

# NEEDS OF THE FIRE SERVICE

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,  
SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

APRIL 30, 2003

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## NEEDS OF THE FIRE SERVICE

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2003

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:43 a.m. in room SR-253, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN MCCAIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. I welcome my colleagues and witnesses to this hearing to examine the needs of Fire Services as we begin the process of reauthorizing the U.S. Fire Administration.

The role of Fire Service is being transformed. September 11, 2001, we all realized the important new role firefighters serve on the front line in the fight to preserve our nation's security. We witnessed the heroism of the firefighters and emergency services personnel, who selflessly rushed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to save the lives of many Americans. Tragically, 343 firefighters and EMS technicians paid the ultimate price in the service of their country.

As we recognize this new role and the dangers it presents to our firefighters, we also must be aware of the other challenges they face. Today's firefighter must be prepared to respond to threats by both urban and wildland fires, natural disasters, hazardous materials spills and other accidents, as well as the specter of terrorism. Just last year, I witnessed the wildland fires that devastated almost 500,000 acres in my state, including impacting several communities in the White Mountain Apache Reservation in eastern Arizona.

The Federal agency tasked with the mission of aiding the Fire Service is the U.S. Fire Administration. However, this agency has recently faced a number of challenges. The agency was transferred to the Department of Homeland Security, and there is uncertainty about the status of the U.S. Fire Administrator position. The agency also faces a budget shortfall, which has caused the National Fire Academy to cancel 36 courses.

The President's fiscal year 2004 budget is proposing to combine the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program with a \$3.5 billion program administered by the Office of Domestic Preparedness. I look forward to hearing Chief Paulison's testimony this morning about how he intends to respond to these challenges and what role the Committee can play to help him.

Another issue that this Committee will continue to examine concerns public safety communications interoperability. Many of the first responders in Arizona have contacted me with concerns that their local communications systems are inadequate for contacting each other and Federal and State agencies in emergencies. And we've all heard the stories from September 11, when the incompatibility of police and firefighters' radios impeded communications and rescue efforts.

We also must examine issues regarding firefighting technology. Today's firefighters use a variety of technologies, including thermal-imaging equipment, devices for locating firefighters and victims, and state-of-the-art protective suits to meet today's challenges. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is authorized for \$900 million for fiscal year 2004 to assist local fire departments in purchasing this high-tech equipment, and we must ensure that the American taxpayers' funds are used to purchase effective equipment.

Unfortunately, there are no uniform technical standards for new technology used in combating fires. The January 2003 Consumer Reports article stated that much of the equipment sold today is not tested or certified by government or independent labs and that the confusion will get worse as new equipment floods the market in response to increased government funding.

Senator Hollings, Brownback, Cantwell, Biden, Carper, DeWine, Graham, and I have introduced S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act, to address this problem. Representatives Camp and Weldon have introduced a companion bill in the House. Our bill would allow the Federal Government to work with the private sector to develop basic uniform performance criteria and technical standards to ensure the effectiveness of new technologies purchased with Federal funds.

In addition, it would task the U.S. Fire Administration to be a resource for state and local governments in developing mutual aid plans, updating the Federal Response Plan, and reporting on the need for a strategy for deploying volunteers, including a national credentialing system. Also, the bill would authorize training programs at the National Fire Academy to improve tactics for using new firefighting technology and responding to terrorist attacks.

I thank the Fire Service organizations, especially those testifying today, for their support of this legislation. It's my hope that the Committee can reach a consensus on this bill and include it in our reauthorization legislation as soon as possible.

I welcome all the witnesses here today. And, of course, I'm very pleased to have our dear friend and the best friend of firefighters in America, Honorable Curt Weldon, in the U.S. House of Representatives. Thank you for joining us today, and thank you for all you have done. It's been incredible work you have done over a many-year period on behalf, not only of our firefighters, but on all of the efforts you've made to improve their capabilities to combat natural disasters and also for planning ahead. Thank you.

Congressman Weldon, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CURT WELDON,  
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. WELDON. Thank you, Senator. I do not have a formal statement, and I will keep my remarks brief. But none of our success would have been possible were it not for your leadership in the Senate. Way back when this effort started, 17 years ago, to organize the fire caucus, you were one of the first—in fact, it was you and Al Gore who stepped up and said, we'll be glad to be co-chairs of the caucus. So for the past 17-years—

The CHAIRMAN. That's what caused us to lose, I guess.

[Laughter.]

Mr. WELDON. I would never approach that one, Senator.

But it was your leadership that has allowed us to achieve the successes that we have achieved today, and we've made many successes.

And let me say, at the outside, that Dave Paulison, who's going to speak here in a moment, is an outstanding leader. He is a true fire-service professional. His loyalties are the Fire Service first, and that's what you and I both wanted in a USFA administrator, and he has given that with every breath that he has breathed over the past several years.

But I want to comment, Senator, on a couple of the issues you raised. First of all, I think it's outrageous that FEMA would cut 36 courses at the U.S. Fire Academy affecting 1,000 of the state people who train the other local officials across America to respond to disasters. What hypocrisy, when we talk about increasing the Homeland Security budget by billions, which I support and on which committee I am a member in the House, and at the same time we tell all the firefighters, our first responders, "But, oh, by the way, a thousand of you aren't going to be trained this year because we just can't find the measly amount of money to keep those programs intact." And I don't want to hear FEMA come back and tell us that somehow this was mandated. They could have requested a re-programming if they needed more money. They could have come back to us and have made the case that these programs are vitally important, and they haven't done that.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think we need to send a signal to the White House and FEMA that we're not going to accept those kinds of cuts, which really affect directly the people who are in command of and are in the leadership positions to all the disasters that we're going to be facing for the next several years. And so that's my first and most outrageous comment regarding the cuts to the USFA.

The second are the grants. You were very instrumental in helping us get this grant program going. It, Senator, has become the most well-run program in the Federal Government, and the reason is there's no bureaucracy, there's no middle person, there's no siphoning off of the dollars by Federal agencies looking to build their kingdoms, there's no siphoning off by the states. 32,000 fire and EMS departments can go online for 30 days each year, and they can apply for this money with a local match of 10 to 30 percent. And the criteria that were developed were developed by the peers in the Fire Service. And the evaluation of the credibility of the grants is done by firefighters, themselves. I don't think bureauc-

racy's ever seen a program that actually works so well and so logically, and that's why we've had such tremendous success.

My concern is, if we allow the new Office of Homeland Security to move this program over, I think there's going to be an attempt to take administrative dollars out of this program, administrative dollars that are needed to buy handheld detection units, new turnout suits that can deal with chemical and biological environments, trucks that are aging that need to be replaced, healthcare training for firefighters, both volunteer and paid, to make sure they're properly prepared to deal with the issue.

And so I would just urge us, using our oversight rule, to make sure that we don't allow the bureaucracy, this animal that feeds on the trough, that we allow it to take apart the most successful program we've seen, and you'll hear that from everyone, in getting dollars directly out.

There's a backlog of grant money in the Homeland Security operation. The States haven't spent their money. That is not the case with the fire grant program. Every dollar is being spent, and the accountability, as it has been reviewed, has been outstanding.

Third, Dave Paulison is a good guy. He's been given expanded responsibilities within the new Office of Homeland Security. And I support that. But, Mr. Chairman, I would ask you to please make sure that we don't take away the Office of the U.S. Fire Administrator. The Fire Service needs a point person. They need a champion. They need someone who, day in and day out, is going to be within the Administration saying, "But what about the impact on the firefighter? What about the impact on the paramedic?" And whether that's Dave Paulison, as a part of his current job, or—there needs to be that title, and it needs to be kept in place, because politically that sends a signal to the 1.2 million men and women across the country that they have an advocate in Washington, they have someone that's going to stand up for them in every possible situation and say, "Wait a minute. How does this impact our local responders across America?"

A couple of other comments based upon what you said, and you've always been on the issues. You were the leader on the issue of interoperability, on frequency spectrum allocation. I was a supporter of your efforts in past Congresses. You were out there championing the fact that public safety needs to have an allocation of frequency spectrum to deal with the needs of the 21st century. And you were the one who was talking about the issue of where those dollars are going to go when that frequency spectrum allocation, in fact, is being allocated. There's no more important issue than that and the interoperability issue.

It's unconscionable today that we have fire departments in neighboring towns that can't talk to each other because they're on high band or low band or digital frequency systems and don't have the interoperable capability. So I would just urge you to continue to press that issue. From the House side, we'll support you.

You mentioned tech transfer. You've been a leader on defense issues. I'm the vice chairman of the House committee. We have developed technology for the military that is not being transferred aggressively enough. Why should we just have a system that we put an undergarment on the soldier that tells us where they are



through GPS technology, but also their vital signs, their heart rate their pulse, when the firefighter or the paramedic could use that same technology. If we'd have had that technology up in Boston, we wouldn't have lost six firefighters. When two went into a warehouse, their air packs ran out, no one knew where they were, no one knew their condition, four more went in to rescue them. All six were killed. We wouldn't have lost the two in Philadelphia in a high-rise when they were two floors above where the chief thought they were. So we've got to do a better effort, and with your leadership this can happen, of transferring technology that we already pay for in the military and transfer it over to our domestic defenders.

And one additional point. It's not under your jurisdiction, but, again, you can help us. We saw the terrible tragedy of the nightclub fire up in Rhode Island. It's tough to deal with buildings that were built before codes were enacted, because they're grandfathered; they don't have to have sprinkler systems. In some cases, they don't have to comply with the NFPA life safety code. So what we did, Jim Langevin and I, the Democrat from Rhode Island, introduced legislation in the House that provides a tax incentive that says to older establishments, "If you install automatic sprinkler systems within 5 years, you can write off the cost of the installation of that system." When you couple that tax savings with the savings they would realize from reduced insurance premiums, within 3 to 5 years, any business in America can retrofit and protect their property. So these older nightclubs, many of which are wood frame and which have really no fire-retardant capability or fire-protection capability, would then be able to install automatic sprinkler systems.

Mr. Chairman, the records will show that we've never lost a human being in an occupancy that's been properly protected with an automatic fire-suppression system. And so I think that legislation could go a long way. And it also helps protect our firefighters, because the fire is largely extinguished before they arrive on the scene.

So, again, I want to thank you. You've been a real hero in so many ways, and the firefighters continue to recognize you as one of their own, and we appreciate the role that you've played. And I thank you for allowing me to come before you today.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Congressman Weldon, and you're all too modest. And I thank you, and I look forward to seeing you this evening.

Mr. WELDON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Our first panel is the Honorable Arden L. Bement, who is the Director of National Institute of Standards and Technology, known as NIST; and Honorable R. David Paulison, who's the director of the Preparedness Division, Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Am I pronouncing your name, right, sir?

Mr. BEMENT. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Welcome, and please proceed. We'll take you first and then Chief Paulison.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ARDEN L. BEMENT, JR., DIRECTOR,  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY,  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

Mr. BEMENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to submit my written testimony for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Written testimony will be included in the record.

Mr. BEMENT. Thank you, sir.

Industry and the U.S. Fire Service look to NFPA and NIOSH as primary sources of equipment performance standards and safety information. NFPA has committees that consider the need for voluntary consensus standards for equipment performance. Many NIST staff are members of NFPA and serve on their standards development committees. Technical reports from NIST provide NFPA committees and NIOSH with data and procedures to help advance national standards. NIST-developed measurement methods are also adopted by the American Society for Testing and Materials and the International Organization for Standardization.

The Department of Homeland Security's FEMA provides grants to fire departments allowing firefighters to better equip and prepare for fires and other emergencies. However, many new technologies are not yet supported by the existence of consensus standards. Individual fire departments are forced to assess the performance of these new technologies or rely solely on manufacturers' information and demonstrations. Interoperability of equipment also suffers from lack of consensus standards.

To help address this issue, NIST and FEMA are working to aid the development of technology and methods to evaluate equipment for use by the Nation's first responder and emergency management communities. Let me give some examples.

Portable thermal images are used by firefighters to enhance vision and identify hot-spots in cool surroundings, such as hidden fires, and to identify cool objects, like victims of fire or downed firefighters. The performance of the sensors implemented in various products has not yet been measured under controlled conditions. NIST, with added funding from USFA, is developing an apparatus to measure how well thermal-imaging hardware is able to aid vision. Standards built on this foundation will provide for accurate measurement of the performance attributes of firefighter equipment.

During firefighting, a firefighter's protective clothing is wet from the outside by water spray and on the inside by perspiration. NIST, assisted by funding from USFA, is performing measurements under a range of thermal exposures and moisture conditions and has found that wet gear performs differently than dry gear with respect to burn protection. Manufacturers have come to NIST to utilize our apparatus to understand more about the behavior of their products. This data will be used by manufacturers to improve protective clothing products and can help in the development of future protective clothing that has even better resistance to burns.

The fire-alarm panel in buildings, often found in the lobby near the main entrance, is the heart of the building's fire information system. Until recently, even the best displays offered only rows of lights that indicated the zones in the building where fire was detected. Often a key or map was needed to interpret the lights. In

many cases, it was easier to look for the fire than to use the information from the panel display. The development of more powerful and affordable computer and graphic displays has provided manufacturers with the opportunity to expand the display capabilities and the amount of information available at the panel. NIST created a standard set of graphic icons for these fire command devices. In this way, firefighters have only to learn the meaning of one set of symbols.

Last fall, NFPA adopted a set of standard icons for fire alarm system displays. NIST is now turning its attention to the standards that will be needed to advance the wireless transmission of displays of information contained in the building emergency systems to responding firefighters even before they arrive at the building.

NIST is the Nation's primary measurement laboratory and has always provided a critical role in the development of effective consensus standards in support of industry and public needs. I expect NIST will continue to contribute substantially to improved safety and effectiveness of firefighting in America.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'd be happy to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ARDEN L. BEMENT, JR., DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Arden Bement. I am the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). I appreciate the opportunity to appear today. NIST supports the goals of S. 321 and understands the Department of Homeland Security is working with Committee staff concerning a number of comments.

NIST conducts research that advances the nation's measurement and standards infrastructure and works closely with national voluntary consensus standards organizations to support the development of consensus standards. These standards are needed by U.S. industry for continually improving products and services.

Equipment for first responders is very specialized. It also constitutes a small market that is generally served by small manufacturers. Producing new equipment for the market in the absence of generally-accepted standards is a high-risk venture. In addition, standards that reflect in use conditions for determining the performance of firefighter equipment would assist industry in providing equipment that meets or exceeds firefighter needs.

The U.S. fire service looks to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) as its primary sources of equipment performance standards and safety information. NFPA has established committees that consider the need for equipment performance standards and develop consensus standards where views of industry, the fire service, government and commercial laboratories, and other interested parties are represented. Many of the staff in the NIST Building and Fire Research Laboratory and the Office of Law Enforcement Standards at NIST are members of NFPA and serve on their standards developing committees. NIST provides technical assistance to NIOSH in firefighter fatality investigations and thermal sensor evaluation. Technical reports from NIST on measurement techniques, methodologies, and results, provide NFPA committees and NIOSH with data and procedures to help advance national standards. NIST developed measurement methods are also adopted by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

In FY2001, FEMA established the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant Program following passage of the Firefighter Investment and Response (FIRE) ACT that provides fire departments funding through grants for needed equipment. These funds are now allowing firefighters to be better equipped and prepared for fires and other emergencies. However, many new technologies are not yet supported by the existence of consensus standards. Individual fire departments are forced to assess the performance of these new technologies or rely solely on manufacturers information

and demonstrations. Interoperability of equipment also suffers from lack of consensus standards.

To help address this issue, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NIST and FEMA was signed in March 2002 and establishes a framework for NIST to serve as a standards and measurement science resource for the Department of Homeland Security's FEMA in the areas of fire, disaster prevention, and homeland security. One of the purposes called out in the agreement is to aid the development of standards and methods to evaluate equipment for use by the Nation's first responder and emergency management communities. Additionally, NIST will continue to work with other agencies and directorates of the Department of Homeland Security. In particular, the Under Secretary of Technology will soon formalize this cooperation with a memorandum of understanding between the Technology Administration and the Directorate of Science and Technology at the Department of Homeland Security.

