



VFIS[®] news

Bringing important information to emergency service organizations

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We welcome comments, suggestions and questions from our readers.

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Winter Driving: A Different Spin

Winter is coming! And that brings adverse driving conditions for everyone, especially for the emergency services. While responding, the emergency service driver will face wet and snow-covered roads, icy streets and bridges, reduced visibility and other drivers who are facing the same weather-related driving conditions.

If your area of response is affected by winter weather conditions, then being proactive in preparing your drivers and vehicles for winter weather is essential to providing timely service to your community.

Review the following measures with your drivers and operators to help them get safely through the winter.

Conduct pre-winter and post-winter inspections of vehicles with emphasis on:

- The condition and inflation of tires
- Brakes
- Wiper blades and fluid
- Headlights/emergency lights
- Defrosters

Also make sure your organization checks the following prior to winter driving:

- Review the organization's guidelines on the use of chains.
- Inspect chains for broken links and spread hooks.
- Fit the chains to the wheels of the vehicles, and mark the chains for those wheels. This makes it quicker to install them the next time.
- Review winter driving tips with all drivers. Slow down, have patience, keep extra following distance and understand the vehicle's handling characteristics in inclement weather.
- Review your organization's response area and mutual aid area with respect to road conditions during the winter.
- Identify streets/roads that are susceptible to icing up more frequently than others.
- Know the highway department's snow removal routes. This will enable you to pre-plan routes of response during severe winter weather conditions. ❄️



Photo courtesy of DeFreestville Fire Department.

Winter driving is not complicated nor are there any special tricks to driving safely. Have patience, slow down, know your vehicle's winter driving characteristics and be aware of changing conditions of the roads. As always, the objective of the emergency response is getting to the emergency. Don't let winter weather be the cause of an accident or prevent you from getting to the emergency.

Preparing for Snowflakes and Snowbirds

Aaron K. Shaffer, MBA, AIS, Marketing Project Leader



Winter and the holidays mean different things to emergency responders across the country. Some are dealing with an influx of snowbirds while others are dealing with large snowfalls. Still others are prepping for parades and teaching about fire prevention and safety during a season when decorations pose additional fire hazards. Since the details differ but each scenario affects emergency response, VFIS asked three organizations from very different geographies about their approach.

Arizona

Located along the shores of the beautiful Colorado River in Northwestern Arizona, the Bullhead City Fire Department provides emergency services, including ambulance transport, to more than 45,000 citizens. With a nearby gaming community (Laughlin), Bullhead City is a destination resort for visitors from all across the US and Canada. This time of year the fire department must prepare for many special events, as well as the arrival of more and more snowbirds. We also string our engine and ladder truck with colorful lights for the Christmas Holiday Boom Box Parade and transport our own kids aboard as future firefighters. **Bill Kinsey, Division Chief**



Wisconsin

La Pointe Ice Rescue is an all-volunteer department on Lake Superior's Madeline Island, serving all 22 Apostle Islands as well as Washburn, Ashland, and Chequamegon. In slush conditions on the lake, we commandeer something called a wind sled for emergency rescues. The sled, which substitutes for the ferry when the ice on the lake is too thick for boats and too thin for vehicles, has a boat-like hull and is pushed by fans. The need for this type of craft for rescues has grown along with the popularity of snowmobiles. Also, during the spring thaw, the trout in Lake Superior are more active, and fishermen walk far out onto the thin ice, at times necessitating rescue efforts. **Charles Nelson, Ice Rescue Training Officer**

New York

On the Great Lakes the "Lake Effect" can unexpectedly cause blizzard conditions and significant snowfall in short order. When this happens we need to carry not just our firefighting equipment, but also bags of de-icer, snow shovels and sand. Also, we stockpile extra gloves in every apparatus and recommend that members bring extra socks. Snow banks and ice reduce roadway width, and we have to assess whether to allow civilian vehicles on the road when we're operating. Even more challenging, water leaking from apparatus and hose-lines in sub-zero temperatures

becomes a frozen lake. When the ice forms, we use cones and scene tape to warn responders about icy areas. We also educate the public, reminding them to have a family disaster plan and kit, shovel a path around the entire house, keep sidewalks and doorways clear of snow

and ice, clean snow away from fire hydrants and clear the end of driveways after plows come by. Finally, we encourage good fire safety and stress that all heating sources must be properly installed, maintained and used. **Gregory Brunelle, Deputy Director, NYS Emergency Management Office, former Director of the Jefferson County Office of Fire & Emergency Management** ❄️

Resources:

VFIS Safety Flyer,
Winter Safety Press Release
(available to customize
for your organization):
<http://vfis.com/resources.htm>

Photos courtesy of La Pointe
Ice Rescue (top) and Bullhead
City Fire Department (right).

