THE TONE OUT

Emergency Services Quarterly Newsletter September 2014

Front Street: One Year Later

Ryan Allen
Battalion Chief, GCFE

It's been almost a year since "the front street fire". New faces in the fire station hear the stories but will never know the experience of being there. Talking to those first on scene as they describe the initial conditions, how things changed so rapidly and all that was done to bring the fire under control. This area had not seen a fire of that magnitude in a long time. It is good to see how all the local departments worked so well and came together. How, while different, the trainings and abilities of the departments meshed for the common purpose of extinguishing the fire. To see all the resources and what they were and how they could be used. While reflecting on it, looking at how our strategies may have changed or how our tactics may be different should such a fire strike us again. Having an anniversary coming upon us gives us the time and ability to look back at these events and consider all the good and the bad that happened that day. It gives us the chance to reevaluate and ask if we are more prepared today because of events of the past.

Photos Courtesy of Midway Fire Rescue

Wildland Firefighting 101

Pete Copeland
Lieutenant, MFR

Protective wildland firefighting clothing is essential to safety. Proper protective clothing provides protection without being too cumbersome. There are several materials available including NOMEX, PBI, and a more recent material called SPENDEX that provide fire-resistive protection for outer shell clothing. Whatever you buy, make sure it meets all the proper standards from the National Fire Protection Association and is very fire resistive. I do not agree with the notion that cotton fabric provides much outer shell protection. Yet, there are wildland firefighting clothing lines on the market made of cotton fabrics.

Unlike structural turnouts, wildland firefighting clothing does not inherently provide an insulation or thermal barrier from radiant heat. The clothing worn beneath the outer garment requires important considerations. Firefighters, particularly in municipal departments, often wear uniform pants and shirts that can contain 65 percent polyester material. In a fire, this stuff melts and can stick to your skin!

All too often, firefighters are wearing uniforms beneath their protective clothing because they're in too much of a hurry to get to the fire. We tend to loosely throw on protective clothing over our uniforms without taking that extra time to first don appropriate undergarments like cotton denim pants and long-sleeve, plain white cotton shirts. There are now newer undergarments of fire-resistive materials that breathe very well. If you're out of quarters when you get the dispatch, stop the rig, pull over, remove your uniforms, and put on appropriate under and outer garments before proceeding to the fire. That's one of the reasons we invented enclosed cabs—so you don't have to strip off your uniform along the sidewalk, which generates angry phone calls to overstressed chiefs. Nice looking uniforms are fine for public appearances and such; they have no place on the fire ground.

Proper fire-resistive pants and shirts are just the start. Every person on scene also needs to have an appropriate helmet with chin strap and pull-down shroud, hood, eye protection, respirator mask, and fire shelter. Comfortable, high-top boots without metal toe protection complete your equipment. And please ensure all personnel have a portable radio. With all the grants and funding sources out there, no firefighter in the United States should be on any emergency scene without a portable radio!

Conduct regular fire shelter training with as many smoke ejectors blowing air over the trainees as possible. You need to train personnel in how to get into their shelter fast in strong wind conditions. Without strong winds, it is far less likely shelter deployment would be necessary. Fire shelters are your last line of escape, so know them well.

Be Your Best

Brent McClellan
Battalion Chief. MFR

The time is upon us once again to be a huge part of the community's largest events. Of course we are in the public eye every single day and we always do our best to portray a professional image but this time of year we have even more visible opportunities. With September comes football games, October brings Public Education events and school visits, cooler weather brings outdoor activities such as 5K runs and music events. With each of these we get the golden opportunity to make a positive lasting impression on those we serve.

Please take the time and ensure you are prepared for these events. Most importantly, have the right equipment. Make sure your equipment is stocked and ready to go. Know that you are located in the correct place and visible. For football games, have a plan in place with the school or athletic trainer. For outdoor events at parks or other venues, know who to coordinate with. Secondly, be aware of the image you display. Have apparatus looking their best. Have your crews looking their best. Be involved and prepared to answer questions from the public and always eager to communicate with them. These impressions could last a lifetime and the public views you as professionals. Prove it to them and always be your best!

