



NIOSH Stakeholders' Meeting to Seek Input on the Firefighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program

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NFPA's Stake in this Program

- **NFPA's annual firefighter fatality study**
- **NFPA's fire service health & safety standards**
- **OSDS requests for information on firefighter health and safety issues**



What do the investigations provide?

For the firefighter fatality studies:

- thorough reports on factors in deaths
- relevant recommendations
- often, details not available from other sources
- consistent format



What do the investigations provide?

For codes and standards development:

- Details to justify new requirements in the standards
- Details to evaluate existing requirements against
- NIOSH staff with expertise to assist technical committees in understanding problems



What do the investigations provide?

For data requestors:

- NIOSH investigation reports provide anecdotal details that flesh out the statistics we have available;

We often provide links to NIOSH reports along with the trend data for the problem of interest.



From NIOSH's FFFIPP progress report, NFPA identified 13 questions in seven areas where NIOSH requested stakeholder input

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (NIOSH) FIRE FIGHTER FATALITY INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM, 1998 - 2000

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is an agency of the United States government located in the Department of Health and Human Services, and is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NIOSH is responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injuries. In fiscal year 1998, NIOSH initiated a new program entitled, NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP). NIOSH is seeking public comments on the program and future direction of the program. A summary of the program and possible future activities for this initiative are provided in this document.

Background

The United States currently employs approximately 1.1 million fire fighters, those not of fire who are volunteers, to protect our citizens and property from losses caused by fire. Data from recent years indicate that approximately 75 fire fighters die each year from fire-related injuries and another 40 fire fighters suffer moderate to severe injuries as a result of duty. Approximately 55,000 fire fighters are injured or work each year. Thousands of people are killed and many hospitalized, including spouses, twins, blowing, observed death, etc. The number of fire fighters experiencing medical conditions remain very low as indicated.

In fiscal year 1998, Congress recognized the need for further efforts to address the continuing problem of occupational fire fighter fatalities and occupational health. NIOSH is "...conducting daily assessment and critical evaluation investigations to public information on factors that may have contributed to traumatic occupational fatalities, identify causal factors common to fire fighter fatalities, provide recommendations for prevention of similar incidents, formulate strategies for effective interventions, and evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions."

In January 1998, NIOSH convened a stakeholder meeting in Washington, DC to discuss input on the new NIOSH program. In attendance were representatives from across the fire service, including a number of fire departments, union representatives, fire service organizations and federal agencies. The stakeholder meeting was useful in helping NIOSH plan the appropriate direction for this initiative. The primary message communicated to NIOSH at this meeting was the need to focus the program on conducting fire of duty investigations to identify factors contributing to fire fighter fatalities, and to disseminate this information to fire departments across the country. Throughout the initiative NIOSH has continued to encourage the use of co-investigative and non-incident investigations to improve fire fighter safety and health efforts.

NIOSH is again seeking your input and advice to ensure that the NIOSH FFFIPP is meeting the needs of stakeholders, and to identify ways in which NIOSH might improve upon the program to address its impact on the safety and health of fire fighters across the United States. A stakeholder meeting will be held March 15, 2004 in Washington, DC. Your input will be sought at this meeting and through a public forum.

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Type and Number of Investigations

- 1) **Should fatality investigations continue to be the focus of the FFFIPP, with modest decreases in the intensity of fatality investigations to support more outreach and research?**
- 2) **What type of investigations should receive high priority for investigation, and how and when should prioritization change over time?**



NIOSH Alert Bulletins

- 3) **What is the value and need for summary publications like the Alert Bulletins?**
- 4) **How might NIOSH make such documents more useful to the fire service and occupational safety and health community?**
- 5) **What specific topics should they address in these documents?**



Dissemination of Reports

- 6) Any suggestions on dissemination of NIOSH reports and publications focused on firefighter safety and health?**



Outreach and Partnership

- 7) Should NIOSH continue to aggressively conduct outreach and partnership activities to foster increase use of FFFIPP findings and products by fire service organizations and pursue activities that complement and support prevention efforts of others?**
- 8) Are there any specific suggestions for recommended areas for concentration?**



Data Analysis from Other Sources

- 9) Is there value in or need for NIOSH to conduct data analyses of available data (from NFPA/USFA/NEISS/BLS) to guide NIOSH fatality investigations, add to knowledge about patterns of firefighter injury and illness, risk factors for injury and illness, level of risk experienced by firefighters and identify needed improvements in available surveillance data?



Other Potential Research Efforts

- 10) Should NIOSH increase efforts to foster and conduct research that is not centered on fatality investigations?
- 11) What specific research is needed?
- 12) What specific interventions should NIOSH evaluate?



Measurement of Performance

- 13) How can NIOSH measure the performance and impact of the FFFIPP, given that NIOSH is a research agency without a direct role in making changes in the workplace, and that about half the deaths result from CVD, which develops over decades?



**Concluding
Remarks**