Lost Electronic Equipment: *A Loss Prevention Nightmare*

A recent survey of almost 500 employers found that a large majority of companies (81 percent) reported the loss of one or more laptop computers containing sensitive information during the previous 12 months.

The survey highlights the challenges of securing confidential "data at rest," defined as all electronic information found on storage devices within the organization's IT infrastructure. ("Ponemon Institute Releases National Survey on Confidential Data at Risk," PRNewswire, Aug. 25, 2008.)

The study also identified the probability that various storage media are likely to contain unprotected sensitive information.

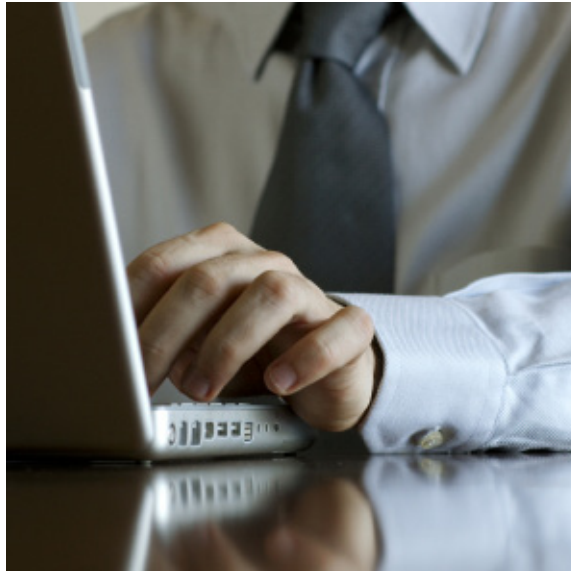
Additional findings from the employer survey include:

- **Loss of confidential data, such as intellectual property, business documents, customer data and employee records, is a pervasive problem.**
- **PDA's and laptops ranked highest among storage devices posing the greatest risk for sensitive corporate data, followed by USB memory sticks, desktop systems and shared file servers.**
- **Sixty-four (64) percent of companies surveyed reported never having conducted an inventory of sensitive consumer information. Sixty-four (64) percent also reported never having inventoried employee data.**
- **Eighty-one (81) percent of respondents reported that protecting sensitive data at rest is a priority this year, and 89 percent anticipated that it would be a priority next year.**

Commentary and Checklist

Employers and emergency service organizations (ESOs) alike face the difficult challenge of identifying and protecting sensitive data in an era of ever-increasing data mobility. Risks posed by loss of data can range from intentional theft to accidental misuse or loss.

Moreover, those who are impacted from security breaches are finding ways to stick liability on those who mishandle their sensitive information, like Social Security numbers. Consequently, employers and



This informational piece was originally published on March 25, 2009 on GoGlatfelter.com. Reprinted with permission of The McCalmon Group. This article has been altered with permission of The McCalmon Group for the VFIS audience.

ESOs that demand confidential information from others are required to exercise reasonable care when sensitive information is in their possession.

The Department of Veteran Affairs recently agreed to pay \$20 million to settle a class action lawsuit over the 2006 loss of a laptop containing records with personal information of up to 26.5 million veterans and active duty personnel.

Employers and ESOs must make employee, customer and client Social Security numbers a security priority.

Departments that manage customer and client information must make certain that the information is safe from outside and inside threats.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) offers an interactive tutorial "Protecting Personal Information - A Guide for Business" that offers low-cost solutions to protecting sensitive data.

According to the FTC, a sound data security plan should include the following steps:

- **Take stock.** Know what personal information you have in your files and on your computers.
- **Scale down.** Keep only what you need for your business.
- **Lock it.** Protect the information in your care.
- **Pitch it.** Properly dispose of what you no longer need.
- **Plan ahead.** Create a plan to respond to security incidents. 🌀

Leadership, the Old Defines the New

By Chief Bill Jenaway, PhD, CFOD, CFPS
Executive Vice President, VFIS Education and Training Services

Some things, like leadership, are hard to define. You know it when you see it, though, and there are people you recognize as leaders when you first encounter them. Right or wrong, Abraham Lincoln and Attila the Hun were leaders. In the annals of history, these men were recognized for their performance in leading others.

If you research their actions—and their motivations—you find that Lincoln and Attila both combined management techniques and people skills to achieve success. Neither had taken college courses in leadership, yet both took actions that are used as examples in today's leadership textbooks. Since it was a little too late for me to meet these men and chat with them, I did a bit of research, which led me to some interesting findings.