Child Safety Seat Installation

Jeff Pifer
Battalion Chief, MFR

The leading cause of death in infants and children is trauma. Motor vehicle accidents cause most of the trauma that leads to these deaths. In the United States it is estimated that a large majority of children are improperly secured in child safety seats or the safety seat was installed incorrectly. Therefore, Midway Fire Rescue will be available to the citizens to check and install child safety seats in order to help prevent deaths or injuries.

Midway Fire Rescue has seven employees that are certified to install or check Child Safety Seats. They are certified by Safekids Worldwide. More information about child safety seats or child safety in general can be found at www.safekids.org

Midway Fire Rescues program is administered by the Division of Fire and Life Safety. If you would like assistance with a Child Safety Seat installation please call for an appointment. 843-545-3620.

Great Southeast ShakeOut

Sam Hodge
Emergency Manager, Georgetown County Emergency Management

Recent events have reminded us that damaging earthquakes can happen when we least expect them, causing widespread damage and disruption. The August 24, 2014 a 6.0 magnitude earthquake near Napa California is a perfect example of this, with an estimated 500 million to 1 billion in insured losses. South Carolina experienced a 4.1 magnitude on February 14, 2014 that was felt throughout the state and parts of the Southeast. Furthermore, three years after the August 2011 5.8 magnitude in Virginia recovery is still ongoing.

With this in mind, the state of Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia are participating in a major, open to the public earthquake drill on October 16, 2014 at 10:16 AM. This drill, known as the Great Southeast ShakeOut is our opportunity to prevent disasters from becoming catastrophes, by participating in what to do when the earthquake occurs.

We don't know when the next damaging earthquake will strike, but we can act now to get prepared . . . This drill offers members of the community an opportunity to set aside time to think about how they will respond to an earthquake. Again, the drill will be held on Thursday, October 16, 2014 at 10:16 AM. On the day of the drill we are asking participants to practice "drop, cover, and hold on" which is the recommended action to take during an earthquake shake.

Information can be found at http://shakeout.org/southeast/

SC National Guard prepares for hurricane season with Georgetown County photo by Tech. Sgt. Jorge Intriago

Sounding the Alarm on Cancer

Joe Ruffennach
Captain, MFR

As October approaches, we are all reminded of National Breast Cancer awareness month. I am sure that there are not too many people that have not been affected by cancer, either by a family member or a friend. All types of cancer have a devastating effect with everyone involved. As firefighters we need to make ourselves aware of the effects of cancer and how it is affecting the fire service. It is time we sound the alarm on cancer rate with firefighters.

In a recent USA Today news report it was reported that the fire service is losing 1 firefighters a week to cancer. That's about 52 firefighter a year. Research has found cancer rate for firefighters has been steadily increasing over the last several years. The most common types of cancer firefighters are facing are; testicular, mesothelioma and prostate cancer. Although we might not be able to stop firefighters from getting cancer one thing we are able to do is to reduce our risk.

To understand how to prevent cancer we need to understand what is causing the problem. Although there are many things that contribute to firefighters getting cancer two of the most deadly contributing factors are dioxins and furans. These two toxins are not a manufactured chemical but they are unintentionally created in two different ways. The first way is in the process to make certain product such as disinfectants, paper products and pesticides. The second way is (which is important for us to understand) when materials such as plastic, paper, and wood are burned at low heat. These products are commonly found in every household. Dioxins and furans are frequently present when products start off gassing at low heated temperatures. These toxins are frequently found in higher concentration levels during the overhaul stage.

In order to reduce our risk and exposer to dioxin and furan it is important that we take a few extra steps. These are easy things to do and these few extra steps will extend your career.