In order to develop consensus standards for new fire fighting technologies as described in S. 321, there is a need for several interrelated activities.

First, priorities must be established for the development of the standards. In cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), NIST has hosted workshops with representatives of the fire service, industry, and other laboratories to establish priorities for fire service research. Published results of these workshops have helped set the current research agenda for both NIST and USFA. Similar workshops should be held to establish priority and a timeline for the development of measurement techniques, testing methodologies, and consensus standards.

Second, measurement techniques and testing methodologies need to be developed for evaluating the performance of firefighter equipment using new technologies. NIST is the nation's primary measurement laboratory. Our mission is to develop measurements and standards to enhance productivity, facilitate trade, and improve the quality of life. NIST has specialized laboratory facilities and staff expertise ideally suited for the development of these techniques and methodologies for many of the new fire fighting technologies.

Third, a network of private sector laboratories and facilities are needed where the measurement techniques and the methodologies can be used in a reproducible way, a necessary condition for the success of any standard. NIST will work with other organizations to assure that the measurement results are reproducible.

Finally, NIST will work closely with national voluntary consensus standards organizations to support the development of the consensus standards. An unbiased source of technical information and data, such as that supplied by NIST, is critical to the success of this effort.

#### **Current NIST Research in Support of the Fire Service**

NIST is proud of its role as a science and technology resource in helping to improve the effectiveness and safety of fire fighting. Below is a brief description of its current and recent activities.

Portable thermal imagers are used by firefighters to enhance vision. They are used to identify hot spots in cool surroundings such as hidden fires in void space or over-heated fluorescent light ballasts lights. They are also used to identify cool objects, like victims of fire incapacitated by smoke or downed firefighters in hot surroundings during building search and rescue. Unfortunately, the performance of the sensors implemented in various products has not been measured under controlled conditions. Furthermore, the minimum level of important performance attributes, such as image contrast, have not been determined.

NIST, with added funding from USFA, is developing an apparatus to measure how well thermal imaging hardware is able to aid vision and hazard sensing under a variety of realistic conditions. These laboratory measurements will be compared to measurements made in actual building fires and in large-scale fire experiments at NIST. The results will be used to assure that laboratory measurements are reliable indicators of real-world performance. Standards built on this foundation will provide for accurate measurement of the important performance attributes of firefighter equipment essential for quality, reliability, safe, and effective use.

Another example of our work deals with firefighter protective clothing. The NFPA Standard on Protective Ensemble for Structural Fire Fighting (NFPA1971) specifies the minimum design, performance, certification requirements, and test methods for structural firefighter protective ensembles. The test method for measurement of thermal protective performance for firefighter protective garment and the minimum rating required for safety is part of this NFPA standard. The Thermal Protective Performance (TPP) rating is determined by exposing dry materials to a single high intensity exposure condition that is often related to an extreme fire condition called flashover. This standard has contributed substantially to improved safety for fire-

fighters, but firefighters tell us they are being burned through their gear under lower intensity exposures.

During fire fighting, a firefighter's protective clothing is wet from the outside by water spray and the inside by perspiration produced from strenuous activity. NIST, assisted by funding from USFA, is performing measurements under a range of thermal exposures and moisture conditions and has found that wet gear performs differently than dry gear with respect to burn injury protection. Manufacturers have come to NIST to utilize the NIST apparatus to understand more about the behavior of their products under conditions different from those assumed in the present standard. This data generated by manufacturers working at NIST will be used to improve protective clothing products. In addition, the testing approach used at NIST will be offered for consideration for adoption as part of the current standard. The apparatus is also being used in exploratory NIST research to evaluate the thermal protective attributes of new materials such as carbon nano-tube composite fabrics. These measurements can help in the development of future protective clothing that has even better resistance to burn injury with reduced weight.

NIST works hard to anticipate needs so that information is ready when needed by industry to advance their products and provide for interoperability. Four years ago, NIST formed a consortium with several fire alarm hardware manufacturers. The fire alarm panel in buildings, often found in the lobby near the main entrance, is the heart of the building's fire information system. Condition measurements and alarms from fire detectors placed throughout a building are sent to this display. Until recently even the best displays offered only rows of lights that indicated the zones in the building where fire was detected. Often a key or map was needed to interpret the lights. In many cases, it was easier to look for the fire than to use the information from the panel display.

The development of more powerful and affordable computer and graphic displays have provided manufacturers with the opportunity to expand the display capabilities and the amount of information available at the panel using graphic icons. NIST created a standard set of icons for these panels and other fire command devices. In this way, firefighters would only have to learn the meaning of one set of symbols if they were applied on all fire service graphic displays. Last fall, working from documents submitted by NIST, the NFPA Technical Committee on Testing and Maintenance of Fire Alarm Systems adopted a set of standard icons for fire alarm system displays and published these in the 2002 Edition of National Fire Alarm Code (NFPA 72). NIST is now turning its attention to the standards that will be needed to advance the wireless transmission and display of information contained in the building emergency systems to responding firefighters even before they arrive at a building.

Interagency research managed by NIST is also helping to protect firefighters responding to terrorism incidents. Threat analyses and simulations have been conducted to examine chemical warfare agent hazard concentrations in a variety of domestic terrorist attack scenarios, both for respiratory and percutaneous (skin) threats. Results are being supplied to the NFPA committee revising the Standard on Protective Ensembles for Chemical/Biological Terrorism Incidents (NFPA 1994).

#### **Closing Remarks**

I am delighted that there is recognition by the committee of the need for the development of firefighting equipment standards. NIST is the nation's primary measurement laboratory and has always played a critical role in the development of effective consensus standards in support of industry and public needs. I expect NIST to continue to contribute substantially to improved safety and effectiveness of fire fighting in America.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, sir.  
Mr. Paulison, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF HON. R. DAVID PAULISON, DIRECTOR,  
PREPAREDNESS DIVISION, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS  
AND RESPONSE DIRECTORATE, DEPARTMENT OF  
HOMELAND SECURITY**

Mr. PAULISON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've submitted my written comments for the record, and, with your permission, I'd like to make a few brief oral comments. Thank you, sir.

As you're aware, I'm the director of preparedness for Emergency Preparedness and Response in FEMA, but I also serve as U.S. Fire Administrator for FEMA. I've had the opportunity to serve in the Fire Service for over 30 years, and I was the chief of Miami Dade County Fire Department for the last 10 years before coming to Washington, D.C.. I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of Secretary Ridge and represent the U.S. Fire Administration.

And I also want to thank the people sitting behind us, from the Fire Service, my friends and colleagues, who have gone way out of their way to make sure that my term has been as successful as it has; and the successes we've had have been due to their support, and I appreciate that very much and want them to know that.

As you know and the others know in this room, we lose more people to fires than we do to any other catastrophe in this country. We lose over 4,000 people a year to fires and also have over 22,000 injuries due to fire. And last year, we lost 102 firefighters responding to alarms in this country. And as one who's had to go to someone's house at 3 o'clock in the morning and tell the wife or children that their father and husband is not coming home, that is not tolerable, and I would not like to have any other chief have to go through that process.

As part of the Department of Homeland Security, we work with our partners in the Fire Service, the emergency responders, and State and local governments to prevent deaths, injuries and damage to property through leadership, advocacy, coordination, and support in four basic mission areas. The four mission areas include: the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, training, research and data analysis, and, as important as the rest, public preparedness and awareness.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, as Congressman Weldon so aptly covered earlier, covers training and safety, apparatus and personnel gear, firefighting equipment, and wellness and fitness issues for local fire departments. In the last 3 years, we've received over 60,000 requests from fire departments from across the Nation, totaling over \$6 billion. In the last 3 years Congress gave us a total of 1.2 billion. This year alone, we've received over 20,000 applications from fire departments for the grants. As we begin to administer the 2003 grants to successful applicants, and those moneys will start to be awarded June of this year, and we will finish that process before June of next year, 2004.

By the way, as Congressman Weldon pointed out, the 2001 dollars that you gave us, 98 percent of that money has been spent, not just issued by us, but also spent by the fire departments. Almost 60 percent of the 2002 grants, which we just finished awarding has been spent. And, in 2003, again, we're ready to roll those out June 1, and we're excited about it and so is the Fire Service.

As requested by the President's budget in 2004, the Office for Domestic Preparedness of the Border and Transportation Security Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security will manage the fire grant program to offer one-stop shopping for grants in the new

department. FEMA and I, personally, commit that we will work with the Office of Domestic Preparedness to ensure the continued success of this vital program. This program is vital to the Fire Service.

For more than 20 years, the United States Fire Administration has trained millions of first responders as fire, law enforcement, public health, public works people. We've trained emergency managers, government officials, school administrators, and citizens on how to prepare, respond, and recover in all type of disasters. In 2002 alone, we conducted over 600 courses and have reached over 250,000 responders from the National Fire Academy and Emergency Management Institute. And this training was done for all hazards, not just terrorism.

We provide training through various methods. We do resident training. We train 16,000 people a year at the campus at Emmitsburg. We do independent study courses through our relationships with States and through several distance-learning efforts with several colleges and universities. Emergency responders, firefighters, emergency managers, and others who have taken courses at EMI and at NFA have told us these courses have added value to their job performance and professional development. The fire chiefs tell us that they have seen a significant increase in performance in their departments when their students come back from these classes.

The survey also indicated, and I think it's important, that 95 percent of the skill sets necessary to conduct support for a WMD or a terrorism catastrophic event are already being taught at the National Fire Academy with the existing curriculum.

One of the new developmental programs we're working on is to prepare for regional incident management teams that will be hosted by the metropolitan fire chiefs around the country and will provide support for major incidents. They'll either be there prior to or in lieu of Federal incident management teams. This provides quicker response capabilities while building national capability and regional capability for our country.

We also focus on data collection. The Fire Administration continues to collect, analyze, and publish data in fire prevention, occurrence of fires, and control of related fields. We work to define and describe the national fire problem, and we support the State and local collection of analysis of fire data.

This past fall, in cooperation with the National Fire Protection Association, the United States Fire Administration completed a needs assessment for the U.S. Fire Service so we could gain an understanding of the fire problem area and to guide future planning and initiatives. There were no surprises in this report that came out from the NFPA. It pretty much mimicked what we're learning with the fire grants through our applications, that the fire departments in this country need basic firefighting gear, and they lack that, and we're working hard to continue to provide funds to do that.

In our research technology area, we work with groups like NIST, sitting here along side of me, our partners in developing our emergent needs, and also doing testing on existing equipment. We also leverage partnerships and technology developments to improve fire

prevention and promote public safety. One example is our partnership with the fire-sprinkler community, to re-energize advocacy for residential fire sprinklers. Our data shows that localized fire sprinklers, just in kitchens, would dramatically reduce the number of civilian deaths in this country by as much as 25 percent, and it's an excellent opportunity to reduce residential fire loss in the U.S. as well as firefighter death and injuries, since 40 percent of our firefighter deaths in the line of duty occur en route to residential fires.

In closing, we also focus on public awareness. We think it's extremely important that the public knows what's going on. We do this in CERT programs and through public awareness initiatives for our communities. Citizens learn not only to respond to others, but also learn how to protect themselves.

Since 1974, when Congress passed the Federal Fire Prevention Control Act and established the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy, the United States Fire Administration has helped reduce fire deaths significantly. Over the last 10 years, fires have declined by 16 percent, and there's a 22 percent decline in civilian deaths, and a 31 percent drop in civilian injuries. But it's not enough. We are committed to continue to see this drop. We want to end up with zero fire deaths in this country, like we should have, and zero deaths of our firefighters.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for allowing me to have the opportunity to speak today, and I'm here to answer any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Paulison follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. R. DAVID PAULISON, DIRECTOR, PREPAREDNESS DIVISION, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE DIRECTORATE, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is R. David Paulison. I am the Director of the Preparedness Division in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of Secretary Ridge.

Each year, fire injures and kills more Americans than the combined losses of all other natural disasters. Death rates by fire in the United States are among the highest in the industrialized world. The U.S. Fire Administration's mission to reduce loss of life and property because of fire and related emergencies is a sobering challenge, but also a hopeful challenge, since most of these deaths are preventable.

As a part of DHS, the staff works diligently to prevent these deaths, injuries, and the damage to property through leadership, advocacy, coordination and support in four basic mission areas: fire service training, public education and awareness, technology and research, and data analysis.

To accomplish this mission, we work with the fire service, other emergency responders and state and local governments to better prepare them to respond to all hazards, including acts of terrorism. We are also listening to State and local governments, and working with private industry, to provide standardized, practical, compatible equipment that works in all possible circumstances. We are assisting first responders and emergency managers practice and refine their response plans with partners at the local, State and Federal level. We will continue to provide training and education programs to prepare for the routine hazards as well as the emergent threats posed by WMD and terrorist incidents.

Today, I will focus my remarks on the U.S. Fire Administration, its programs and services, how to improve the preparedness and effectiveness and safety of our first responders, and summarize our current activities and future needs.

#### **Accomplishments**

The U.S. Fire Administration is a national leader in fire safety and prevention and in preparing communities to deal with fires and other hazards. USFA is work-



ing to support the efforts of local communities to reduce the number of fires and fire deaths and it champions Federal fire protection issues and coordinates information about fire programs.

In terms of our preparedness programs, we recognize the importance of training as a vital step toward a first responder community that is prepared to respond to any kind of emergency, ranging from a small fire to a terrorist attack involving a large number of victims. We continue to administer training and education programs for community leaders and first responders to help them prepare for and respond to emergencies regardless of cause or magnitude. We also provide equipment, vehicles, and training and wellness programs through our Assistance to Firefighter Grant program to help first responders perform their duties.

This year, Congress appropriated \$750 million for USFA to provide grants directly to fire departments to build their basic response capabilities for all types of emergencies, including suppressing fires. This brings our total funding for this grant program to a little over \$1 billion since the program began three years ago. This benefits the community as a whole and benefits other first responder entities by building the base capabilities of local fire departments to respond to all types of incidents.

FEMA also continues to provide training in emergency management to our firefighters, law enforcement, emergency managers, healthcare workers, public works, and state and local officials, at our Emergency Management Institute. I would like to give you a few more details about these and other USFA activities.

#### **Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program**

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program provides competitive grants to address training, safety, prevention, apparatus, personal protective gear and other firefighting equipment needs as well as wellness and fitness issues of local fire departments. We have streamlined the online application process for fire grants and sped up the flow of resources to first responders, while ensuring that the funds are used effectively and appropriately. In 2001 and again in 2002, we received nearly 20,000 applications from fire departments across the country. Beginning with the 2001 Grant Program, the Emergency Education NETWORK (EENET) broadcast valuable information on the grant programs and process. Prior to the application period in 2003, EENET broadcast an actual applicant workshop, which was rebroadcast six times during the application period. We heard from many organizations that this eased the application process. The 2003 application process closed on April 11 and again we received nearly 20,000 applications. We expect to distribute those funds to successful applicants beginning in June 2003.

In 2004, the Office for Domestic Preparedness in the Border Transportation and Security Directorate of DHS will manage the fire grants program to offer one-stop shopping for grants in the new Department. EP& R will work closely with ODP to ensure the continued success of this vital program.

#### **Fire Service Training**

The National Fire Academy (NFA) and the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) offer a wide variety of training programs to promote the professional development of command level firefighters, emergency managers, emergency responders and technical staff. Fire departments will continue to receive training to respond to terrorist attacks from the Department of Homeland Security in addition to training to respond to other hazards, such as chemical accidents, floods, or hurricanes. We will continue to develop policy, procedures and training for a cadre of structural firefighters that will be identified by States in wildland fire threat zones.

One training program under development is to prepare regional Incident Management Teams (IMT) to provide support for major incidents prior to, or in lieu of, the arrival of a Federal IMT. Simultaneously, we are developing the training for the Federal Incident Management Teams Program.