Lincoln was managing in the face of crisis, trying to bring the country together. He surrounded himself with talented individuals, using a circle of people who were former enemies. This made Lincoln a better leader. As I understand it, Lincoln's ability to listen, analyze, negotiate, and absorb the others' points of view before acting may have been the quality that made him one of the most acknowledged leaders in history.

In an interesting parallel, the book Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun is used in management training for law enforcement. It focuses on Attila the Hun's ability to learn from the past, sacrifice, negotiate, delegate and reward his team. In both cases, references are made that say leaders are as they appear to their people.

With over 40 years in safety and risk management, Dr. William F. Jenaway, PhD, CSP, CFO, CFPS, serves as Executive Vice President of VFIS Education, Training, and Consulting Services. Bill is also an adjunct professor in Risk Analysis at the Graduate School of Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia.

PERCEPTION, indeed, may be most critical to success...or failure.

People want to follow a leader they believe can bring them value and success, whether they are firefighters, EMTs, members of the general public or, obviously, Huns. Generally, the ability to create that perception is a great part of the ability to lead.

So what in the world does the leadership success of Abraham Lincoln and Attila the Hun have to do with the fire service of the 21st century? Everything! Both worked in some of the most difficult times and situations in history. In fact, they made history through their unique leadership styles of respect, negotiation, working with others, and making things happen.

Sure, every once in a while they lost a battle or fight, but so will you. The ability to learn from each conflict and win the next one can be your legacy, just as it was theirs. Unfortunately, I have seen good officers lose a battle and fail to react appropriately or learn from the experience. They lose the respect of fellow members and officers as well as the opportunity to enhance their ability to lead.

In this article series, we saw:

1. The definition of leadership is in the eye of the beholder.
2. Leadership is often situation-driven.
3. Recent, new firefighters and the next generation of firefighters will expect leadership qualities and actions not necessarily seen in today's leaders.



Remember, just because someone gave you one, two or more bugles doesn't make you a leader. You have to earn the respect of those below you, above you, and around you. Only then will you have the ability to influence them as they respect your ability to lead.

While we can't get Abe and Attila to teach at a conference, we can try to understand their successes and failures, learning how to improve our leadership skills and knowledge.

What do you think? E-mail me at wjenaway@vfis.com. As we wrestle with the leadership performance of tomorrow's emergency service officers, you may agree, have a great idea, or disagree entirely. Let's advance leadership by challenging each other to define it and make it a "station-wide word." 🌟

MABAS Enhances US Response Capabilities

Don Klinger, Sales, Ideal Insurance Agency (IL)

In any disaster, mobilizing every organization that can help is critical to good response and outcome. But before 2001, during declared disasters in Illinois, its Emergency Management Agency was able to activate only certain organizations, and these did not include fire and emergency medical services (EMS). This made it difficult for emergency workers to 1) cooperate with each other and respond quickly across jurisdictions; 2) be covered adequately by insurance; and 3) be reimbursed for additional costs. An agreement signed in January 2001 helped to resolve these issues, allowing fire and EMS to be mobilized as state assets, creating an effective, responsive team. The state's mutual aid system, called MABAS, or The Illinois Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (in existence since the late 1960s), was now included in the emergency management system. After September 11, 2001, the relationship between the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and MABAS accelerated, becoming a key element of Homeland Security for our area.

VFIS and the Ideal Insurance Agency proudly provide property and casualty insurance coverage for MABAS. As a growing organization, MABAS has responded to many US disasters and recoveries outside of its area.

MABAS alarms speed the response of emergency resources to a stricken community during an ongoing emergency. With 65 divisions, MABAS includes:

- Approximately 1,100 of Illinois' 1,200 fire departments
- More than 37,000 of the 40,000 firefighters in Illinois
- More than 1,300 fire stations, 1,800 engine companies, 389 ladder trucks, 831 ambulances, 278 heavy-rescue squads, and 647 tenders
- An additional 1,000 Fire/EMS reserve (back-up) emergency vehicles
- Special operations teams for hazardous materials, underwater rescue/recovery, technical rescue, and incident management teams who must be revalidated every three years

MABAS participants sign a contract that standardizes operations and establishes a common radio frequency, enabling them to work together seamlessly on any emergency scene.

Since January 2001, MABAS has enabled coordinated responses including several train derailments with hazmat issues; a tornado disaster; Hurricanes Gustav, Ike, and Katrina; statewide floods in Illinois and Indiana; Chicago power outages; Chicago fire at the LaSalle Bank, and an evaluation of multiple senior housing high rises. Several MABAS procedures have earned a "best practices" rating by Homeland Security.

