, MD, FACEP. "Hopefully a year from now we will be able to fully enjoy the company of each other; participate in all the meetings, exhibits, and sessions without significant distractions; and share after action reports that lay out a new future for fire and emergency medical services."

## **A BIG THANK YOU TO CHARLOTTE**

The Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA) worked very hard behind the scenes to help ensure that the event went off safely and without a hitch. In addition to adhering to all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local guidelines for health and safety (which included recommended masks for all employees and attendees, regardless of vaccination status), signage was prominently displayed throughout the Charlotte Convention Center highlighting the "Three Ws" – Wear, Wait, and Wash – and the conference rooms were sprayed and disinfected between each breakout session.



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The benefits of the event for the City of Charlotte were significant, providing jobs and opportunities for those who live in the community and work in the hospitality and tourism industry. FRI 2021 was also a breath of fresh air that helped to reinvigorate the city, providing an indication that life is once again returning to a sense of normalcy after months of pandemic uncertainty.

"Fire-Rescue International 2021 allowed us to do what we do best, and that's to provide world class customer service to our visitors," says Beth Butler, Director of Destination Services at CRVA. "It was great to see people in the building, wearing badges, happy to be there, reuniting with their peers. It was truly wonderful to see the building decorated with event signage and continue to see that welcome decor throughout the city."

Make sure to mark your calendar for Fire-Rescue international 2022, happening next August 24-26 in San Antonio, Texas. Stay tuned as more information about the 2022 event will be coming out in the coming months. IAFC is looking forward to seeing you there! 🔥



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## FRI 2021 EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

### Fire Service Data: 7 Questions Your Agency Should Consider

Speaker: Lieutenant Chris Goessl, Union Township Fire Department, Cincinnati, Ohio

### Sled Dog Leadership: What Fire Service Leaders Can Learn from the Iditarod

Speaker: Alex Boyd, Assistant Chief, Anchorage Fire Department, Alaska

### Shrooms and Smoke Signals: Legal Drugs in the Firehouse 2021

Speaker: John D. Rukavina, Director, Public Fire Safety Services, Asheville, North Carolina

### How to Transform Fire/EMS through the Business Principles of the Grateful Dead

Speakers: Commissioner Jared Renshaw and Chief (Ret.) Anthony Correia

### Human Performance Improvement: How Company Officers Can Reduce Mistakes on the Fireground and at the Station

Speaker: Lieutenant John Russ, Paramedic, Brentwood Fire & Rescue Department, Brentwood, Tennessee

### Completing the 540: Drones Provide Elevated Insights into Fireground Operations

Speakers: Battalion Chief Vince Bettinazzi and Captain Christian Sliker, Myrtle Beach Fire Department, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

### How Fire Chiefs Get in Trouble: The Top Reasons Chiefs Lose the Top Spot

Speaker: Chief Gary Ludwig, Champaign Fire Department, Champaign, Illinois

### Leveling-Up CRR: Beyond Teaching Kids to 'Stop, Drop and Roll'

Speaker: Captain Christian Sliker, Myrtle Beach Fire Department, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina



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# Legislative Update



By Ken LaSala, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy

## A Busy Fall in Washington, DC

**C**ongress is going to focus on passing three major pieces of legislation this fall. They are an approximately \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill; a \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill; and an omnibus appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (F.Y.) 2022. The IAFC has spent the spring and summer working to ensure that these bills address the nation's fire and emergency service priorities. We will be working this fall to ensure that the final products meet your needs.

### THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

After spending the early summer trying to negotiate with different groups, President Biden, and the Senate Democrats and Republicans were able to negotiate an approximately \$1 trillion infrastructure bill (H.R. 3684). The bill passed the Senate on August 10, and the House will be considering it in the fall.

H.R. 3684 funds several programs to help the fire and emergency service. To train rural fire departments to respond to hazardous materials incidents, it authorizes the U.S. Department of Transportation's Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training grant program. The bill also provides funding for programs to support lithium battery

safety, including a five-year, \$1 billion program at the U.S. Department of Energy for research, development, and demonstration of electric vehicle battery recycling.

The bill also helps the nation to prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters. It includes \$1 billion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, which funds projects to mitigate the costs of disasters. In addition, the bill includes more than \$3 billion for the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior to fund wildland fire risk reduction activities, including community defense grants; the Collaborative Restoration Program; and firefighting resources.

The bill also includes an increase for the State Fire Assistance program of \$17.6 million per year for five years and an increase to the Volunteer Fire Assistance program of \$4 million per year for five years. To help improve the nation's cybersecurity defenses, the bill includes \$20 million per year for five years for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Cyber Response and Recovery Fund. The bill also includes \$1 billion for four years for the state, local, tribal, and territorial grant program at FEMA. The bill also authorizes a new commission and Government Accountability Office study to review wildland fire policy and risk reduction activities.

### THE \$3.5 TRILLION RECONCILIATION BILL

While H.R. 3684 covered surface transportation and water projects, the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill will cover other Biden domestic policy priorities. The reconciliation process is an arcane budget process where the various authorizing committees make tax and spending recommendations. These recommendations are then combined into one bill by the House and Senate budget committees and then considered on the House and Senate floors, respectively. The principal interest for the Democrats in this process is that reconciliation bills can be passed with a simple Senate majority. With a 50-50 split in the Senate, Vice President Harris can cast the tie-breaking vote to pass the reconciliation bill. The House and Senate will be negotiating this reconciliation bill in the fall.