In 2002, EMI conducted 278 resident training activities for 8,968 students; participants also completed 143,000 EMI independent study courses. The National Fire Academy held 340 residential classes for 7,860 students and provided training to another 87,265 through outreach, regional and direct deliveries, distance learning efforts with several colleges and universities and on-line training efforts. A curriculum review for the National Fire Academy curriculum is scheduled for FY 2004 and we expect to see those results by 2005.

Emergency responders, firefighters, emergency managers and others who have taken courses at EMI and NFA have told us these courses have added value to job performance and professional development. In fact, surveys conducted in FY 2000 and 2001 revealed that our student's supervisors have reported an 88 percent improvement in the student's job performance following training. Ninety-three percent report that EMI and NFA training have contributed to the student's professional de-

velopment and almost 87 percent report that the training has improved the department's performance.

State and local support of fire service training must be increased and the federal role is to foster that participation. In the future USFA will:

- Coordinate the exchange of training materials and information among State and local fire training systems;
- Focus on distance learning and alternate training delivery methods such as the National Incident Simulation and Training network; independent study programs and computer-based courses;
- Increase the number of Integrated Emergency Management Courses with bioterrorism scenarios aimed at bringing officials of local jurisdictions together to simulate and critique their responses to terrorism-driven events;
- Revise training courses to include the most updated information on risk management, public fire safety education and emergency response;
- Partner with associate and bachelor degree programs to align the national academic fire curricula; and
- Include multiple delivery formats in future course development so that the nexus of the course may be provided to the field in a variety of adaptable formats.

During 2002 and early 2003, the USFA held summit meetings in the FEMA regions looking for information that defined the needs of the first responder community in the new environment that included WMD and terrorism preparation and response. Our staff also met with focus groups, course developers, and students at the National Emergency Training Center for the same purpose. Without exception every outcome was the same. Each group identified the skill sets necessary to conduct or support a WMD or terrorism catastrophe. Over 95 percent of those skills are already being taught in the existing curriculum and courses. The message is very clear. We need to:

- Continue teaching the curriculum we have on hand;
- Update our course materials regularly to reflect emerging issues;
- Increase the number of courses available to the first responder community; and
- Continue to maximize learning opportunities for all first responders.

During the past year, the importance of working directly with the emergency management, fire service and EMS communities has become even more apparent. It is critical that we keep the most likely first responders to any terrorism or WMD event fully advised of information and circumstances that might affect their response and their community's preparation. Partnering with the law enforcement community has enhanced our ability to deliver direct warnings that will result in improved operations and better outcomes. We look forward to continuing our partnership in critical infrastructure protection.

#### **Public Education and Awareness**

USFA continues to deliver fire safety messages to those most vulnerable to fire—the very young, the elderly and others. We will continue to manage Emergency Response Team activities with an eye toward public outreach and community hazards assessment and mitigation efforts. USFA will assist communities in establishing Community Emergency Response Teams.

We will continue to broadcast training information via the Emergency Education Network (EENET) twice a month to enhance State and local preparedness for all hazards, including terrorist incidents. Since 1981, EENET has broadcast more than 400 programs to meet the needs of all levels of emergency management, from volunteer fire fighters to State Emergency Management Directors.

EENET is an effective way to get timely information or training out to a large audience. Coupled with other outreach and training programs, EENET is a good way to share information about training and education and to keep first responders abreast of emerging issues.

#### **Data Collection**

The Fire Administration continues to collect, analyze, publish and distribute data and information related to fire prevention, occurrence, control, and related fields; defines and describes the national fire problem; and supports State and local collection and analysis of fire incident data.

This past fall, in cooperation with the National Fire Protection Association, the USFA completed a needs assessment of the U.S. fire service to gain a current under-

standing of problem areas and to guide future planning and initiatives. Combined with the ongoing national fire department census, we continue to develop an increasingly complete and accurate picture of the nation's fire departments' capability to meet the challenge of expanding roles and responsibilities in response to all hazards, including acts of terrorism.

#### **Research and Technology**

USFA leverages research partnerships and technology developments to improve fire prevention and promote public safety. In April, the USFA met with the fire sprinkler community to reenergize our advocacy for residential fire sprinklers. I am happy to report that industry agreed to work with USFA on this project. Data suggest that localized fire suppression systems in kitchens would dramatically reduce the number of civilian fire deaths in this country by as much as 25 percent. The cost to retrofit a kitchen is minimal. This is an excellent opportunity to reduce residential fire losses in the U.S. Since 40 percent of firefighter deaths in the line of duty occur at or en route to residential structures; the long-term, benefit is that firefighter injuries and deaths will also be reduced.

#### **Challenges**

Reducing the loss of life and property caused by fire remains a significant challenge. Each year, fire kills more than 4,000 people and injures more than 22,000. Annual property losses due to fire are estimated at nearly \$10 billion. And, firefighters pay a high price. In 2002, 102 firefighters died while on duty. These losses are unacceptable because most can be prevented.

While the numbers are still too high, great progress is being made to reduce the toll from fires. Since 1974, when Congress passed the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act (P.L. 93-498), and established the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy—USFA has helped to reduce fire deaths significantly. Over the last 10 years, fires have declined by 16 percent. During this same period, a 22 percent decline in civilian deaths and a 31 percent drop in civilian injuries were also reported.

#### **Conclusion**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to appear before you today. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. I will be glad to answer any questions you and other Members of the Committee may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bement, let's talk about interoperability again, which is obviously one of the most compelling difficulties that our firefighters and enforcement agencies face. Can you tell us a little bit about what NIST has been able to uncover on that and recommend?

Mr. BEMENT. Yes, sir. We have responded in many ways. One is developing summits and workshops to better understand the needs for new standards and also to determine how our programs complement programs among other Federal agencies. We, of course, are actively involved with NTIA in their spectrum allocation program in order to better understand how that can be improved, but we're also working with industry and the standards organizations in evaluating new-generation land mobile radio systems, new broadband technology and also cross-switching technology that will operate among the various bands that are currently available. We are also looking at a future generation of radio technology such as software-defined radio that will be much more interoperable and will provide a comprehensive solution to the current problems.

That's fundamentally what we're engaged in. We're looking at both short-term and long-term solutions. We're providing test beds for industry to come and evaluate their technology. We're working with them through CRADAs and other mechanisms to bring new technology into the marketplace.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, we appreciate your work, and I don't have to tell you how important this issue is. It's been graphically dem-

onstrated quite frequently, and not the least of which was during 9/11.

Chief Paulison, I won't ask you to comment on Congressman Weldon's recommendation that we preserve the position of U.S. Fire Administrator, because now you've become part of the bureaucracy.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. How long have you been in your job?

Mr. PAULISON. Eighteen months, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. In 18 months, what are the two things that you think you've most accomplished and the two things that you think we need to focus attention on, including from a congressional standpoint?

Mr. PAULISON. I think that the Fire Grant process is probably one of our most significant accomplishments. We are very proud of how we've operated that grant program, and it's due primarily to the Fire Service itself. Right now we have a hundred firefighters at Emmitsburg going through those grants, and we had a hundred last week, and we'll have a hundred next week. These are people who volunteer their time to come in and assist us. And the grants go directly to the fire departments. And it's been a tremendously successful program.

I think the other accomplishment is raising the awareness of the Fire Administration and what we're capable of doing and just raising the initiative of the Fire Service itself.

Some of the issues that you've already talked about, the interoperability, you know, as the preparedness director, I'm also in charge of administering the interoperability grants that we have, and those will be going out in probably the first—next month we'll be getting those out to some of those cities to develop some best practices, because there is no one solution to radio interoperability. But interoperability goes much, much further than just radios. Our equipment also is not interoperable.

Coming from Miami, I'm a scuba diver, and I can take my diving regulator anywhere in the world and rent a scuba tank and it always fits. But our air bottles from one air-pack manufacturer to another are not interoperable. I was a general contractor in Florida also, and I can go to Home Depot and buy a stack of saw blades, and it doesn't matter whether I have a Skil saw or if I have a Makita or a Homelite or any other saw, they always work. And our air compressors that we buy commercially, I can rent one in Florida and drag it to Seattle and rent a jackhammer and it always fits, but our hydraulic tools are not interoperable.

Regarding our communications system on scene, we saw what happened in several major incidents in this country where we get on the scene and we have a police command post and a fire command post, and the Government has a command post, and the mayor has a command post, and on down the line, and we don't talk to each other. So part of interoperability is also our setting up an incident command system where we talk to each other and we work with each other and we work out of the same command post. And all those things are interoperability issues, and those are the things we've been dealing with the Fire Service on, and that's why you see such a crowd behind us, because these are the issues that

you're going to hear from them. I think those are the two big accomplishments that I'm proud of and things that we need to continue.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. And we appreciate your efforts, Mr. Bement. And I also am keenly aware that spectrum management is an issue of congressional action, and we have had hearings and we are proposing legislation, and it's a lot more difficult than it should be, probably, because of the incredible value that's associated with the use of this spectrum, and there's this continuous tension between the reservation of spectrum for emergency and fire and defense purposes, as opposed to the commercial use of it. But I think we're making some progress in sorting that out.

I thank you both. I appreciate you being here. I thank you for your good work. And, Chief, you should come out to Arizona and visit us. It's much nicer than the weather in Miami, we think.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Come and see out there, OK?

Mr. PAULISON. I think the last time I was out there, you had a significant amount of fires.

[Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. That's right.

Thank you. Thanks, again.

Congressman Camp is here, and he would like to say a few words, and then we will have our next panel.

Congressman Camp, thank you for joining us. Thank you for your advocacy, and thank you for your great work—

Mr. CAMP. Well, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN.—for this worthy cause.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVE CAMP,  
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM MICHIGAN**

Mr. CAMP. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to testify before your Committee. And, obviously, this subject has taken greater importance since September 11, and I really congratulate you for convening today's hearing. America's firefighters are taking on heightened responsibilities that go beyond combating fires, and today our first responders must plan for possible acts of terrorism.

Mr. Chairman, I've introduced the House companion bill to the bill that you have introduced in the Senate, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act. I believe this legislation will help address current policy questions on how the Federal Government can most effectively provide firefighters with training and equipment necessary to protect lives. And, in my view, this bill gives appropriate weight to top fire-service needs; more specifically, supporting the development of voluntary consensus standards for firefighting equipment and technology, establishing nationwide and state mutual aid systems for dealing with national emergencies, authorizing the National Fire Academy to train firefighters to respond to acts of terrorism and other national emergencies.

The first objective of the bill focuses on establishing equipment and technology standards, and it would allow the U.S. Fire Administrator, in consultation with the National Institute of Standards and Technology and other such organizations to develop voluntary

consensus standards for evaluating the performance and compatibility of new firefighting technology, such as personal-protection equipment, devices for advance warning, equipment for enhanced vision, other types of new technology. Equipment purchased under the assistance of the Firefighters Grant Program must meet or exceed these voluntary consensus standards.

The second objective of the bill addresses what is called mutual aid systems or mutual aid compacts, which have been widely acknowledged to be an effective and efficient means of sharing emergency management resources among different jurisdictions. Federal support for mutual aid could better prepare States and localities for all types of disasters, including acts of terrorism. This bill directs, again, the U.S. Fire Administrator, in consultation with the Director of FEMA, to provide technical assistance and training to State and local Fire Service officials to establish these mutual aid systems for responding to national emergencies. Obviously, an important example of that comes, in part, as a result of our responses to the September 11 attacks.

The third objective of the Act permits the Superintendent of the National Fire Academy to coordinate with other Federal, State, and local officials in developing the curricula of the academy. New training courses would focus on building collapse rescue, the use of technology in response to fires, terrorists incidents, and other national emergencies, and strategies for dealing with terrorist-caused national catastrophes.

Last December, the National Fire Protection Association released its needs assessment of the U.S. Fire Service Report that had some pretty sobering statistics on fire personnel and their current capabilities. And obviously, the continued emphasis on formal training in the duties they perform is essential. This legislation has wide support, as you've heard, from the Nation's fire groups.

Again, I want to thank you for your leadership and allowing me to testify today and also thank you for all the efforts that you've made in this area for a very long time.

Thank you for the opportunity.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Camp follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DAVE CAMP, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM MICHIGAN

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee on a subject that has taken on added importance since the September 11th terrorist attacks. I applaud your decision to convene today's hearing on "Needs of the Fire Services." America's fire fighters are taking on heightened responsibilities that go beyond combating fires. Today, our first responders must plan for and respond to possible acts of terrorism.

This morning's hearing comes at an appropriate time for the fire services. As the U.S. Fire Administration settles into the newly created Department of Homeland Security, the Administration and Congress are examining which policy approaches can best meet the growing needs of the fire services, particularly during this transitional period. Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I would like to submit an approach that I believe yields significant benefits to our nation's firefighters.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, I have introduced the House companion to a bill you introduced in the Senate, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act, H.R. 545. I believe this legislation will help address current policy questions on how the federal government can most effectively provide firefighters with the training and equipment necessary to protect lives. In my view, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act gives appropriate weight to top fire service needs. More specifically, the bill seeks to:

1. Support the development of voluntary consensus standards for firefighting equipment and technology;
2. Establish nationwide and State mutual aid systems for dealing with national emergencies, and;
3. Authorize the National Fire Academy to train firefighters to respond to acts of terrorism and other national emergencies.

In large part, the genesis of the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act came after the September 11th attacks. After the tragic events of that day, fire departments throughout America began to grapple with new concerns over how to best train for and respond to terrorist acts. The needs of the fire service continue to grow as new threats emerge. As a result, Congress has a responsibility to assist and protect our firefighters. That is the goal of the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act.

As mentioned, the first objective of the bill focuses on establishing equipment and technology standards. It would allow the U.S. Fire Administrator, in consultation with the National Institute of Standards and Technology, national voluntary consensus standards development organizations, and other interested parties to develop voluntary consensus standards for evaluating the performance and compatibility of new fire fighting technology. Examples of new technologies include: personal protection equipment, devices for advance warning of extreme hazard, equipment for enhanced vision, and robotics and other remote-controlled devices, among others. Equipment purchased under the Assistance to Firefighters grant program must meet or exceed the voluntary consensus standards.

Establishing standards for firefighting equipment and technologies will help safeguard the lives of firefighters. At present, manufacturers of emergency equipment can sell their products with no government testing or certification requirements to ensure their product meets the needs of firefighters. A January 2003 *Consumer Reports* article entitled, "Safeguards Lacking for Emergency Equipment," highlights the problems associated with a lack of standards. The article reports "Firefighter organizations, which also represent most of the nation's emergency medical technicians, say they worry that there is no law that requires fire departments to buy equipment certified for use against chemical or biological agents."

The second objective of the bill addresses mutual aid systems. Mutual aid compacts are widely acknowledged to be an effective and efficient means of sharing emergency management resources among different jurisdictions. Federal support for mutual aid could better prepare states and localities for all types of disasters, including acts of terrorism. The Firefighting Research and Coordination Act directs the U.S. Fire Administrator, in consultation with the Director of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to provide technical assistance and training to state and local fire service officials to establish nationwide and state mutual aid systems for responding to national emergencies. An important example of why model mutual aid systems are important to establish comes in part, as a response to the September 11th attacks and also to wildfires that have raged in the western United States.

As this Committee noted in its November 18, 2002 report accompanying the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act, the Titan Systems Corporation issued a report on July 23, 2002, on behalf of the Arlington County, Virginia fire department. The report found that self-dispatching fire and emergency crews were favorable in some respects, but were also detrimental. For example, the report states that the Arlington County fire department "faced the monumental challenge of gaining control of the resources already onsite and those arriving minute-by-minute." The report goes on to say that, "firefighters and other personnel came and went from other Pentagon entrances with little or no control. Thus, had there been a second attack, as occurred at the World Trade Center, it would have been virtually impossible for the Incident Commander to determine quickly who might have been lost."

Another example of why model mutual aid plans are important comes from the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA)'s 2001 Annual Report. On September 11th, approximately 50 public safety agencies responded to the attack on the Pentagon resulting in 900 radio users attempting communications with various mission requirements to consider. The report details how initially, local first responders experienced no difficulty in establishing an interoperable communications system. But, as the number of secondary responders increased at the site, direct interoperability between the first and secondary responders was unavailable.

