

Rules for Judging:

Deadline: Please have your essay winner selection to Rynnel Gibbs (rgibbs@iafc.org) no later than COB on Friday, July 8th. Please keep the nominations confidential and do not forward them to anyone. All of the departments will be highlighted in an upcoming issue of *IAFC On Scene*.

Please keep in mind the background and requirements when judging:

Background

The National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System Safety Leadership Award was established to recognize firefighters and fire departments that use the near-miss reporting system as a part of their program to prevent line of duty deaths and injuries in their departments.

Requirements

Applicants will submit an essay (minimum 250 words-about two paragraphs) that describes how the department uses the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System and/or the Report of the Week to enhance or improve the safety culture of their fire department.

**Entry #1:
Burlington Fire Department**

Please accept our submission for the 2010 National Fire Fighter Near-Miss System Safety Leadership Award. The Burlington Fire Department has taken a progressive lead in North Carolina to provide the best safety programs for our members. Over the past four years, the organizations firefighters as a whole, has devoted many hours of work to improve our operations and enhance our planning to continue the trend of eliminating the possibility of injury or death to our people.

In the attached documents included in the submission, you will find what our team has implemented and accomplished towards the goal of creating an injury free department. We obtained the North Carolina Department of Labor (NCDOL) Public Sector Star Award in 2008 and continue to be an active participant and leader in this organization today. As a result of our attitudes and efforts, we have been successful in dramatically reducing the number of injuries our folks suffer over the past 3 years. The National Near-Miss Reporting System has played a major part in our efforts and is evident by our documentation and implementation of programs that may be attested by reviewing the attached policies and reports. I have highlighted all of the sections that specifically pertain to your reporting system in yellow for ease of review, but the validation of its affects can be more readily understood by a broader look at all the information included.

We have experience a 38 percent reduction in injuries to our firefighters over the past 3 years. We will continue to reduce this number until every hazard presented to our crews, during emergency or non-emergency tasks, has been assessed and negated. The safety culture that has been established here will be maintained through effective leadership and encouraged participation by all of our members for years to come. We are voluntarily reviewed and assessed annually by the NCDOL to accredit what we are doing and have not simply adopted the issue of firefighter safety as a popular “catch phrase” with simple or half measures.

I would appreciate any consideration you may give to our submission for this award and your team’s efforts at providing this program to the fire service. If I may be of further assistance contact me at your convenience.

**Entry #2:
Langley AFB Fire Emergency Services**

Air Force Fire Emergency Services has a long history of setting the standard in the fire service community. From the birth of the Air Force in September 1947 to the present day, the Air Force has established 206 active duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and contingency bases around the globe. These bases along with the 6200 highly skilled and adept Air Force firefighters play a vital role in accomplishing the various and ever changing fire protection mission in the military. One base stands out amongst the others in terms of demonstrating leadership; that being Langley AFB in Hampton, Virginia.

Langley AFB Fire Emergency Services (FES) is no stranger to the concept of promoting methods of protecting firefighters in the Department of Defense (DoD). In 2009, after establishing a Near-Miss program from scratch, Langley FES became the first DoD base to host a Near-Miss seminar consisting of ten regional departments and 40 firefighters. Rick Atkins and John Tippett were pivotal in providing information that each participant was able to take

back to their respective departments and use towards achieving the intent of the program. In 2010, Langley AFB FES yet again provided evidence as a prominent leader by coordinating and instructing a Near-Miss class in Iraq; the first of its kind! TSgt Kevin Ferrara, who was the cornerstone in implementing Langley's 2009 Near-Miss program, spearheaded the logistical turmoil that was expected in teaching a class not only overseas, but during combat conditions.

After arriving to Joint Base Balad, Iraq, TSgt Ferrara quickly evaluated the combat environment military fire fighters were subjected to and came to the conclusion that the Near-Miss principles were necessary to preserve the wellbeing of fire fighters currently assigned and who would follow. TSgt Ferrara recognized that fire fighting during combat conditions is obviously an environment in which a fire fighters situational awareness could be compromised. As a result, injuries or worse yet, fatalities could occur which was something he nor Langley FES did not want to see take place now or ever.