The House committees worked on their recommendations for the reconciliation bill in September. The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee recommended \$718 million for the construction, renovation, and reconstruction of fire and EMS stations. It also recommended \$80 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program for PFAS-free foam and personal protective equipment. The House Natural Resources Committee included \$900 million to the Bureau of Land Management to reduce

wildland fire risk to communities through “fire preparedness, fire science and research, emergency rehabilitation, rural fire assistance, fuels management activities, the renovation or construction of fire facilities, and for expenses necessary to support firefighter workforce reforms.” The House Agriculture Committee included additional funding for wildland fire preparedness, such as an additional \$250 million over the next 10 years for the State and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee included \$10 billion for the nationwide deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1, including funding for training and improved cybersecurity. The House Financial Service Committee also recommended \$66.5 billion for a fund to improve public housing, including making fire and life safety improvements.

**F.Y. 2022 APPROPRIATIONS**

In December, Congress is expected to pass a large F.Y. 2022 appropriations bill. The House began work on these bills in the summer and even passed a large appropriations bill on July 29. That bill (H.R. 4502) included \$2.5 million for the National Firefighter Registry for cancer and \$6.5 million for the SIREN grant program to assist rural EMS agencies. H.R. 4502 also included more than \$2 billion for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wildland Fire Management programs, including \$20 million for the Volunteer Fire Assistance program. The bill included \$1.1 billion for wildland fire management programs at the U.S. Department of the Interior as well.

The House Appropriations Committee reported its F.Y. 2022 DHS Appropriations bill (H.R. 4431) on July 15. The bill was not considered on the House Floor. In addition, the Senate is working on its version of the DHS appropriations bill. Figure 1 shows the House’s proposed funding levels:

H.R. 4431 would allow the FEMA Administrator to waive the following requirements to the SAFER grants:

- The local cost-share.
- The three-year performance period.
- The requirement that SAFER funds not supplant local funds.
- The requirement that the recipient fire department maintains its budget at 80% of the average funding over the past three years.

In addition, the FEMA Administrator also would be authorized to allow fire departments to retain and re-hire firefighters as part of the SAFER program. For the AFG program, the FEMA

Administrator would be allowed to waive the local match requirement and the maintenance of expenditures requirements (preventing a fire department’s budget from being reduced to not less than 80 percent of the average amount of such expenditures in the preceding two fiscal years).

Congress will have a busy agenda as we start to approach the holidays. They will have to balance priorities in passing bills to enact President Biden’s agenda while also passing the annual appropriations bills. There also is a need to raise the federal debt limit, which may cause complications. The IAFC will be working to ensure that priorities like fire station construction grants; N.G. 9-1-1 deployment; and the AFG and SAFER grant programs are funded. You can keep track of what is happening in Washington, D.C. by following our webpage: [www.iafc.org/gr](http://www.iafc.org/gr). 🔥

**Figure 1: The House’s Proposed Funding Levels**

PROGRAM	FY 2020 (ENACTED)	FY 2021 (ENACTED)	FY 2022 (PRESIDENT’S BUDGET)	FY 2022 (HOUSE)
AFG	455 <sup>1</sup>	460 <sup>2</sup>	370	370
SAFER	355	560 <sup>3</sup>	370	370
USFA	46.844	49.269	53.212	53.212
UASI	665	705	689.684	705
SHSGP	560	610	594.686	610
US&R	37.832	37.832	37.832	37.832

*In Millions (\$)*

1. Includes \$100 million in AFG funding from the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136).
2. Includes \$100 million in AFG funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2).
3. Includes \$200 million in SAFER funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2).

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# Learning from the Past to Improve the Future



I'm excited to write that we were able to host a very successful in-person Fire-Rescue International (FRI) 2021 in late July. Because of the restrictions from the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic, this conference was the first in-person conference in nearly two years for the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC).

Our FRI 2021 theme, *Together Again – Connecting Safely in Charlotte*, was very fitting. Our conference team delivered an outstanding program, while ensuring that guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were followed in a safe and healthy environment that allowed us to reconnect safely. I want to thank the Charlotte Fire Department for their tireless support, as well as our IAFC staff for their extraordinary efforts. FRI 2021 was a great success, and we now have our sights set on hosting another successful FRI in San Antonio, Texas, in August 2022.

While we continue to battle the impact of the pandemic, we must pause to remember that September 11, 2001, signifies the 20th anniversary of the devastating terrorist attacks on our nation. On this fateful day 20 years ago, nearly 3,000 lives were lost – including 343 firefighters and paramedics.

In response to the challenges public safety officials encountered that day, the IAFC has worked tirelessly over the last 20 years with our partners, Congress, and various government entities to strengthen our mitigation, planning, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. Over the past two decades, the IAFC has worked closely with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal agencies to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. This has helped ensure information sharing and the creation of improved methods of communication leading to the development of an interoperable communication network for first responders. We are also working with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to expand their Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) to increase training and response efforts on weapons of mass destruction and active-shooter events.

Internally, the IAFC established task forces and committees that have been instrumental in creating the National Mutual Aid System (NMAS)

and developing several resources to assist fire departments in protecting their communities from the threat of terrorism. These products include a terrorism response checklist, a guide to assist fire chiefs' work with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to learn about threats to local jurisdictions, and support for the development of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

We have learned many lessons from the monstrous attacks of September 11th, and we have used what we have learned as a catalyst for change and progression in the fire service. I encourage you to read this issue's cover story, *Marking 20 Years Since 9/11: How Public Safety Communications Has Evolved*, and visit the IAFC website where fire chiefs have reflected on the events of September 11, 2001.

As 2021 comes to a close, I'm excited for the future of the IAFC. As we recover from the impact of the pandemic, we are working to re-engineer our IAFC programs and services using many of the lessons we learned so we can be more robust and resilient than ever before. Here's wishing you a safe and healthy holiday season that continues into the new year!

## Rob Brown

IAFC Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director





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