The third objective of the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act permits the Superintendent of the National Fire Academy to coordinate with other Federal, State, and local officials in developing curricula for classes offered by the Academy. Over one million students have received training at the National Fire Academy.

Since its inception in 1975, the Academy has helped firefighters gain vital education and training to the benefit of the American public. Its online courses and cooperation with local colleges and universities expand the reach of the Academy to thousands of firefighters across the nation.

With the nation recovering from acts of terrorism, engulfing wildfires, and the possibility of future national emergencies, America's firefighters deserve nothing less than quality educational opportunities and training to prepare for these disasters. We saw with the World Trade Center that building collapse rescue is a critical component of a firefighters job. In a December 1, 2001 article that appeared in Fire Chief magazine, a member of the Michigan Urban Search and Rescue team stated that while the federal government has spent millions of dollars to train local first responders with weapons of mass destruction, little if any focus has been placed on building collapse rescue. "For some time now, I have advocated that every state should have a structural-collapse response that includes a Urban Search and Rescue task force system," stated the Michigan firefighter.

The Firefighting Research and Coordination Act authorizes the Fire Academy to conduct new types of training in: building collapse rescue, the use of technology in response to fires; including terrorist incidents and other national emergencies; strategies for dealing with terrorist-caused national catastrophes; and applying new technology and developing strategies and tactics for fighting forest fires.

Last December the National Fire Protection Association released its "Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service" report that included sobering statistics on fire personnel and their current capabilities. An estimated 233,000 firefighters are involved in structural firefighting but lack formal training in those duties. Similarly, an estimated 40 percent of fire department personnel involved in hazardous material response lack formal training in those duties. The Firefighting Research and Coordination Act aims to reduce these alarming statistics.

Finally, I want to mention that this legislation enjoys wide support among many of this nation's fire groups including the Congressional Fire Services Institute, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters, and many others prominent fire organizations.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify before the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much for taking time from your very busy schedule to come and join us. Your support and efforts are important, and I look forward to continuing to work with you and Congressman Weldon. And I thank you very much.

Mr. CAMP. I noticed when you were discussing the weather, nobody mentioned Michigan.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CAMP. But we're starting to move into our good season.

The CHAIRMAN. I have great affection for your State. And I thank you very much.

Mr. CAMP. Yes, you do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks for coming.

Mr. CAMP. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Our next panel is Chief Randy R. Bruegman, the president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs; Mr. Kevin O'Connor, assistant to the general president for government and public relations, International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO-CLC; the Honorable James M. Shannon, president and chief executive officer, National Fire Protection Association; and Chief Philip C. Stittleburg, who is the chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for taking your time.

Is that the proper pronunciation, Chief Bruegman?

Mr. BRUEGMAN. Yes, thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Thank you all for coming, and we'll begin with you, Chief Bruegman. And if you'll pull that microphone over so that the stenographer can—Mr. Bruegman: Thank you.



**STATEMENT OF RANDY R. BRUEGMAN, PRESIDENT,  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**

Mr. BRUEGMAN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee.

I'm Randy Bruegman, chief of Clackamas County Fire District Number 1, located just outside of Portland, Oregon. I appear this morning as president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, which represents the leaders and managers of the American Fire Service consisting of more than 30,000 fire departments staffed by 1.1 million firefighters and emergency medical personnel.

America's fire and emergency service is the only organized group of citizens situated in local communities throughout this Nation like a fabric across this land, trained and equipped to deal with all risks and hazards, both natural and manmade.

I'd like to talk about several issues of importance to us this morning, and the first is the Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program. I think one of the most important relationships between the Fire Service and the Federal Government is the Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program, better known as the FIRE Act, and you've heard it spoken to several times this morning. I come before you today to ask for your help in securing its future.

The FIRE Act has been called, by both congressional and administration officials, one of the very best Federal grant programs, and we totally agree with that. And there are good reasons for its success. And I think Chief Paulison outlined several of those.

First, when you apply for a grant, the fire chief must clearly define that he or she has an urgent need. The application is subject to a rigorous peer review by Fire Service representatives. And, third, a department, before it's awarded a grant, the community must agree to a significant co-payment, and this assures local governmental buy-in. And, finally, the Federal funds cannot supplant funds from the local government; they are supplemental only.

The hallmark of the FIRE Act is that funds go directly to the local fire department for the intended purpose in a timely manner without being diminished or diverted. That's a Federal success story that I think our taxpayers can be very, very proud of.

But, as noted several times this morning, we see problems ahead. The President's budget proposal for fiscal year 2004 recommends \$500 million in funding for the FIRE Act, and it also moves the program from the U.S. Fire Administration to the Office for Domestic Preparedness. This transfer is proposed in accordance with section 430 of the Department of Homeland Security Act, which states, "The Office for Domestic Preparedness shall have the primary responsibility for the preparedness of the United States for acts of terrorism."

Mr. Chairman, I bring your attention to the authority for the FIRE Act, which originated in this Committee and is found in section 33 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974. That law states that the Director of FEMA shall make grants for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the public and firefighting personnel against fire and fire-related hazards and provide assistance for fire-prevention programs.

Mr. Chairman, the FIRE Act was not designed or intended for the sole purpose of enhancing terrorism response. The FIRE Act was structured to assist communities to better prepare for all risks and all hazards, one which could be an act of terrorism. We ask for your assistance from this Committee to keep the FIRE Act at the U.S. Fire Administration where it has been so successfully managed.

Second point, Fire Service presence in the Department of Homeland Security. We have a very serious concern from the leaders of this industry, the Fire Service industry. The emergency services—the continued reduction of our presence in the Department of Homeland Security is not being addressed. Our concern about the FIRE Act, the recent elimination of the U.S. Fire Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration, the cancellation, as has been noted several times, of a significant number of Fire Academy classes, is of real concern to us.

The creation of the new Department of Homeland Security is a process by which the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the Fire Service community supported, and we still do, to this day. This new department has the potential to provide great advancement for the first responder community. Unfortunately, we have reasons to be concerned about the representation the Fire Service has in this whole process.

This Committee understands the important role of the American Fire Service and the Emergency Service and the first responder community as it relates to major disasters, natural or manmade. We ask that you support our request for a voice at DHS that is appropriate and proportionate to the Fire Service contribution to homeland security and the safety of our communities throughout this country.

HazMat placarding. Recently, we've learned that the Department of Homeland Security may seek to substantially change or even eliminate the current placarding system for the transportation of hazardous materials. America's Fire Service, the primary provider of HazMat response in the U.S., relies upon the current placarding system to quickly assess a HazMat incident and initiate appropriate and effective response. This rapid assessment is critical to protecting nearby residents as well as the response team from potentially serious effects of a HazMat incident. In the absence of a proven replacement system, dismantling the current placarding system would be a significant mistake that would have serious ramifications for the safety of America's communities.

It appears that DHS is able to issue these regulations under emergency regulatory authority vested in the head of the Transportation Security Administration that precludes the normal notice and review process. These regulations could take effect with no outside notice other than consultation with the Secretary of Transportation and then a review by the Transportation Secretary Board, which is comprised solely of Cabinet-level officials from the administration. There's no opportunity for oversight or input from Congress or the American public. Mr. Chairman, the IAFC and the American Fire Service are very concerned about that situation.

Communications. And you've noted it so aptly in your opening remarks. One of the most persistent problems that plagues every

large-scale emergency response is the issue of communication interoperability. Fortunately, Senator McCain, your Committee has jurisdiction over this legislation. It represents a significant step forward in addressing this for us.

In 1997, the Congress set aside 24 megahertz of radio spectrum for public safety agencies. This spectrum is currently used by TV channels 63, 64, 68, and 69. Congress directed that transfer to the public safety be completed by December 31 of 2006, conditional on digital television rollout reaching 85 percent of the American households. Presently, only 1 percent, as you are well aware, have digital TVs; and, therefore, that rollout doesn't seem to be actually moving forward as we anticipated.

I see I'm running out of time, so I'm going to go ahead and end my comments this morning with just a brief thank you for your legislation that you've proposed for the transfer of technology to the Fire Service. It's extremely important.

I will end by saying this, Mr. Chairman. We appreciate the support that you have given to the American Fire Service. We appreciate the support and the understanding that you have about the role and responsibility that we have for the safety of our citizens, not only at the local level, but from a national perspective, as well.

We have a saying in the Fire Service—or it's not a saying, but it's noted, as terminology called "first due." And it talks about—"first due" denotes the companies that are dispatched to an alarm and are first to arrive.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would propose to you today that, in the arena of homeland security, we are "first due." The Fire Service will be the first to arrive and, in many cases, the last to leave. And it will be our efforts during the first 15 to 30 minutes to hours of a significant incident in this country that will dictate the outcome of that incident and will dictate the psychological impact and the economic impact in this country. We have to be recognized for the role that we play in homeland security and the protection of the homeland within our geographic borders. And I hope that, with your support in the future, we can address several of the concerns that we noted this morning.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bruegman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RANDY R. BRUEGMAN, PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am Randy Bruegman, Chief of Clackamas County Fire District No. 1 located outside Portland, Oregon. I appear this morning as the president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs which represents the leaders and managers of America's fire service. The fire service consists of about 30,000 fire departments staffed by 1.1 million firefighters and emergency medical personnel. America's fire and emergency service is the only organized group of citizens situated in local communities throughout the nation—like fabric across the land—trained and equipped to deal with all risks and all hazards both natural and manmade.

**The Fire and Emergency Service Community**

America's fire and emergency service is the only organized group of citizens situated in local communities throughout the nation trained and equipped to deal with natural and manmade disasters. Fire departments respond to all risks, all hazards ranging from earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods, to acts of terrorism, hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, fires, and medical emergencies.

The fire service protects America's critical infrastructure—the electrical grid, interstate highways, railroads, pipelines, petroleum and chemical facilities—and is, in fact, even considered part of the critical infrastructure. The fire service protects most federal buildings, provides mutual aid to most military bases, and protects interstate commerce. No passenger airliner takes off from a runway that is not protected by a fire department. Hazardous materials transports are an integral part of the United States economy, when they spill or ignite, the fire service responds to protect lives and property and clean-up the mess.

#### **Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program**

One of the most important relationships between the fire service and the federal government is the Assistance to Firefighters grant program, better known as the FIRE Act. I come before you today to ask for your help in securing its future.

The FIRE Act has been called—by both congressional and administration officials—one of the very best federal grant programs. We agree. And there are good reasons for its success.

I recently became aware of a document indicating the success of the FIRE Act grant program. The “Survey, Assessment, and Recommendations for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program” is an independent report compiled within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This document explicitly and precisely describes the strengths of the FIRE Act program.

In their words, “The USFA Grants to Firefighters Program has been *highly effective* in increasing the safety and effectiveness of grant recipients . . . 99 percent of program participants are satisfied with the program's ability to meet the needs of their department . . . and 97 percent of program participants reported positive impact on their ability to handle fire and fire-related incidents. Overall, the results of the survey and our analysis reflect that the USFA Grant to Firefighters program was highly effective in improving the readiness and capabilities of firefighters across the nation.” I think we all recognize the value of these words when coming from one federal agency to another.

I will be happy to provide copies of this document for review upon request.

The current assistance process works. First, when applying for a grant, the fire chief must clearly define an urgent need. Then the application is subject to rigorous peer review by fire service representatives. Third, for a department to be awarded a grant, the community must agree to a significant co-payment. This assures local government buy-in. Finally, federal funds cannot supplant funds from the local government, they are supplemental only. The hallmark of the FIRE Act is that funds go directly to the local fire department for the intended purpose in a timely manner without being diminished or diverted. That's a federal success story for which the taxpayers can be proud.

But we see problems ahead. The president's budget proposal for FY 2004 recommends \$500 million in funding for the FIRE Act; it also moves the program from the U.S. Fire Administration to the Office for Domestic Preparedness. This transfer is proposed in accordance with Section 430 of the Department of Homeland Security Act which states: “The Office for Domestic Preparedness shall have the primary responsibility . . . for the preparedness of the United States for acts of terrorism . . . .”

Mr. Chairman, I bring your attention to the authority for the FIRE Act, which originated in this Committee, and is found in Section 33 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974. The law states that the Director of FEMA shall make grants “for the purpose of protecting the health and safety of the public and fire-fighting personnel against fire and fire-related hazards and provide assistance for fire prevention programs . . . .” Mr. Chairman, the FIRE Act is not designed nor intended for the sole purpose of enhancing terrorism response. The FIRE Act is structured to assist communities to better respond to all risks and all hazards—one of which could be an act of terrorism. Mr. Chairman, we ask for assistance from this Committee to keep the FIRE Act at the United States Fire Administration (USFA) where it has been so successfully managed.

#### **Fire Service Presence in the Department of Homeland Security**

A very serious concern for the fire and emergency service is the continued reduction of the fire service presence in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In addition to our concern about the FIRE Act, the recent elimination of the Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration and the cancellation of a significant number of National Fire Academy classes are matters of real concern. The creation of the Department of Homeland Security is a process which the IAFC and the fire community supported. This new department has the potential to provide great advance-

ment for the first responder community. Unfortunately, we have reasons to be concerned about the representation of the fire service in this process.

This Committee understands the important role of America's fire and emergency service in the first responder community as it relates to major disasters—natural and manmade. We ask that you support our request for a voice at DHS that is appropriate and proportionate to the fire service contribution to homeland security.

#### **Hazardous Material Placarding**

Recently, we have learned that the Department of Homeland Security may seek to substantially change, or even eliminate, the current placarding system for the transportation of hazardous materials. We would like to emphasize the critical role that the current placarding system plays in protecting the safety of American communities and the safety of HazMat responders. Every year, there are approximately 850,000 shipments of hazardous materials. Statistics indicate that there will be over 17,000 HazMat incidents each year and that almost 500 of those incidents will be classified as serious—meaning that the incident resulted in a fatality or major injury.

America's fire service, the primary provider of HazMat response in the U.S., relies upon the current placarding system to quickly assess a HazMat incident and initiate an appropriate response. This rapid assessment is critical to protecting nearby residents as well as the response team from the potentially serious effects of a HazMat incident. In the absence of a proven replacement system, dismantling the current placarding system would be a significant mistake that would have serious ramifications for the safety of America's communities.

It appears that DHS is able to issue these regulations under "emergency" regulatory authority vested in the UnderSecretary of the Transportation Security Administration that precludes the normal notice and review process. These regulations could take effect with no outside notice other than "consultation" with the Secretary of Transportation and then review by the Transportation Security Board which is comprised solely of cabinet-level officials from the administration. There is no opportunity for oversight or input from Congress or the American public. Mr. Chairman, the IAFC and America's fire service is very concerned about this situation.

#### **Communications**

One of the most persistent problems that plagues large-scale emergency response is the issue of communications interoperability. Fortunately Senator McCain, your Committee has jurisdiction over legislation that represents a significant step forward in addressing this problem.

In 1997, Congress set aside 24 MHz of radio spectrum for public safety agencies. This spectrum is currently used by TV channels 63, 64, 68, and 69. Congress directed that the transfer to public safety be completed by December 31, 2006 conditioned on digital television rollout reaching 85 percent of American households. Presently, only 1 percent of households have digital television. As a result of this enormous loophole, the public safety community is unable to utilize this badly needed spectrum.

The IAFC strongly believes that any effort to address the DTV transition must include a requirement that television stations operating on channels 60–69 vacate the band as quickly as possible, but no later than December 31, 2006—the original completion date set by Congress. We strongly urge this Committee to address this as a priority issue.

#### **SAFER**

Another issue facing fire departments across the country is the lack of adequate staffing to appropriately respond to our communities' needs. The "Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act of 2003", also known as SAFER, would provide federal assistance to local fire departments for the purpose of hiring new firefighters. Patterned after the highly successful COPS program, local governments would jointly share the costs of hiring new firefighters over a three-year period until the local government assumed all responsibility for funding the new positions. This legislation has garnered bipartisan support in both houses of Congress, as well as the support of the major fire service organizations.