1. One of the simplest things to do is wash up after any type of fire. It's amazing how many toxicants can be found in the simplest fires. So no matter if it's a dumpster fire, car fire or structure fire clean-up at your first opportunity.
2. Clean your turn out gear and PPE. NFPA 1851 recommends that the cleaning process can be broken into 3 different areas. The first is a "routine cleaning" this is when you spray your gear off and brush it down. The second area is "advance cleaning" this is when you place your gear in the washing machine (follow manufacturer instructions when machine washing). The last is "specialized cleaning" this is when your gear is sent off to have it cleaned. In most cases you will fall under the 'Routine" and "Advance" cleaning. You can run the risk of spreading any carcinogens that may have attached themselves to your turn out gear or PPE.
3. Make sure you are wearing your SCBA and monitor the air and gasses. Even with the simplest fire you just never know what toxicants are involved. A new trend in the fire service is having firefighters wear their SCBA's during overhauling. As we learned earlier, dioxins and furans (which are carcinogens) are created by off gassing at low burn temperatures. We understand that the easy thing to do is to put that fire out and drop your SCBA pack, but that's when the most dangerous part of our job begins. It's the long term effects that will hurt you. Make sure crews are monitoring the air in the work area, by using gas meters. A good acceptable atmospheric condition should fall in with a LEL– below 10% O2 content not less than 19.5% and not greater than 23.5% and with CO ppm below 30 PPM.
4. The last thing is to be pro-active. Talk to your doctor during annual physicals and check yourself for any lumps or unusual growths. Your chances of surviving cancer increases with early detection.

Cancer prevention is just a matter of making a few simple changes or adding a few extra steps in your day. Since the Fire/EMS Service doesn't have enough acronyms I thought you might be able to add one more to your list.

Change your PPE after every fire
Always shower after every fire.
Never place dirty PPE in living area.
Clean your PPE regularly.
Exhaust is deadly.
Remember to get a yearly physical.

Remember our job is hazardous enough and a career is not a sprint to the finish line, it's a marathon. In order to cross that finish line take care of yourself by adding these few extra steps during your shift. Be smart about cleaning your gear and PPE. Wear your SCBA during the early stages of overhaul. Come off air when you have good air quality readings along with reduced heat. Take advantage of your annual physical and never forget that early prevention is everything. Stay Safe.

Pride

Deborah Johnson
Battalion Chief, GCFE

During the evening of August 10th we experienced a down pour of rain in the county. We had a MVA where a family ran into the back of a small SUV. We had almost every medic unit in the county on calls or at the ER. The ladies in the SUV were not injured but the teenager in the back seat injured her ankle. We arrived on the scene and began patient care as we do on every MVA. We then transported the teenager with the ankle injury to the ER. The SUV's back window was busted due to the impact of the rear end collision. We then cleared the scene, had the ladies come to the fire station, covered the back window with plastic and vacuumed the back seat to remove all the broken glass from the car.

I always treat others like I want to be treated. My thoughts were that could be me and my daughter, in this car, out of town, involved in an accident, with no one to help me. I would hope someone would help me. The pride that has been taught in the fire service shined threw B-shift personnel as they "did their job" not realizing the example they set that day. How professional they were, the respect showed to each one of these ladies, the integrity presented which allowed them to trust us, the dedication of being on the scene in the pouring rain helping others and the excellence of service provided.

How does one define pride in the fire service? Let's take the word pride and break it down letter by letter.

P stands for **professionalism**. Being professional doesn't mean collecting a paycheck as a career firefighter or paid per call, as a volunteer. Professionalism is an attitude, learning about our craft and keeping up with it. It is doing the job properly, without making excuses. It is putting our best efforts to do what we were sworn in for: the protection of **life and property**.

R stands for **respect**. Respect for the job. Respect for the rank. Respect for those we serve. Respect cannot be demanded, it has to be earned. Most of all, the letter **R** stands for the respect for those who blazed the trail and did the job before us and made the sacrifices (some of them supreme) that define the job today.

I stands for **integrity**. As firefighters, from the green behind the ears Probie to the old seasoned Chief, we are held to a higher standard. When one swears the oath to serve and protect life and property, we assume a position of trust. When someone calls 911 for an emergency, they are, basically inviting us into their homes and their lives. They trust us. If we lose that trust, it takes a very long time to gain it back.