Because of the high operations tempo Joint Base Balad Iraq fire fighters endured every day, finding time to schedule the Near-Miss class was a challenge. The objective was to hold a class with little or no distractions. Attendees needed to be able to concentrate on and retain the programs primary goal of sharing experiences while formulating strategies to reduce injuries and fatalities. As a result, students were expected to positively influence and enhance the safety culture of the emergency service. During the on-site coordination phase of the class, there was a buzz in the air from firefighters who were hearing and seeing information about the program. TSgt Ferrara was approached several times with questions pertaining to the program's mission, benefits, what impact it might have with regards to the Air Force and how the program could be implemented at various bases back home.

After countless hours of continuous hard work, the Near-Miss class was finally scheduled and presented to over 20 DoD military fire fighters consisting of 2-days of class participation sessions. Throughout the course, students were introduced to various Report-of-the-Week examples, discussing and generating theories as to what led to each near miss and what could be implemented to prevent future occurrences. Student participation was astounding and their support for the course was made clear through course evaluations. Some students requested one-on-one opportunities to discuss the program more-in-depth.

Effectively completing the first joint forces (Army and Air Force) Near Miss classes in a foreign country and during combat conditions, Langley AFB FES aspires to see this program implemented throughout the United States Air Force. With the combined efforts of the leadership at each base and the assistance of TSgt Kevin Ferrara as the professional expert in the field, there is no doubt that the Near-Miss program will be continue to be a success throughout the DoD.

Entry #3: Aurora Fire Department

The Aurora Fire Department and the International Association of Firefighters-Aurora, Colorado Local 1290 both support and encourage department wide participation in the National Near-Miss Reporting System. In June of 2010, in conjunction with the 2009 joint International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Safety, Health and Survival Week, the Aurora Fire Department unveiled a program to compliment the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System. This system, the "Dangerous Incident Reporting" (DIR) System allows members of the Aurora Fire Department to anonymously and immediately report incidents and/or behaviors that could potentially lead to a serious injury and/or line of duty deaths of fire department members and/or the public they have sworn to protect.

The Department's DIR is available to all department members through an icon on every fire department computer that is linked electronically to a submission form. When the member submits the survey, the consents of the survey are anonymously emailed to the Department Health and Safety Officer. If a member would like detailed feedback on what action was taken related to a specific report; the reporting member can choose to enter their contact information on the Dangerous Incident Report.

Initially, reluctance related to the anonymity of the reporting was a challenge, but with continued training, continuous reinforcement related to the assurance of anonymity, and support from the International Association of Firefighters Local 1290 ultimately proved successful.

In the year since implementing the dual reporting system, 11 agency specific reports have been made. During 2009 and in contrast to the 2008 National Near Miss Annual Report, the Aurora Fire Department reported no "Near Misses" or "Dangerous Incidents" on the fire ground. However, the overwhelming majority of Near-Misses or Dangerous Incidents (62%) indicated that that there was some type of communication error that contributed to the situation. Additionally department members reported that 28% of the close calls were related to the operation of apparatus.

It is the hope of both Local 1290 and the Aurora Fire Department, as evidenced by the document that is attached, that members will use both the National Near-Miss Reporting System and the Aurora Fire Departments "Dangerous Incident Report" to provide ongoing anonymous feedback regarding safety concerns to the Health & Safety Office that mechanisms can be developed to maintain the safety record of the development by identifying both national and agency specific safety related trends that will improve safety through awareness or training recommendations.

Since implementing and supporting the dual approach, The Aurora Fire Department has found that by collecting agency specific information, comparing it to a national database such as the National Near Miss Reporting System and then taking steps to address both individual and industry wide safety issues, the health, wellness and longevity of firefighters can be maximized.