The primary reasons for hiring additional firefighters are very simple:

1. Greatly enhanced efficiency on-scene,
2. Increased safety, both for firefighters and the victims they are assisting, and
3. Enhanced planning and training to protect both firefighters and the communities they serve.

While some jurisdictions require four firefighters to staff a single piece of fire apparatus, most staff with only three. By increasing to four firefighters per unit we will generate a 100 percent increase in operational capacity compared with three-person companies. Under federal administrative law and proper safety practices, firefighters must operate in teams of at least two people. Therefore, fire apparatus staffing of four will yield two working teams of two, doubling the capacity of apparatus staffed with only three personnel.

Linked to this substantial gain in productivity is a commensurate increase in safety both for firefighters and for the victims they are treating. On emergency responses time is critical and minutes, or even seconds, can often mean the difference between life and death. The SAFER bill will help local governments provide necessary staffing on the initial response and not allow precious time to slip away as the first personnel on-scene wait for additional firefighters to arrive.

Recent economic conditions have forced fire departments to make significant budget cuts which are forcing staff reductions across the country. Departments have also been directly affected by the military call-ups necessary for the war in Iraq. A recent IAFC survey has shown that the smallest fire departments are disproportionately affected by the call-up of military personnel. These departments are the least able to absorb the loss of trained staff.

**Firefighting Research and Coordination Act:**

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the IAFC and the fire service, to thank you, Chairman McCain, for introducing the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act. This act will help coordinate necessary standards for new technologies and training in order to better prepare first responders for the challenges they face daily. Many important groups have been advancing first responder standards including, the InterAgency Board for Equipment Standardization and Inter-Operability; national voluntary consensus standards development organizations, such as the National Fire Protection Association; the National Institute of Standards and Technology; and other federal, state, and local agencies.

Chairman McCain has provided Congress with a realistic approach to the inter-operability issues that plague our community. It is time for Congress to pass this legislation.

**Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, the fire service stands today as a bulwark of the first responder community; ready to quickly respond to, contain, and resolve nearly all emergencies that arise in our local communities. We very much appreciate the opportunity to appear before your Committee today. We also appreciate the personal commitment you have demonstrated to the fire service through your Committee work and your willingness to serve as Chairman of the Fire Caucus in Congress.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Chief, for a very eloquent statement.

Mr. O'Connor, welcome.

**STATEMENT OF KEVIN O'CONNOR, ASSISTANT TO THE GENERAL PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS**

Mr. O'CONNOR. Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

I'm Kevin O'Connor, and I serve as the assistant to the general president of the International Association of Fire Fighters. Prior to joining the IAFF, I had the honor of being a professional firefighter and EMT in Baltimore County, and served concurrently as president of the Baltimore County and the Maryland State and D.C. Professional Firefighters Associations.

On behalf of my general president, Harold Schaitberger, and the 260,000 professional firefighters and EMS personnel we represent, I am pleased to offer our views on the critical needs of the Fire Service. While there are many daunting issues facing us, I will limit my remarks to two specific proposals that will immediately,

significantly, and measurably enhance our Nation's domestic preparedness.

Unfortunately, as you have pointed out, there has never been a uniform technical standard for firefighting equipment, personal protective clothing, and related gear. Much of the equipment available or in use today is neither tested nor certified by government or private labs. With the influx of Federal money and the growing public awareness of homeland-security issues, the need for such standards is greater than ever. The Firefighting Research and Coordination Act would do just that by establishing a scientific basis to evaluate new firefighting equipment.

Equally as significant that legislation would require equipment purchased with Federal dollars to comply with these standards, S. 321 also seeks to address a major deficiency in our emergency response profile by directing the U.S. Fire Administration to assist State and local communities in establishing mutual aid covenants to pool resources and better coordinate response.

Our lone recommendation is to include the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in the list of organizations to be consulted. NIOSH has been doing exemplary work and has unsurpassed expertise in developing standards for first responder protective equipment.

Mr. Chairman, before leaving this issue, I would be remiss if I did not commend you for your leadership and tenacity. The Nation's firefighters are deeply indebted for your work.

The vital lifesaving work of firefighters long predates the horrific events of 9/11. Firefighters are on the front line for America 24/7 each and every day. Today's firefighter is a multitasked professional, putting out fires, large and small, responding to hazardous materials incidents, engaging in technical, high-angle and swift-water rescue. And perhaps most important to everyone's day-to-day lives, firefighters and fire-based paramedics are the Nation's primary responders of pre-hospital emergency medical care. And post 9/11, certainly, we have assumed the role of the Nation's first responders to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

To successfully fulfill our mission, this Nation must have a sufficient number of firefighters properly trained and equipped to do their job. Sadly, we do not. And, as a result, people die.

Firefighting is not about fancy rigs or polished brass; it's about people. Our profession is inherently labor intensive. All studies concur that responding with inadequate personnel jeopardizes both the safety of firefighters and the citizens we are charged to protect. To operate safely and efficiently and to comply with nationally accepted standards, we must ensure that each rig is staffed with at least four firefighters and there are a minimum of 14 to 17 firefighters on every house fire.

Here are the facts. Over two-thirds of all fire departments operate short staffed. Two-thirds. A recent USFA study points out that between 60 and 75 percent of all fire departments have too few stations to meet response guidelines established by the Insurance Services Office.

How does this relate to terrorism response? The same study reveals that only 11 percent of our Nation's fire departments can handle a building collapse involving rescue and EMFs operations

for over 50 people. Consider the enormity of 9/11 or Oklahoma City or Hurricane Andrew, and then analyze that statistic about 11 percent. It is a sobering picture.

The exigent fiscal crisis confronting States and local government has exacerbated an already bad problem. Layoffs, station closings, and reductions in force are occurring in every part of the country. Congress would never allow our Army to engage in a war with two-thirds of its divisions understaffed. Incredibly, this is exactly what we're asking our local fire departments to do.

The solution is the adoption of the Safer Firefighters Act, S. 544. While the Federal Government has begun providing much needed assistance to local fire departments in recent years, none of our current programs currently provide any Federal assistance for the most significant need to the American Fire Service, firefighting personnel.

In order to address this critical staffing shortage, a bipartisan coalition has introduced the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act. SAFER provides grants to local fire departments to hire 75,000 additional firefighters over a 7-year period. It creates a 4-year program under which fire departments would apply for Federal grants, not to exceed \$100,000 per position, to hire additional firefighters. Local jurisdictions would then be required to maintain those positions for at least another year. SAFER is a very innovative approach to solving the Nation's need for additional firefighters and for improving homeland security.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, as a firefighter, a first responder, and someone who represents America's bravest, I'm here to tell you that no investment in homeland security will do as much to protect our nation and its citizens as the enactment of SAFER. Additionally, I join the chorus of my colleagues and Congressman Weldon in urging your Committee to continue the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration and the maintenance of the U.S. Fire Administrator as a Senate-confirmed position.

It is, indeed, time for action. We ask that you give the resources we need to protect our Nation and its people, and I ask that my written testimony be submitted for the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, all written testimony will be included.

[The prepared statement of Mr. O'Connor follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEVIN O'CONNOR, ASSISTANT TO THE GENERAL PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

#### **Introduction**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman. My name is Kevin O'Connor, and I serve as the Assistant to the General President for the International Association of Fire Fighters.

Prior to joining the IAFF, I had the honor of being a professional fire fighter in Baltimore County, Maryland, and I am very proud to say I was a member of our department's busiest and best ladder company. During that time, I served concurrently as President of the Baltimore County Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association and the Maryland State and District of Columbia Professional Fire Fighters.

On behalf of my General President Harold Schaitberger, and the 260,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel we represent throughout the



United States, and who collectively provide fire and emergency response protection to over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the nation's population, I am pleased to offer our views on the critical needs of the fire service.

While there are many daunting issues facing the fire service, I will limit my remarks to two specific pieces of legislation that will immediately, significantly and measurably enhance our nation's domestic preparedness. They are: S.321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act and S.544, the SAFER Fire Fighters Act.

#### **Firefighting Research and Coordination**

The need for uniform technical standards for firefighting equipment, personal protective equipment, and other related gear is now greater than ever. Much of the emergency response equipment available today is not tested or certified by government or other labs. This problem is increasing as fire departments prepare to replace old and worn equipment, and manufacturers flood the market with new equipment in response to increased government spending and citizen awareness of homeland security.

S. 321 would finally establish a scientific basis for measurement and testing methodologies for new firefighting equipment. The legislation would authorize the United States Fire Administration (USFA) to work with NIST, the Interagency Board, and other federal, state, local, and private consensus standards organizations to accomplish this goal.

Significantly, the legislation would require equipment purchased with federal dollars—including grants from the highly successful FIRE Act program—to comply with these standards wherever feasible. In addition to encouraging communities to purchase quality equipment, we are optimistic that this language will promote the development of safer and better equipment as manufacturers strive to comply with new federal standards.

S. 321 also seeks to address the lack of coordination among responding agencies by directing the USFA to provide technical assistance and training for state and local fire service officials to establish nationwide and state mutual aid systems for responding to national emergencies.

We are especially supportive of the concept of creating a national credentialing system for emergency responders. Emergency response and mutual aid networks have long been plagued by the lack of consensus about what fire fighters and fire departments should be capable of. S.321 will seek to rectify this serious deficiency by asking the U.S. Fire Administration report to consider a credentialing system as part of its report to Congress on the deployment of emergency responders.

The lone recommendation we wish to make regarding S.321 is to expressly include the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the list of organizations to be consulted. NIOSH has been doing exemplary work certifying respirators for WMD response, and has unsurpassed expertise in standards for first responder protective equipment.

Before leaving this issue, I would be remiss if I failed to commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your pioneering work on this issue. Prior to your involvement, the world of fire fighting standards was generally considered outside the scope of the federal government. Your innovative approach demonstrates that there is a significant role for the federal government to play in this arena, and for this, the nation's fire fighters are deeply grateful.

#### **Fire Fighter Staffing**

As you well know, Mr. Chairman, the work of fire fighters in protecting our nation long predates September 11, 2001. For nearly 100 years, the members of the IAFF have been the first on the scene whenever and wherever people's lives are in jeopardy.

Firefighting, or putting the "wet stuff on the red stuff," is but one dimension of our work. We are the ones who respond whenever a hazardous chemical is released into the environment. We search for and rescue people who are trapped or in danger. We are the nation's primary providers of pre-hospital emergency medical care. And more recently, in addition to all we have been doing, we must also assume the role of the nation's first responders to acts of terrorism.

The mission to protect Americans against terrorist acts poses a number of unprecedented challenges for the fire service. Each time the alarm rings, we must be prepared for the possibility that it is an act of war. Our enemies possess weapons of mass destruction, and appear unafraid to use them. If a biological, chemical, or radiological attack is unleashed against Americans, it will be fire fighters who will respond first. Moreover, terrorism is forcing us to rethink how personnel are deployed. Rather than viewing incidents as isolated events, we must confront the possibility that each incident is but one part of a coordinated attack.

To meet these crucial and growing demands, we need an adequate number of fire fighters. Firefighting always has been and always will be essentially about people. It is a labor-intensive operation that requires large numbers of properly equipped and trained personnel to perform the myriad tasks that must be undertaken at an emergency scene. Attempting to respond to a fire or other hazard with only 2 or 3 people per piece of apparatus is not only ineffective, it is extraordinarily dangerous. Every year in our nation, fire fighters lose their lives because there are not enough of them on scene to conduct a safe response.

Unfortunately, responses with 2 or 3 fire fighters have become the norm. Studies indicate that 2/3 of all fire departments in America lack adequate personnel, and the problem is growing. Even after September 11th, municipalities are failing to adequately staff fire departments. The IAFF receives at least two new requests each week from our locals seeking assistance to prevent layoffs, and station and company closings. Examples of short staffing are common in every part of the country.

- In Arizona, due to the \$100 billion state deficit, the city of Phoenix plans to eliminate three engine companies and lay off 42 fire fighters if it cannot balance its budget.
- In South Carolina's largest cities, including Charleston, fire fighters respond with 3—and sometimes as few as 2—fire fighters per apparatus.
- In New York City, a \$47 million reduction to the Fire Department would force the closure of 35 to 40 of the city's 207 firehouses. Mayor Bloomberg has proposed a plan to reduce the per piece staffing on 39 FDNY companies.
- In Buffalo, New York, the city has already closed four fire companies. Still being debated are additional proposals to close more companies and reduce fire fighting personnel by as many as 200 fire fighters.
- In Texas, the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth have proposed shutting down companies. And Fort Worth is planning to reduce the number of fire fighters per apparatus from four to three.
- Seattle, Washington has proposed eliminating 31 fire fighters.
- In the Midwest, Minneapolis, a dynamic cosmopolitan area and a commercial and cultural center, has laid off 44 fire fighters, reducing the fire department size to less than what it was a decade ago. In Dayton, Ohio, four engine companies have been eliminated and the city plans to reduce the number of fire fighters per apparatus from four to three. And, in the little township of Bellaire, Ohio, the Mayor and Town Council have proposed eliminating the fire department because of budgetary woes.
- In Springfield Massachusetts, 53 fire fighters have been laid off. In nearby Worcester, Massachusetts, the city is honoring the memory of the six fire fighters who died in that horrific warehouse fire three years ago, by laying off 17 fire fighters.

These examples are merely the tip of the iceberg. Below the surface, there is a massive personnel crisis that is the weak link in our homeland defense. Congress would never allow our Army to engage in a war with 2/3 of its divisions understaffed. Incredibly, this is exactly what we are asking our local fire departments to do in this current war on our home soil.

Quite simply, far too many local fire departments don't have adequate personnel to perform their mission. With the new dangers posed by terrorists, this situation has reached crisis proportions. Whether it be a containment and evacuation mission following release of a radiological material in Texas, evacuating a skyscraper in Los Angeles, or providing emergency medical care to Members of Congress following an explosion in the Capitol, the frightening fact of life is that we simply do not have enough people to get the job done.

### **Staffing Studies**

Frontline fire fighters have always understood the critical role of safe staffing. Beyond the anecdotal, numerous studies document the extent of fire fighter understaffing and the impact it has on fire fighter safety and community security.

In its seminal report, "*A Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service*," USFA/NFPA found that the vast majority of fire departments cannot respond to emergencies in a timely manner, and when fire fighters do reach the scene of an emergency, there are not enough personnel to do the job safely and effectively. The report found that up to 75 percent of our nation's fire departments have too few fire stations to meet response time guidelines. In fire departments that protect communities with a population of less than a million, it is common to respond to emergencies with less than 4 fire fighters per apparatus. Further, the report found that only 11 percent of our

nation's fire departments could handle structural collapse involving rescue and EMS operations for over 50 people. Considering the enormity of the destruction on September 11th, in Oklahoma City, or caused by Hurricane Andrew, it is a sobering and sad that only a small segment of our population has real protection from terrorism or natural disasters.

A study conducted by the Seattle Fire Department found that the severity of fire fighter injuries declined 35 percent when staffing per apparatus was increased from 3-person crews to 4-person crews. A study by the Dallas Fire Department found a direct correlation between staffing levels and both the safety and effectiveness of emergency response operations. Specifically, the Dallas study found that inadequate staffing delays or prevents the performance of critical tasks, increases the physiological stress on fire fighters, and increases the risk to both civilians and fire fighters. After analyzing their data, the authors of the Dallas study concluded, "staffing below a crew size of four can overtax the operating force and lead to higher losses."

And studies of fire fighter fatalities have consistently identified inadequate staffing as a key factor in fireground deaths. Since 1997, NIOSH has investigated every fire fighter line-of-duty death as part of its Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program. Far too many of these reports have attributed these deaths to inadequate personnel on the scene.

NIOSH has been especially critical of the failure of fire departments to assure that there are adequate numbers of people stationed outside a dangerous environment during an interior fire suppression attack. These outside personnel, known as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT), are equipped and ready to perform rescue missions when a fire fighter becomes disoriented or lost during an interior attack.