D stands for **dedication**. Dedication is putting the needs of the public we serve ahead of our own. Dedication is also keeping up with the latest trends in the fire service by constantly training and reading articles.

E stands for **excellence.** The very nature of the job means that perfection cannot, will not and never ever be achieved. There are far too many variables in each and every call we respond to for that to happen. Excellence in what we do is a far more achievable goal. Firefighting is a proud profession. Firefighters show their pride by wearing shirts with their department's logo when they are off duty. Career and volunteer firefighters have their own versions to identify their pride; but one has to remember that "pride" isn't a fire department shirt or a sticker, it is professionalism, respect, integrity, dedication and the pursuit of excellence.

Emergency Services Employee of the Quarter

Tracey Howle
Emergency Services

Cindy Grace, Emergency Management Coordinator, was recently recognized as the Emergency Services' Employee of the Quarter for the second quarter 2014. She was nominated by her supervisor, Sam Hodge, Georgetown County's Emergency Manager.

One of Cindy's most recent accomplishments was the challenge of updating the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan. This was a major undertaking, involving many hours of research, data analysis and typing. In the past, the county has contracted this plan out. Completing this plan in-house saved the county approximately $20,000.

Cindy was also extremely valuable during Winter Storm Pax. She coordinated the completion of the required FEMA forms documenting and tracking all staff hours, and the equipment and supplies that were used. She spent many hours during the evening and weekends reviewing FEMA forms ensuring accuracy so agencies would receive the maximum reimbursement from FEMA.

Additionally, Grace was also essential in the planning of a state full-scale exercise in June that the county hosted at the Georgetown Airport. "Pulling off an exercise of this size and magnitude shows the dedication and teamwork that Cindy has to make Georgetown County a better and safer place to live, work and play," Hodge said.

(Photo courtesy of Emergency Services)

Camp "Can Do" Fundraiser

Keith Ziegenhorn
Firefighter/EMT GCFE

Once again in March Georgetown County Fire/EMS participated in a green shirt fundraiser. The purpose of the fundraiser was to increase awareness about burn prevention and raise money for the MUSC Camp "Can Do". During the month of March employees were allowed to wear the t-shirts they had purchased to raise awareness. In June of 2014 a check for over 1600 dollars was presented on behalf of GCFE employees to MUSC. This money allowed up to 3 campers to attend the week long Camp "Can Do".

(photo courtesy of Georgetown County Fire/EMS)

Emergency Services Birthdays

Emergency Management

Sam Hodge	11/08

County Fire/EMS

October		November		December	
Buster Evans	10/01	David Scoggins	11/05	Jim Eastham	12/06
Chris Battlo	10/02	Douglas Herriott	11/06	Walter Myers	12/08
Garrett Driggers	10/03	Jonathan Johnson	11/06	Gregory Grayson	12/10
Deborah Johnson	10/03	Daniel Poindexter	11/17	Brian Ullom	12/11
Chris Armstrong	10/04	Isaac Goss	11/18	Connie Roman	12/14
James Elmore	10/04	Jim Falkenhagen	11/19	Arnie Cribb	12/21
Rayondal Davis	10/05	Mike Gosnell	11/22	William McConnell	12/25
Robert Elliott	10/10			Steve Johnson	12/27
Jack Lowe	10/11			Bobbie Brown	12/28
John Cochran	10/14				
Jeff Bialecki	10/21				
Mike Derenzo	10/24				
Sarah Welch	10/25				
Matthew Howell	10/31				

Midway Fire Rescue

October		November		December	
Suzanne Myers	10/02	Justin Lenker	11/02	Steve Kelsey	12/23
Scott McGuire	10/05	Ryan Matthews	11/03	Michael Morris	12/26
Shane Kingsford	10/12	Brett Sparks	11/03		
Brian Michna	10/12	Gary Wallace	11/05		
Blake Cute	10/31	Jessica Costa	11/08		
		Christopher Egan	11/10		
		Adam Bender	11/12		
		Jeff Pifer	11/15		
		Conner Callaway	11/21		