

## **Future Directions for the NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP)**

In 2006, the National Institute for Occupational Safety (NIOSH) undertook two complementary efforts to seek data and feedback to guide future directions of the NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP). NIOSH sought stakeholder input at a public meeting and through a public docket, and conducted a national survey of U.S. fire departments focusing on the use of NIOSH recommendations and information products. NIOSH is making several modifications to the FFFIPP based on stakeholder input and survey results. The intent of these modifications is to ensure that the FFFIPP meets stakeholders' needs and to increase the impact of the FFFIPP on fire fighter safety and health. This document summarizes these modifications and future directions.

The public stakeholders' meeting was held on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006. A total of 37 non-NIOSH attendees participated in the meeting, and presentations were given by individuals representing the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), among others. Eleven individuals submitted written comments to the docket. NIOSH received considerable positive feedback about the FFFIPP, and suggestions for improving the FFFIPP. Information about the FFFIPP Stakeholder meeting and docket comments are available on the [NIOSH Docket 0063](#) page.

In the spring of 2006, RTI International conducted an evaluation of the FFFIPP under contract to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [NIOSH is part of the CDC]. The evaluation was based on a nationwide survey of 3,000 fire departments and a series of focus groups with front-line fire fighters. The evaluation served to determine the extent to which FFFIPP reports, recommendations, and other products are being utilized by the fire service for: training; development of procedures, guidelines, policies and practices; and other prevention efforts. The evaluation also helped to identify enhancements that could further the FFFIPP's impact.

Below is the summary of future directions for the FFFIPP based on stakeholder input and survey results, grouped into the following areas:

- investigations and fatality reports
- document production
- dissemination
- outreach
- research
- evaluation
- technical assistance

NIOSH management and FFFIPP staff would like to thank all those who participated in the stakeholders' meeting, submitted comments to the docket, and responded to the evaluation survey and focus groups. It is the goal of the NIOSH FFFIPP to work with partners and stakeholders to decrease the number of fire fighter injuries, illnesses, and deaths across the country and around the world, and the constructive feedback provided has helped to strengthen these efforts.

### **Investigations and Fatality Reports**

- continue to make the main focus of the program performing fatality investigations, and maintain investigative activity at or near the current level.
- make the prioritization of investigations transparent by posting the program's [decision flow chart](#) on the FFFIPP website.
- document and make recommendations applicable to the training of the incident commanders/line officers on the incident scene.
- address the issue of safety "culture" by looking more thoroughly at the incident department's occupational safety and health program.
- increase the evaluation of fire "behavior" during structure fire incident investigations.
- strive to make recommendations more straightforward and practical
- increase references to "best practices" and standards in reports and recommendations.
- investigate selected non-fatal cardiovascular (CVD) incidents.
- increase the number of draft reports reviewed by external experts.
- explore modifications to the FFFIPP fatality reports to make them more user-friendly and to enhance messages, including formatting changes and the development of training aides for reports.
- continue to ensure that FFFIPP reports are finalized and posted to the FFFIPP web site in the timeliest manner possible.

### **Document Production**

- continue to develop documents, including Alerts and Workplace Solutions, that identify trends and hazards, and recommend equipment, training, and /or procedures to abate those hazards.

## **Dissemination**

- enhance efforts to disseminate FFFIPP publications to small, rural, and volunteer fire departments through direct mailings and e-mail listserve dissemination.
- enhance the FFFIPP website by providing additional search capabilities and organizing materials by broad topic areas.

## **Outreach**

- continue to expand outreach and partnership activities to fire service organizations, and pursue activities that complement and support prevention efforts of others.

## **Research**

- increase routine and in-depth analyses of available data on fire fighter deaths and injuries (e.g. fatality data collected and reported by USFA and NFPA, data from the National Fire Incident Reporting System, and data from occupational injury and illness databases such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries). Such analyses will be used to add knowledge about patterns and risks for fire fighter injury and illness, identify needed improvements in available surveillance data, and help focus FFFIPP investigations.
- increase efforts to foster research that builds from NIOSH investigation findings and recommendations, and leverage resources to conduct such research.
- increase coordination with other NIOSH Divisions conducting research on fire fighter safety and health, including the NIOSH National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory.

## **Evaluation**

- develop a survey that would be provided to all departments following a NIOSH fatality investigation that would provide feedback on the investigation and departmental changes made as a result of the investigation.

## **Technical Assistance**

- add point-of-contact info on the web site as a resource to facilitate specific inquiries related to fire fighter occupational safety and health.
- send information on prevention resources available through the FFFIPP to departments that experience a line of duty death (LODD) when a FFFIPP investigation will not be conducted.
- post the FFFIPP Investigation Procedures Manual on the FFFIPP website to assist fire departments in conducting their own, independent investigations.