A recent NIOSH report concluded that a RIT should respond to every major fire. The duties of the team were enumerated in the report and are quoted below.

*The team should report to the officer in command and remain at the command post until an intervention is required to rescue a fire fighter(s) . . . Many fire fighters who die from smoke inhalation, from a flashover, or from being caught or trapped by fire actually become disoriented first. They are lost in smoke and their SCBA runs out of air, or they cannot find their way out through the smoke, become trapped, and then fire or smoke kills them. The RIT will be ordered by the IC to complete any emergency searches or rescues. It will provide the suppression companies the opportunity to regroup and take a roll call instead of performing rescue operations . . . When a RIT is used in an emergency situation, an additional RIT should be put into place in case an additional emergency situation arises. This additional RIT should be comprised of fresh, well-rested fire fighters.*

### **Staffing Standards**

The need for adequate fireground personnel has been formally recognized by standardsmaking bodies of both the federal government and the fire service industry. Both the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the consensus standards making body of the fire service, have promulgated standards designed to achieve safe staffing levels.

#### *OSHA's "Two-In/ Two-Out" Standard*

In 1998, OSHA amended its Respirator Standard for employees engaged in dangerous occupations that require use of breathing apparatus. The revised standard formally endorsed a safe staffing rule known as "2-in/2-out" that left no doubt about the vital link between sufficient staffing and fire fighter safety.

The 2-in/2-out regulation requires that whenever fire fighters enter a burning structure or other dangerous environment, they must do so in teams of at least two that operate in direct visual or voice contact. Additionally, for every group of two fire fighters inside the structure, there must be a corresponding number of at least two other fully-equipped and trained fire fighters who remain outside the structure, monitoring those inside and who are prepared to rescue them.

Unfortunately, most fire departments do not currently have adequate staffing to comply with these safety regulations. The result is that all too often fire fighters are sent into dangerous environments without sufficient personnel standing by to rescue them if they become disoriented, trapped or injured.

#### *NFPA 1710*

In the face of the mounting evidence of a severe shortage of fire fighters, NFPA—the consensus, standard making body of the fire service—issued its first standard on minimum staffing for fire departments in the summer of 2001. NFPA Standard 1710, governing deployment and operations for fire and rescue departments, was the

result of years of thoroughly investigating staffing related line-of-duty injuries and deaths, and gathering and analyzing data.

Ten years in the making, NFPA 1710 established consensus standards for minimum safe staffing levels for basic fire fighting operations; for responses to tactical hazards, high hazard occupancies, and high incident frequencies; and for overall, integrated fireground operations. If fully implemented, this standard would result in more effective and more efficient fire and EMS departments across the United States—and in our business that means lives saved.

OSHA's 2-in/2-out standard and NFPA 1710 clearly articulate the minimum staffing levels that fire departments need in order to perform emergency operations safely and effectively. Yet, as of today, jurisdictions that comply with these standards are in the minority. It is for this reason that federal assistance is needed and warranted.

### **The SAFER Fire Fighters Act**

The solution to the staffing crisis is the adoption of S. 544, the SAFER Fire Fighters Act. In recent years, the federal government has increasingly recognized its responsibility to assist local governments with the cost of protecting Americans against hazards. Both the FIRE Act and the programs run by the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) have provided training and equipment to local fire departments. Other federal programs provide funding for emergency response training involving transportation incidents, superfund sites and nuclear facilities.

None of these programs, however, currently provides any federal assistance for the most significant need of America's fire service: fire fighting personnel. Even the FIRE Act, which was originally conceived as a staffing proposal and lists staffing as the first of its 13 areas, can not currently be used to hire fire fighters due to the structure of the program and FEMA's decision to limit its grants to certain areas.

In order to address the critical staffing shortage, a bi-partisan group of Members of Congress has introduced the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Act. The SAFER Act provides grants to local fire departments to fund the hiring of 75,000 additional fire fighters over a seven-year period. SAFER would create a four year program under which fire departments would apply for federal grants that would contribute to the costs associated with hiring new fire fighters, not to exceed \$100,000 over four years for each fire fighter hired. Local jurisdictions would then be required to retain the fire fighter position(s) for at least one additional year.

The SAFER Fire Fighters Act is an innovative approach to solving the nation's need for more fire fighters. It is an example of the new type of federalism that our country needs to combat terrorism. Numerous federal studies and reports bemoan the lack of coordination between the different levels of government. The SAFER Fire Fighters Act would be a step towards better cooperation and coordination amongst local, state, and federal governments to respond strongly and decisively to terrorism and other emergencies.

Although we are aware of no organized opposition to the SAFER Act, some Members of Congress have raised some legitimate questions, which I would like to address.

Some argue that paying for fire fighter training and equipment may be a legitimate federal government function, but providing aid to hire personnel crosses some sort of boundary for appropriate federal involvement. But the federal government has long provided financial assistance to local government for the express purpose of hiring municipal employees, including police officers, teachers and many other occupations. President Bush's signature domestic issue, the No Child Left Behind Act, is only the most recent in a long line of federal programs that provide funding to hire local government workers.

Other Members question the authorized funding level. They argue that \$1 billion a year is too much money at a time of fiscal restraint. We disagree. Since September 2001, Congress has passed in excess of \$55 billion in supplemental appropriations for homeland security and the war on terrorism. Additionally, the President has proposed over \$36 billion for homeland security in FY 2004, which includes the \$3.5 billion First Responder proposal. The funding is available. It is simply a matter of priorities.

As a fire fighter, a first responder, and someone who represents America's Bravest, I am here today to tell you that no investment in Homeland Security will do as much to protect Americans as enactment of the SAFER Fire Fighters Act.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the IAFF thanks you for your leadership on fire-fighting issues and, in particular, for tackling the need for more research and coordination in the fire service. The need for S.321 has never been greater. All fire-fighting equipment should meet minimum standards. More mutual aid agreements should be signed. And, fire fighters and departments should be credentialed so that parties to mutual aid agreements know the capabilities of their partners. If S.321 were enacted, fire fighters would respond to the next emergency knowing that their equipment work, and having the confidence in the capabilities and competency of the fire department providing mutual aid. This would be a real benefit to frontline fire fighters.

The other need of the fire service that the federal government must address is the shortage of fire fighters. This week marks the twenty-ninth anniversary of the publication of America's Burning, the first comprehensive analysis of the American fire service. In the nearly three decades that have past since that hallmark report, the problems identified continue and have worsened. In those many years, new threats have expanded our responsibilities, while the resources available to us have been reduced.

Domestic terrorism was not a real threat in the 1970s. On September 11th, we witnessed one of the "worst case scenarios" that terrorism experts have warned us about. Yet, the string of attacks that we suffered in the '90s, including the first attack on the World Trade Center, and the Oklahoma City and the Olympics bombings, should have alerted us to the threat. We, as a nation, should have been better prepared for September 11th.

Fire fighters have learned the lessons of September 11th. The signs won't be ignored as they were in the last decade. We know that the nation must confront, and realistically deal with, the next great threat to our homeland—an attack using weapons of mass destruction. In order to realistically deal with future terrorist attacks, the nation must address the staffing crisis in our fire departments. Federal dollars spent to purchase training and equipment for fire fighters will only go as far as the number of fire fighters. To fully maximize the money spent and to ensure adequate homeland security, more fire fighters need to be hired.

Mr. Chairman, help us do our jobs. Provide the resources and staffing we need to serve our nation and its people.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. O'Connor.  
Mr. Shannon?

### STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES M. SHANNON, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

Mr. SHANNON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm honored to appear before you today.

My name is Jim Shannon, and I'm president and CEO of NFPA. NFPA is a nonprofit organization founded more than a hundred years ago with a mission to save lives through fire-and life-safety education and training, fire research and analysis, and the development of consensus codes and standards that are adopted by State and local jurisdictions throughout the United States and widely used by the Federal Government and internationally.

As the Congress considers the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration and its many important functions, I wish to testify today in support of your legislation, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act.

I also want to bring to your attention a congressionally authorized report that found serious gaps in the training, staffing, and equipment of the U.S. Fire Service.

First, let me state emphatically that the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration is extremely important to the effectiveness of the Fire Service throughout the United States. For nearly three decades, the USFA and the National Fire Academy have worked successfully with NFPA and the Fire Service to reduce the

death and destruction caused by fire. While both civilian and firefighter deaths have decreased dramatically, we must do more to ensure that our Fire Service can meet the new challenges of homeland security, including responding effectively to biological or chemical accidents or attacks.

With the move of the USFA to the Department of Homeland Security, there are important functions and positions that must be retained. For example, the USFA must continue to provide public education in fire-prevention activities in partnership with safety organizations, particularly those working to reduce fire deaths among high-risk groups. It's also critical that the Administrator of the USFA remain a Presidential appointee to retain that important advocacy position within the executive branch.

This legislation and the companion bill introduced by Representative Camp in the House of Representatives will do much to focus Federal agencies on the needs of our first responders. It will provide additional research and support for an already strong process that will inevitably lead to safer firefighting. By becoming a full partner in the consensus process, the Federal Government can be assured that first responders will have the finest equipment and technology available. And isn't that what we should demand for those who routinely risk their lives on our behalf?

Now, I ask that you consider the findings from the recently published needs assessment of the U.S. Fire Service, a study authorized by Congress and conducted by NFPA in cooperation with FEMA. The study, which I submit today for the Committee's full review, is troubling.

Now, allow me to focus on three distinct areas: training, equipment, and staffing. Here's just a sampling of what we found.

Only one in every 10 fire departments has the local personnel and equipment required to respond to a building collapse or the release of chemical or biological agents.

Fifty percent of our firefighters lack formal training in technical rescue which involves unique or complex conditions, precisely the situations that they would encounter in a terrorist attack.

There are huge gaps in training. There's been no formal training for 21 percent of those involved in structural firefighting, for 27 percent of those involved in EMS work, and for 40 percent who are sent in to deal with hazardous materials.

And we don't protect our firefighters as we should. One third of the protective clothing worn by firefighters sent into a burning building is more than 10 years old.

On a typical fire-department shift, 45 percent of first-responding firefighters lack portable radios—now, interoperability is a problem, but 45 percent on a typical fire department don't have radios at all—36 percent lack self-contained breathing apparatus, and 42 percent answer an emergency call without a personal-alert safety-system device that's critical in locating an injured or trapped firefighter.

Finally, at least 65 percent of cities and towns nationwide don't have enough fire stations to achieve widely recognized response-time guidelines, and those guidelines recommend that firefighters be on the scene of any situation within 4 minutes 90 percent of the time.

Now, not surprisingly, the picture is bleaker in smaller communities. And, remember, 75 percent of the country's firefighters are volunteers. Twenty-one percent of rural communities often respond with too few firefighters to engage safely in structural firefighting, as do 38 percent of the fire departments in communities with more than 50,000 residents.

We must do better. We cannot continue to ask our firefighters to do more with fewer resources. We should not expect the men and women in our armed services to defend our nation without proper training, equipment, and staffing; but as the country braces for the unknown at home, our Nation's firefighters, who are nearly always the first responders in any crisis, are woefully unprepared to fully protect our citizenry or themselves. And so this need is urgent, and it's overdue.

Many of our firefighters, most of our firefighters, face the same limitations and obstacles that they encountered on September 11, and we can no longer ask our firefighters and our fire departments to survive entirely on local tax revenues supplemented by potluck dinners and auctions and raffle tickets. The Federal Government must provide adequate assistance to our firefighters to meet the many challenges, whether natural, unintentional, or deliberate, as they protect us and the security of our homeland.

Your legislation, Mr. Chairman, would begin to address these urgent needs, and NFPA enthusiastically endorses it.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shannon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES M. SHANNON, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

Chairman McCain, Senator Hollings and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before this Committee today. My name is James M. Shannon, and I am President and Chief Executive Officer of NFPA (the National Fire Protection Association). NFPA is a non-profit organization, founded more than 100 years ago, with a mission to save lives through fire and life safety education and training, fire research and analysis, and the development of consensus codes and standards that are adopted by state and local jurisdictions throughout the United States and widely used by the federal government.

Today NFPA has nearly 300 codes and standards addressing safety, each accredited by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) and developed by technical experts, the fire service, and others participating as volunteers in a consensus process. This process ensures that all interested parties have a say in developing standards. Congress affirmed its support for voluntary consensus standards in the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 (P.L.104-113) and reaffirmed that support in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the law that created the new department.

As the Congress considers the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) and its many important functions, I wish, Senator McCain, to testify today in support of your legislation, Senate Bill 321 the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act. I also want to bring to your attention—and the attention of your colleagues—a Congressionally authorized report that found serious gaps in the training, staffing and equipment of the U.S. fire service.

First, let me state emphatically that the reauthorization of the U.S. Fire Administration is extremely important to the effectiveness of the fire service throughout the United States. In May of 1973, nearly 30 years ago to the day, the Chairman of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, Richard E. Bland, transmitted to President Nixon its final report "America Burning." In that report the Commission recommended establishment of the United States Fire Administration to:

- Evaluate the nation's fire problem through data collection and analysis and research

- Create a National Fire Academy to improve training and education for fire service personnel
- Strengthen public awareness of the fire threat
- Provide grants to state and local governments

For nearly three decades, the USFA and the National Fire Academy have been working successfully with NFPA and the fire service to reduce the death and destruction caused by fire in the U.S. We have made great strides over the past 30 years. While both civilian and firefighter deaths have decreased dramatically, we must do much more to ensure that our fire departments can meet the new challenges of homeland security, including responding effectively to biological or chemical accidents or attacks.

While we support the move of the USFA to the new Department of Homeland Security, there are important functions and positions that must be retained. For example, the USFA must continue to provide public education and fire prevention activities in partnership and cooperation with safety organizations, particularly those working to reduce fire deaths among high risk groups (children, older adults and persons with disabilities). It is also critical that the position of Administrator of the USFA remain a Presidential appointment to retain that important advocacy position within the Executive Branch.

The staff at USFA has done a tremendous job in administering the Assistance to Firefighters (FIRE) Grant Program. Since its creation in FY2001, this program has provided more than \$1 billion in financial resources directly to fire departments. Nonetheless, fire departments applied for more than \$7 billion, demonstrating that the needs are great. It is crucial that the FIRE Grant Program be maintained as a separate and distinct funding source where fire departments can receive direct funding from the USFA and avoid unnecessary red tape. I would also urge the Congress to fund the program at a level no less than its authorized amount of \$900 million dollars.

This legislation and the companion bill introduced by Representative Camp in the House of Representatives will do much to focus federal agencies such as USFA and the National Institute of Standards and Technology on the needs of our first responders. It will provide additional research and support for an already strong process that will inevitably lead to safer firefighting equipment. By becoming a full partner in the consensus process, the Federal Government can be assured that first responders will have the finest equipment and technology available. And isn't that what we should demand for those who routinely risk their lives on our behalf?

Another key element of your legislation is the requirement that equipment purchased through the FIRE Grant Program must meet or exceed applicable voluntary consensus standards. This concept is not new. Many existing federal grant programs already have similar requirements. For example, the Department of Justice's Bullet-proof Vest Partnership Grant Program requires that vests meet minimum safety and performance standards. The voluntary consensus process has served the fire service well for many years, and it should serve as the national model.