Since 9/11, MABAS has expanded rapidly throughout Illinois and Wisconsin and into parts of Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri. Its success is due to the highly dedicated emergency responders across these areas as well as the dedication and strong leadership of the MABAS Executive Board, headed by President Jay Reardon. 🌟

Resources:

Illinois Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, www.mabas.org

Homeland Security study of grants given to MABAS: http://www.dhs.gov/xoig/assets/mgmt/rpts/OIG_09-06_Oct08.pdf





Photo courtesy of DeFreestville Fire Department.

Winter Driving: Lessons Learned

Steve Mormino, Deputy Chief,
South Farmingdale Volunteer Fire Dept., Long Island, NY

As winter approaches, so does the danger of winter driving. Emergency vehicle operation remains a leading cause of injuries and fatalities within the fire service. It also accounts for millions of dollars in damage claims each year.

Near-miss report number 08-148 (see firefighternearmiss.com) reminds us that weather can create insurmountable conditions that may cause us to alter our response or direction of travel. In the driver's own words:

I was driving to a call, "car off the road on [Hwy deleted]." The weather conditions included heavy falling snow, wind, cold air, and slushy/snow-packed/icy roads. Knowing that we were approaching a hill that would likely be icy, I slowed the vehicle to 10 mph or less hoping to avoid any slipping. As the vehicle crested the hill it began to slide sideways. I attempted to correct the slide by turning into the slide, but the vehicle did not correct. The vehicle went over the curb and struck a large pine tree on the engineer's front corner of the cab. [Then] something forced the accelerator into full throttle and the vehicle continued into the backyard of a home.

The National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System (www.firefighternearmiss.com) is a voluntary, confidential, non-punitive and secure reporting system to improve firefighter safety. Firefighternearmiss.com is funded by a grant from the US Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. The project is managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs in mutual dedication to firefighter safety and survival. Reports are reviewed by fire service professionals, who remove identifying descriptions to protect anonymity and then post for other firefighters to use as a learning tool.

The lessons learned from this event, as reported by the safety officer, are:

The driver/operator acknowledged during a post-incident interview that he was not totally familiar with that piece of apparatus. As part of his training, the driver/operator ... had received instruction on adverse weather driving, includ[ing] de-activating engine/transmission brakes on wet/slippery roads, the use of tire chains and traction control devices as well as skid control techniques. [He] suggested that, despite having been trained to operate an apparatus in adverse weather, the lack of familiarity with the apparatus coupled with his lack of experience as a relief driver contributed him from not applying his training.

Take a moment to review the report and photos (see resources under videos/photos at www.firefighternearmiss.com) with your department or crew. Place yourself in this situation and discuss driving techniques and other remedies that would help provide a different outcome. Also, if your department has experienced a near-miss, kindly take the 10 or 15 minutes to enter the report into the system. You never know how many lives you could save by sharing your experience. ❄️

NEWS YOU CAN USE

VFIS Presents Safety Award

VFIS proudly presented the 2009 Billy Goldfeder Organizational Safety Award during the Annual Conference of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) in Dallas, Texas. Co-sponsored by VFIS and the IAFC's Safety, Health and Survival Section, the award was won by the Tualatin Valley, Oregon, Fire and Rescue Services. The Tualatin program consisted of an extensive wellness initiative to manage individual and group wellness and was integrated to include all members and officers of the organization. The award is named to honor the work of Deputy Fire Chief Billy Goldfeder, a firefighter since 1973 who is also chair of the Safety, Health and Survival Section. The award is presented to fire service organizations that have demonstrated an outstanding commitment or made a significant contribution to fire service health and safety.

Congratulations, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue!



Shown presenting the award are Chief Bill Jenaway, VFIS Vice President – Education, Training, Consulting (fifth from left); Troy Markel, President, VFIS (second from right); and Dan Naylor, Regional Vice President – West Region (far right); along with Deputy Fire Chief Billy Goldfeder (fourth from left) and members of the Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue Services.

Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency is Canada's oldest organized fire service and one of the largest in the country. With 400 career and administrative personnel and more than 600 volunteers operating from 55 stations, the region covers an area the size of Prince Edward Island (slightly larger than the state of Delaware).



District Chief Bernard Turpin is a career officer with Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency, with 30 years of experience in the fire service, dealing primarily with volunteer issues.