However, the development of new technologically-sophisticated equipment is only one aspect of improving the nation's fire service. Consider these findings from the recently published "Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service," a study authorized by Congress and conducted by NFPA in cooperation with FEMA. The study, which I submit today for the Committee's full review, delivers some troubling findings. Allow me to focus on three distinct areas—training, equipment and staffing. Here's just a sampling of what NFPA and FEMA found:

- Only one in every 10 fire departments has the local personnel and equipment required to respond to a building collapse or the release of chemical or biological agents
- 50 percent of our firefighters involved in "technical rescue" lack formal training, but technical rescue involves unique or complex conditions, precisely the situation they would encounter in a terrorist attack
- There are other huge gaps in training—There has been no formal training for 21 percent of those involved in structural firefighting; for 27 percent of those involved in EMS work; and for 40 percent who are sent in to deal with hazardous materials
- And we don't protect our firefighters as we should. One third of the protective clothing worn by firefighters sent into a burning building is more than 10 years old.
- On a typical fire department shift, 45 percent of first responding firefighters lack portable radios; 36 percent lack self-contained breathing apparatus; and 42



percent answer an emergency call without a Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) device that is critical in locating an injured or trapped firefighter

- Finally, at least 65 percent of cities and towns nationwide don't have enough fire stations to achieve widely recognized response-time guidelines. Those guidelines recommend that firefighters be on the scene of any situation within 4 minutes, 90 percent of the time

Not surprisingly, the picture is bleaker in our smaller communities. And remember seventy-five percent of the country's firefighters are volunteers. Twenty-one percent of rural communities often respond with too few firefighters to engage safely in structural firefighting. Our research also found that thirty-eight percent of fire departments in communities with more than 50,000 residents often respond with too few firefighters.

We must improve these numbers. We cannot continue to ask our firefighters to do more with fewer resources. We would not expect the men and women in our armed services to defend our nation without proper training, equipment and staffing. That's how it should be. But as the country braces for the unknown at home, our nation's firefighters, who are nearly always the first responders in any crisis, are woefully unprepared to fully protect our citizenry or themselves. The need is urgent and overdue.

Our firefighters face the same limitations and obstacles they encountered on September 11th. We can no longer ask our fire departments to survive entirely on local tax revenue supplemented by potluck dinners, auctions and fundraisers. The federal government must provide adequate resources and support to our firefighters to meet the many challenges—whether natural, unintentional or deliberate—as they protect us and the security of our homeland.

Your legislation would begin to address these urgent needs, and NFPA enthusiastically endorses it.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to answer any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Shannon.  
Chief Stittleburg?

**STATEMENT OF PHILIP C. STITTLEBURG, CHAIRMAN,  
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL**

Mr. STITTLEBURG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today.

I represent the National Volunteer Fire Council. There are approximately 800,000 volunteer firefighters in our nation. That means that about 75 percent of all firefighters in the United States are volunteers, and about 90 percent of all fire departments in the United States are either fully volunteer or predominantly volunteer.

Now, I mention that for the purpose of demonstrating that the volunteer sector is a major component of the Nation's Fire Service. And, clearly, the Nation's Fire Service is a major component of homeland security.

I'd like to address a number of issues, beginning with the FIRE Act. A number of the people who preceded me have already addressed that, so I won't dwell on it at length other than to say that it's at \$1.2 billion now that has been put out to the Fire Service, and it's gone directly to the fire departments.

Speaking from the volunteer sector, that's particularly important to us. We serve rural areas. Many of us have small departments with very, very limited budgets. And this has been a very good start on meeting our needs. Chief Paulison spoke about the needs of the Fire Service, in terms of basic gear. President Shannon mentioned, likewise, the needs in terms of gear and training. The FIRE Act is clearly a prime vehicle for trying to address that issue.

This budget year, of course, started with good news and bad news. The good news was that the administration did put \$500 million in its budget for the FIRE Act. The bad news was that it didn't put in the \$900 million that's the authorized level, of course. And the worst news, in our view, is that it proposes that it would be administered by the Office of Domestic Preparedness.

Now, in the past, as you know, it's been administered by the U.S. Fire Administration. Chief Paulison and his staff have done an outstanding job in administering that program. They've administered it quickly. They've administered it efficiently and are in the process of doing it right now for the third year.

ODP doesn't have the benefit of that experience, doesn't have the benefit of that background. They would have to obtain and train staff to do it. And, in my opinion, that's basically reinventing the wheel.

The other concern is that ODP tends to work primarily through the States, and we have a very deep concern that, with ODP, we may eventually see the FIRE Act end up as a part of a State-based block-grant program. And that fear is not entirely unfounded. There was a proposal, of course, in the fiscal year 2003 budget to do precisely that. Congress, of course, in its wisdom, saw a better way. But that is certainly a deep concern.

We recommend that the FIRE Act be funded at the \$900 million level and that it be kept in the U.S. Fire Administration. It's the best money that could be spent in the best fashion that it could be spent.

Several previous speakers have already addressed the issue of the National Fire Academy. I won't, again, go in, at great length, to that, other than to say that, to the volunteer sector, the Fire Academy classes are very important. The training they give, particularly in off-campus training, is especially important to us, because it accommodates volunteers in terms of scheduling and travel commitments that are very helpful to us.

I think it's important that the Fire Academy be properly funded for its mission, but I would strongly suggest that classes to the academy not be reinstated by making cuts elsewhere. For instance, the Fire Academy has a number of cooperative agreements with various Fire Service organizations, mine being one of them, and that's a very important part of what the National Volunteer Fire Council does, is wrapped up in that cooperative agreement with USFA. It enables both of us to carry out public education and training and data collection, things of that nature. So I would certainly hope that we do not see a situation of robbing Peter to pay Paul, where we—in other words, solve the problem of how do we make sure that the Fire Academy has enough money for classes by cutting out, say, cooperative agreements.

The No. 2 concern I have is the apparent elimination of the U.S. Fire Administrator position. And, again, that's already been addressed. But I will simply say that that is a key position to us. The U.S. Fire Administrator is, indeed, the voice of the Fire Service to the President, to Secretary Ridge. And it's very important to us that we maintain that voice and we keep that fire focus.

We have concern, also, about how funds for terrorism training and equipment may get distributed. We hear, from our members,

that fire departments at the local level frequently are not seeing the money arrive there; and this is especially important to the volunteer sector, where much of what we cover is suburban and rural areas, which may not be perceived as a target. But I would suggest to you, sir, that the very perception that things are not a target makes them especially vulnerable to becoming a target. There's not a whole lot said about the fourth airliner that crashed on September 11; but, of course, that was a major incident, also, and that occurred in a volunteer, totally volunteer, area. So things can become targets in inadvertent ways, also.

I would suggest to you, sir, that when the funds are disbursed to first responders, that we take a very close look at the definition of first responder. It seems that prior to September 11, nobody could say first responder, and now everybody is one. I would suggest to you that the first responder definition depends on exposure to risk and response time, and that the first responders are fire, law enforcement, and EMS, and it's as simple as that.

The SAFER bill, we likewise support that, but I strongly suggest that it must include a component for the volunteer sector also. In other words, the SAFER bill is designed for increasing staffing. We don't increase staffing just by increasing the paid sector of staffing. We must also provide that the volunteer sector, which is the largest sector, benefits from the SAFER bill by increasing staffing also. We don't want to see a desertion from the volunteer ranks into the paid ranks and, consequently, a decrease in the volunteer sector. Clearly, both the career and the volunteer sectors staying healthy is critical to the well-being of the nation's Fire Service.

And, last, sir, I would just like to say that we certainly support the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act. It's clearly in our interest to make sure that the equipment we get performs as advertised, and certainly makes good sense from your standpoint, that the money that's getting spent is not spent on junk.

I'd like to close simply by thanking you very much, sir, for your leadership in this fashion and your chairing the Congressional Fire Service Caucus. Your scheduling this hearing today, I believe, clearly demonstrates your dedication and understanding of these issues.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stittleburg follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PHILIP C. STITTLEBURG, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL VOLUNTEER  
FIRE COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, my name is Chief Phil Stittleburg and I am Chairman of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). The NVFC represents the interests of the nation's nearly 800,000 volunteer firefighters, who staff nearly 90 percent of America's fire departments. I have served in the volunteer fire service for the last 30 years and have been the Chief of the LaFarge Volunteer Fire Department in Wisconsin for the last 25 years. I have had experiences in all phases of the first responder community, including chemical and hazardous materials incidents, information management, EMS, rescue and fire.

In addition to serving as NVFC Chairman, I have represented the NVFC on a variety of national standards-making committees, including ones that set industry standards on firefighter health and safety. I also serve on the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Board of Directors and I am an adjunct instructor for the National Fire Academy. I earn my livelihood as an attorney, which includes serving as an Assistant District Attorney on a half-time basis for the last 29 years. These

positions give me an excellent opportunity to work in emergency services in both the law enforcement and fire service professions.

According to NFPA, nearly 75 percent of all firefighters are volunteers. In most years, more than half of the firefighters that are killed in the line of duty are volunteers. In addition to the obvious contribution that volunteer firefighters lend to their communities as the first arriving domestic defenders, these brave men and women represent a significant cost saving to taxpayers, a savings sometimes estimated to be as much as \$36 billion annually.

On behalf of the volunteer fire service, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the needs of the fire service. More specifically, I would like to comment on the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program, the U.S Fire Administration, the National Fire Academy, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act (S. 321 / H.R. 545), terrorism funding for first responders, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act (S. 544 / H.R. 1118).

The events of September 11, 2001 made it clear to all Americans that the fire service is the first responder to all terrorist attacks this country may face. Administration officials and Members of Congress continue to warn Americans of the certainty of a future terrorist incident. As America's domestic first responders, the fire service will be on the front lines of any incident and must be prepared to respond to and defend our citizens from the aftermath of a terrorist attack involving conventional weapons or weapons of mass destruction. This expands our normal services beyond the delivery of fire, EMS, rescue, and technical specialty services to our citizens. These services already have time and training demands that are escalating annually. However, the federal government must not forgo its commitment to the basic needs of America's fire service in the name of Homeland Security.

#### **FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program**

One of the largest problems faced by America's volunteer fire service is funding. Thanks to your leadership Chairman McCain, and the leadership of many members of this Committee and throughout Congress, the Federal government took a giant step in addressing the basic needs of America's fire service by creating the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. Every fire department across the country is now eligible for funding for safety and firefighting equipment, apparatus, training, fire prevention and education, emergency medical service equipment and training, and wellness and fitness programs.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program has proven to be the most effective program to date in providing local volunteer and career fire departments not only with the tools they need to perform their day-to-day duties, but it has also enhanced their ability to respond to large disasters as well. As we move to prepare for terrorist incidents at home, we must first ensure that local fire departments have the basic tools they need to do their jobs on a daily basis, before we can ask them to be fully prepared to respond to large-scale incidents.

This program has been successful for a variety of reasons. First, it is the only federal program that provides funding directly to fire departments for training and equipment. Far too often federal funds intended to aid fire departments are diverted to other uses by state and local officials.

In addition, the U.S Fire Administration (USFA), under the leadership of Chief R. David Paulison, has spent the last two years developing and refining the program and has clearly demonstrated the capability to efficiently distribute these funds to local fire departments. The USFA Grants Office, which is under extremely tight deadlines, has performed remarkably in processing the 20,000 applications it receives annually and has been very responsive to the needs of the fire service. This is no surprise to us because the personnel at USFA know the fire service like no other agency and many of their personnel come from emergency services backgrounds themselves.

Finally, members of the fire service have been involved in nearly every aspect of the program to ensure that it addresses our current needs. We have helped to write the legislation, set the criteria for each category, and have staffed panels to grade the applications.

In February, President Bush included \$500 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program in his 2004 budget request. The Administration also proposed moving the program out of FEMA and USFA, which are in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security, and into the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP), located in the Border and Transportation Security Directorate.

While \$500 million in funding is a good start and this is the first time that the program has been in an Administration budget, the NVFC feels that Congress needs to fully fund the program at the \$900 million level. In addition, the NVFC is strong-

ly opposed to the proposal to move the program into the Border and Transportation Security Directorate of Homeland Security. The NVFC does not understand the benefit of moving a program aimed at equipping and training America's firefighters out of the lead federal agency for the fire service and into a section of the department that exercises little, if any control, over federal fire programs.

The move will require the government to reinvent the wheel, with new staff, new training, and new infrastructure, at a time when the Federal Government should be completely focused on delivering these dollars to our local first responders.

In its first year of existence (FY 2001), the program received \$100 million in appropriations. In FY 2002, the program received \$360 million in appropriations and awarded nearly 5,500 grants to needy fire departments. In FY 2003, Congress appropriated a total of \$750 million for the program and fire service personnel from across the country are reviewing applications as we speak at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Many of these departments who are receiving aid are rural and suburban volunteer fire departments that struggle the most to provide their members with adequate protective gear, safety devices and training to protect their communities. They are being asked to respond to emergency calls involving hazardous materials, structural fire suppression, clandestine drug labs, search and rescue, natural disasters, wildland fires, emergency medical services, and terrorism. Many of these emergencies occur at federal facilities and buildings and on federal lands. In addition, these incidents can damage America's critical infrastructure, including our interstate highways, railroads, bridges, tunnels, financial centers, power plants, refineries, and chemical manufacturing and storage facilities. We as a fire service are sworn to protect these critical facilities and infrastructure.

Once again, the NVFC strongly urges Congress to fully fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program at the fully-authorized \$900 million level in FY 2004 and keep it as a distinct program under the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S Fire Administration (USFA) in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security.

#### **U.S Fire Administration/National Fire Academy**

In 1971, this nation lost more than 12,000 citizens and 250 firefighters to fire. Acting to halt these tragic losses, Congress in 1974 passed P.L. 93-498, the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act, which established the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and its National Fire Academy. Since that time, through data collection, public education, research and training efforts, USFA has helped reduce fire deaths by at least half—making our communities and our citizens safer. The NVFC strongly supports reauthorization of USFA and asks Congress to do whatever possible to continue to enhance the agency's mission.

In early April, it was announced that the USFA was forced to take an 11 percent budget cut in fiscal year 2003. As a result, the Academy has been forced to cut 36 resident courses. This cut represents an over 40 percent loss in the total amount of courses that will be delivered on campus between the beginning of May and the end of September 2003.

The National Fire Academy is the nation's premier fire service training facility, which provides our nation's firefighters and emergency responders with essential skills and leadership needed to keep pace with our ever-expanding role. Besides training responders to deal with the new threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, the Academy also has continued its core mission to enhance the ability of fire and emergency services to deal more effectively with daily emergencies in our nation's communities. Much of this training is not available anywhere else.

Besides delivering courses at its Emmitsburg, Maryland campus, the Academy offers many courses which are available for direct delivery to our local communities through our nation's State Training Agencies. This system is especially beneficial to the many in the volunteer fire service that do not have the time to attend on-campus programs.

Obviously, this substantial cut is of great concern to the NVFC. Our organization has spent many years fighting to strengthen the U.S Fire Administration and the Academy. We find it very disconcerting that at the same time large sums of money are finally making their way to the states for homeland security, the Fire Academy is cutting its budget. Before you can train a firefighter to respond to terrorism incidents, they must first be trained as firefighters or fire officers. Firefighters should not have to choose between the Fire Academy and terrorism training, they need both. These classes must be restored immediately and Congress must ensure that the Fire Academy's role is enhanced in future years.

In addition, the cuts have also affected the Fire Administration's ability to work in partnership with national and local fire and emergency service organizations

through cooperative agreements and with other Federal agencies. These partnerships help the USFA to accomplish its charge to provide public education, training, and data collection, and need to be protected.

Finally, the NVFC is also alarmed at the proposed actions to eliminate the U.S. Fire Administrator position. The individual who fills this position, serves as the lead advocate and spokesman for the fire service within the Administration. He or she is able to carry the fire service's message to the President and the Secretary of Homeland Security, and vice-versa. We urge the Department of Homeland Security to reinstate this position immediately.

Many fire service organizations, including the NVFC, have worked hard to ensure that the U.S. Fire Administrator played an integral role in FEMA and now the Department of Homeland Security. We are concerned that these recent developments indicate a reversal in the fire service's role and stature in the new Department.

### **First Responder Terrorism Funding**

Terrorism and hazardous materials response training and equipment are of vital importance to America's fire service. Even the best-prepared localities lack adequate resources to respond to the full range of terrorist threats this country faces. Many jurisdictions, especially those in rural and suburban areas protected by volunteers, have little or no capability to respond to terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction.

Although the fire service is pleased that Congress has begun to send real dollars to the States for first responder terrorism training, equipment, and planning, we do have some concerns that I would like to address.