Change and the Volunteer Fire Service

Chief Bernard Turpin, Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency

While the volunteer fire service can react quickly to technological change, cultural shifts occur at turtle-like speed. So, in 1996, when a regional municipality was created in Nova Scotia, there were challenges. The amalgamation legislation that created Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency combined a variety of departments: two fully career, three major composite and 27 volunteer.

Some urban and composite departments had already addressed most of their administrative risks. The remaining ones—ranging from small, fiscally strapped departments answering a few calls a year to busy ones taking 400 calls a year—needed some attention.

Foremost was the reaction to change. A Chief Director was appointed unilaterally by the new municipal government. This struck at the heart of the volunteer mindset; emergency volunteers tend to be self-sufficient, manage their own money, accomplish a lot with little—and elect their own leaders.

Meanwhile, the new municipality struggled with differing administrative practices and capabilities within the groups. To ensure the quality of management at the station level, a group of fire chiefs developed a description of a composite chief's job. These new standards set off a number of changes that continue to reverberate.

Gradually, local departments have been relieved of most of the burdens of survival: fundraising, uniforms and PPE, tools, and even apparatus. Other changes abound: Area fire tax rates have been eliminated. Human resources and a training division handle personnel issues and composite chiefs are now appointed by merit. Officers receive management training, which helps them cope with organizational change and develop new processes that ultimately benefit their volunteer responders. Ultimately, this process has become the standard for all officer appointments.

These and other changes have taken time and have not always occurred smoothly. They have, however, raised the quality of the volunteer fire service in the region. Volunteers can now spend their time doing what they joined to do: training and helping their communities. ❄️



NVFC Announces Winners of National Junior Firefighter Scholarships

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), in partnership with Baskin-Robbins®, has selected 10 outstanding junior firefighters to receive a \$5,000 scholarship through the National Junior Firefighter Program. This is the second year that the program has honored 10 exceptional applicants with scholarships. Junior firefighters and explorers from across the US and Canada applied for the 2009 scholarships. Awards were given based on intent to continue in the fire service, the effect of junior firefighting on the applicant, and financial need, among other criteria.

The 10 recipients of the scholarships are:

- Edward Ball, Bloomingdale, NJ, Bloomingdale Fire Department
- Tyler Cegielski, Channelview, TX, Channelview Volunteer Fire Department
- Reeve Chilton, Lake Elmore, VT, Elmore Fire Department
- Brittany Forsstrom, Jamison, PA, Warwick Township Fire Company
- Katelyn Hall-Garrant, Montross, VA, Oak Grove Volunteer Fire Department
- Zachary Kues, Heathsville, VA, Callao Volunteer Fire Department
- Sierra McKinney, Lock Haven, PA, Citizens Hose Company No. 5
- Joseph Petrone, Jr., Erie, PA, Kuhl Hose Company
- Brittany Smith, Bridgeport, NY, Bridgeport Volunteer Fire Department
- Kelly Smith, Williamsville, NY, Williamsville Fire Department/Hutchinson Hose

About the National Volunteer Fire Council

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire, emergency medical, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides invaluable tools, resources, programs, and advocacy for first responders across the nation. Learn more at nvfc.org.

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Safety & Protection: Never An Afterthought

As many of you know, VFIS recently celebrated our 40th anniversary. In reminiscing for this article, it was hard to encapsulate all of the changes we have seen over the years within the emergency services community. Some of the positive trends with life-safety have humbled us. Others, such as safe driving and safe-training, should never be an afterthought.

In 1969, Art Glatfelter started the VFIS program with our Accident & Sickness (A&S) product, which insured members against injury and death. Because of his perseverance and courage, we have enhanced our premier product many times over the years to reach the level it is today. It's unfortunate that, while you help save people and property, we still lose approximately 100 firefighters per year in the line of duty, with countless more injured.

It's my hope and goal to do what we can as an organization to assist you in minimizing both injuries and line-of-duty deaths every year. We do provide a comprehensive A&S product, but it's only a part of the equation and one that's utilized after an unfortunate event occurs. The more forward-thinking we can be on each and every response, the safer our fire and EMS family will remain. For some of our A&S claims, safety was an afterthought; few believe an accident could happen to them. It is critical to be aware of our surroundings and utilize "best practices" on each call because everyone deserves to go home safe. I encourage all of our clients to be proactive and talk to your VFIS representative about ways we can reduce risk and minimize the potential for accidents.

Without question, VFIS is committed to maintaining our position as the largest and most stable emergency service insurance and risk management program in the United States. We strive to provide the most value in the marketplace, and we're glad to be a partner with you in these unique times.



Troy Markel, CIC, CRM, was named President of VFIS in October, 2009.