First, we are concerned that the proposed move of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program to the Office of Domestic Preparedness, which primarily distributes its funding through the states, will eventually lead to consolidating the program into other state-based block grants. This consolidation was proposed by the Administration in their FY 2003 budget and fortunately was not supported by Congress.

Second, we have heard from fire service personnel across the country that much of this funding that is being sent to the states by ODP is not making its way to the local level. This is unacceptable. In a July 2002 position paper on the creation of the Department of Homeland Security authored by the major fire service organizations, we advocated that at least 90 percent of the money reach the local level. While we see a role for the states in coordination and in some training, the Department needs to make sure that this funding reaches local response agencies in an expedited fashion.

Third, the Department of Homeland Security needs to encourage the states to make sure that the fire service is at the table when discussing terrorism preparedness and response. In many states law enforcement, the National Guard, and emergency management will all receive higher priority than the fire service when it comes to receiving federal funding.

Fourth, we have had many concerns regarding the use of the term "first responder." The definition must be clearly articulated from the onset, placing heavy emphasis on response times and exposure to risks. First responders are fire and rescue, emergency medical services and law enforcement personnel. Period.

Finally, although we understand the special needs and concerns of America's large metropolitan areas, the Department of Homeland Security cannot forget smaller communities, whose fire, rescue and EMS personnel also need the training and equipment to recognize and respond to these incidents. While these communities may not seem to be prime terrorist targets, it is this very perception that makes them especially vulnerable.

An often overlooked, yet key component to preparing our nation's fire and rescue personnel are our State Training Agencies. These agencies are well-established and have a proven track record in the training of the fire service. Each year the state fire training systems train over 750,000 students nationally, many of them volunteers.

While ODP's training consortium has developed some excellent terrorism programs for first responders, these centers service a small number of students at very high costs. We feel that some first responder terrorism training dollars need to go to enhance and strengthen the state training system. Unfortunately, terrorism training dollars are not going to them at all. In fact, the small amount of terrorism funding that these agencies received in the past through the National Fire Academy has been redirected to ODP. The NVFC is again concerned that the Federal government is reinventing the wheel and not utilizing the most efficient methods of delivering services to the fire service, which is already in place, state and local fire service training agencies.

**Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act (S. 544 / H.R. 1118)**

Personnel shortages are another large concern of America's fire service. Many departments, in communities of all sizes, struggle on a daily basis to adequately staff local fire stations and respond to calls. Personnel shortfalls endanger the safety of firefighters and hinder the ability of first responders to effectively protect the public from fire and other hazards. Many studies and standards indicate there needs to be a minimum number of personnel on-scene to perform lifesaving measures safely. Other studies indicate proper staffing is required to adequately protect property. Simply put, when firefighters cannot safely work, they are unable to save lives and property. In fact, Congress and the President verbalized the recognition of this immediately after the events of September 11, 2001.

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act (S. 544 / H.R. 1118) authorizes the U.S. Fire Administrator to make grants to States and local governments to hire additional career firefighters. The NVFC supports passage of this legislation.

However, we feel that any initiative by Congress to address the personnel shortfall in the fire service must include a significant recruitment and retention component to account for the nearly 90 percent of America's communities that are protected by volunteers. The recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel has become the number one challenge facing America's volunteer fire service. The ranks of the volunteer fire service have decreased over 10 percent in the last 20 years.

The biggest factor contributing to the decline is increased time demands on the volunteer. This results from increased training hours to comply with more rigorous training requirements, increased fundraising demands, people living further away from their jobs, combined with an increased volume of calls. Many volunteer firefighters become frustrated because they have to spend much of their time raising money to buy life-saving equipment, when they could be training or at home with their families. The increased call volume is a result of the fire services' ever-expanding role into areas such as EMS, terrorism, vehicle extrication, natural disaster response and more. In addition, in many of our communities the lack of affordable housing makes it hard to keep young firefighters in town.

Some possible solutions that should be considered include: funding for national and local recruitment campaigns; tax credits and deductions for volunteers; funding for length of service award programs and other pension programs for volunteers; incentives for employers to allow employees, who are volunteers, time off for training or emergency calls; affordable housing programs; tuition assistance for higher education; and increased proliferation of on-line training for volunteers.

Finally, another concern our organization has is the growing trend of career firefighters being harassed by their local unions for volunteering as firefighters in their home communities during their off-duty hours. In the past few years, the NVFC has received reports from across the country of local union affiliates threatening to take action against their members if they do not stop volunteering. In many cases, these firefighters give in to the pressure and quit volunteering. This situation not only affects the readiness and response level of fire departments in smaller communities, but also discourages citizens from selflessly serving their community.

Since September 11, 2001, the President of the United States has been encouraging all Americans to commit to service of their neighbors and their nation by becoming volunteers. We hope that we can all work together to heed the President's call to community service. We furthermore urge Congress to include language in the SAFER Bill to ensure that a career firefighter, especially those who are hired under the provisions of this bill, has the right to volunteer in his or her community.

**Firefighting Research and Coordination Act**

Finally Mr. Chairman, the NVFC fully supports your legislation, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act, which would allow the U.S. Fire Administrator, in consultation with other interested parties, to develop voluntary consensus standards for evaluating the performance and compatibility of new firefighting technology. The legislation would also include the establishment of a scientific basis for new firefighting technology standards, improve coordination among Federal, State, and local fire officials in training for and responding to terrorist attacks and other national emergencies. We stand ready to assist you and your staff in your efforts to pass this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your time and your attention to the views of America's fire service, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The CHAIRMAN. You're very kind, Chief.

I would like to—in either reauthorization of existing legislation or in consideration of S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act, I'd like to—besides the permanent appointment of the Administrator and have it a Senate-confirmed position, I'd like to have your top two priorities, beginning with you, Chief.

Mr. BRUEGMAN. First priority is to have a greater role in the Department of Homeland Security. If we look long-term, all these other issues, and there will be many more that we'll have to address, will require a Fire Service presence, Fire Service knowledge, Fire Service expertise if we're going to have impact in respect to the Department of Homeland Security in what will be forthcoming over the next several years.

It's just not about the U.S. Fire Administrator, although I agree that it needs to be retained and it needs to be Senate-confirmed, but it's about the placement of Fire Service leadership throughout DHS. We bring to the table, I think, a level of expertise, a level of knowledge, that is desperately needed within the Department of Homeland Security. As I indicated before, we are a critical link to what will occur during the next incident, whether it's a terrorist incident or it's a natural disaster.

The second is, I think, the FIRE Act. We know that it has been extremely successful. And as President Shannon has indicated, the report that NFPA conducted recently, on behalf of Congress and the U.S. Fire Administration, I think shocked many of us, even in the industry, as to the lack of basic equipment that many of our, especially smaller, fire agencies have. And I think we have to focus our efforts and our moneys on making sure that those agencies are equipped to perform their day-to-day functions as safely as possible.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Chief.

Mr. O'Connor?

Mr. O'CONNOR. Well, our first priority, is identified in my testimony, and that is the inadequate staffing throughout the Nation. I think the second component segues into that, and that is the issue of training. Mr. Shannon's testimony very eloquently detailed, in numbers and percentage, the lack of training in various disciplines that our people undergo, whether it be in terms of rescue, EMS, hazardous material, or even simply structural firefighting. And, clearly, in order for us to be able to do our job effectively, we need that type of training.

It's ironic that this week is the 30th anniversary of America's Burning Report that was issued 30 years ago, and it identified the needs of the Fire Service, and its deficiencies. And in the three decades that have transpired, the issues identified in that document still are unmet. And I think that when you get down to it, the needs of the Fire Service come under the broad rubric of being able to get the job done, and that's staffing and training.

The CHAIRMAN. And you share Congressman Weldon's specific concern about cancellation of classes?

Mr. O'CONNOR. Oh, absolutely. I believe 40 percent of the classes at National Fire Academy have been canceled, and clearly that's an issue. And I would also agree with Mr. Stittleburg that we would like to see that restored, but not at the expense of other programs.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Shannon?



Mr. SHANNON. Mr. Chairman, I think the broad answer to the question is, I think what we need more than anything else is a realistic assessment, a battle plan, if you will, as to what it would take to get our Nation's first responders fully equipped and trained and ready to respond to the type of incidents that we're asking them to respond to.

I cannot tell you how many times in the last 18 months I've been with a fire chief or fire officer from a major community or a smaller community when their cell phone or their beeper has gone off. And when I asked them what it was, it's responding to some effort to plan for homeland security. And yet they all tell me the same thing. They're putting more and more time, they're asked to be better and better prepared, and they're given no additional resources to do this.

And there might be some people still kicking around who say, "Well, this is primarily a local function, and it should be handled at the local level." But this is a unique situation in American history, because, for the first time in American history, the people in Washington are best able to assess the threat that they're asking the first responders to address. And yet I don't think there has been sufficient follow-through—and part of it is just because there have been so many conflicting priorities, and I know what that's all about—but I don't think that there has been sufficient follow-through since September 11 to ensure that the people we're asking to do the job have the resources to do that.

So I would say I'd like to see the creation of an agreed-upon battle plan to bring them up to where we all agree that they need to be, and I think that has to originate here.

And I think the second thing is, I feel it is very important that the Administrator of the United States Fire Administration be a Presidential appointee; because, otherwise, I think the reality is going to be that, when the attention is turned to other things, the Fire Service will be forgotten. And, just as importantly, they'll feel like they're forgotten. There will be nobody to whom they can turn when they have an issue of importance.

The CHAIRMAN. We take that recommendation very seriously, Mr. Shannon. Thank you.

Chief Stittleburg?

Mr. STITTLEBURG. Mr. Chairman, I would say our two priorities are, one, full funding of the FIRE Act, and continuing to administer it as it has been in the past. It's just remarkably efficient.

Second, as to the SAFER bill, I believe would be our second priority, but a significant component be included, as I'd mentioned in my testimony, to prevent a diminution of the volunteer ranks. And I would suggest that various methods can be done to accomplish that. For instance, we have a 1-800-FIRE-LINE program that could be promoted nationwide to encourage people to become volunteer firefighters, tax credits and tax deductions for volunteers, funding of LOSAP or pension plans, affordable housing, increase of online training capabilities to accommodate the flexible work schedules of volunteers.

So I would suggest to you that that is probably a very key component of what we need to look at when we're talking about increasing staffing in the Fire Service nationwide.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I want to thank all of you. You represent America's heroes. We're grateful to you. I want to assure you we will continue with serious consideration of this issue before this Committee. I see nothing but support throughout the Congress for what you're trying to do, and we value immensely your recommendations and your advice and counsel, and, without that, I don't believe we could effectively serve this very current and urgent need that exists throughout the Nation.

Thank you for coming today. I look forward to seeing you this evening.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:55 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

## A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the time to address the importance of increased support for the fire service.

Our country's firefighters are clearly one of the most crucial lines of first response in the protection of our communities. This was demonstrated strikingly in the tragedy of September 11, 2001, in which New York City firefighters, police, and emergency service personnel answered their call to duty with great heroism in selflessly rushing to the World Trade Center and saving the lives of many Americans. Tragically, 343 firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) technicians paid the ultimate price in the service of their country.

While we strive to prevent any future attack in the United States, it is our duty to ensure that we are adequately prepared to respond to any future catastrophic act of terrorism. In addition, we must recognize that many of the preparations we make to improve the response to national emergencies also will aid our firefighters for their everyday role in protecting our families and homes.

As illustrated by the events of September 11, 2001, fire departments have substantial responsibilities beyond responding to fires. Along with EMS components, fire fighters also are usually the first on the scene at car accidents, medical emergencies, hazardous materials spills, and acts of terrorism, as well as natural disasters like earthquakes and floods. The fire service is also one of the most hazardous professions in the country, as thousands of firefighters are injured and about one hundred are killed in the line of duty each year.

Despite the essential and heroic role the fire service plays in protecting our communities, fire departments across the country remain under-funded and understaffed. Several proposals before our committee to address these needs deserve serious consideration.

One of the most important achievements in this area is the FIRE Act grant program, which, since its 2001 passage, has provided substantial funding targeted for fire departments across the country. The nearly 700 volunteer and municipal fire districts in Washington state rely on FIRE Act grant programs to fulfill essential needs. However, this program clearly does not meet our needs in Washington state and in the nation.

While \$750 million is available for the FIRE Act in fiscal year 2003, in fiscal year 2002 alone, more than 19,500 fire departments applied for a total of \$2.2 billion in assistance.

Disturbingly, in the Administration's fiscal year 2004 budget, instead of seeking an increase in funding to meet the needs, only \$500 million is earmarked for firefighters.

Of further concern, this funding is offered as a portion of the \$3.5 billion grant program for first responders, not through the FIRE Act grant program. We must work to increase this funding, and ensure that this funding is not diverted away from the specific needs of firefighters.

A similar concern arises with the inclusion of the Fire Administration within the Department of Homeland Security. While I support the important role of firefighters in responding to terrorism, we must not lose sight of the essential day-to-day life saving services our fighters provide for our communities. The deadly and extremely costly Western forest fire season last year is another reminder of the need to retain a comprehensive view of the services the Fire Administration provides, especially in support of protecting rural communities.

The Firefighting Research and Coordination Act is an important piece of legislation under consideration in our Committee. As an original cosponsor, I strongly support this legislation. As many of you know, this bill would establish and authorize funding for programs under the Fire Administration to develop voluntary consensus standards for new firefighting technology; improve coordination between federal,

state, and local fire officials; and authorize the National Fire Academy to train firefighters for responding to acts of terrorism.

While we will never be able to prevent firefighter deaths because of the risks involved, it is our obligation to help ensure that future firefighters are adequately equipped and trained, and are working in coordination to respond to any future national emergencies.

In addition to providing funding to properly train and equip our firefighters, America's fire departments need more firefighters to effectively meet the needs of our communities.

Legislation such as the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act is an important step for the safety of our communities and our firefighters. As many of you know, this bill provides matching grants for up to 75 percent of the costs of hiring 75,000 new firefighters nationwide. I strongly support this legislation and urge my colleagues in the committee and the full Senate to support its passage.

Again, I thank the Chairman for the consideration of this important issue and thank our witnesses today for their time and insight.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN MCCAIN TO  
ARLEN L. BEMENT, JR.

*Question 1.* S.321, The Firefighting Research and Coordination Act would require that equipment purchased through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program meet or exceed applicable voluntary consensus standards. Are you aware of any other federal grant programs that link federal grant money to standards?

Answer. Yes, NIST developed body armor performance standards for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ)—NIJ Standard—0101.04 for ballistic-resistant body armor and NIJ Standard—0115.00 for stab-resistant body armor. The Office of Justice Programs administers a body armor grant program (Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2000, see more at <http://vests.ojp.gov>) that covers up to half the cost of bullet-resistant and/or stab-resistant body armor. To be eligible for the grant funding, law enforcement or corrections agencies must purchase body armor that complies with either of the two NIJ body armor performance standards. For the body armor manufacturers, establishing compliance with the NIJ standards is voluntary.

There are two more points about these standards. First, NIJ administers a formal Compliance Testing Program that must be used to establish compliance with the standards. The Program establishes a chain of custody for body armor test specimens, uses only approved laboratories, and requires an independent assessment of test results. Second, these body armor standards were developed by a Federal organization, and while many in the armor industry participated in a comment and review phase, the standards development process did not require "consensus." In that respect, they differ from the voluntary consensus standards developed by organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), ANSI, or ASTM, which do require consensus. The Federal standards tend to establish a higher level of performance, while typical voluntary consensus standards seek to broaden the market for products.

The Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP), formerly with the Office of Justice Programs, now with the Department of Homeland Security's Border and Transportation Security Directorate, manages the grants program for WMD-related equipment for emergency first responders. Currently ODP funding grants are not conditional upon procurement of equipment that complies with voluntary consensus standards. In fact, there are few standards that address the first responder needs in a CBRNE environment, which seriously hinders linking grants programs to standards compliance. However, coordination is being conducted with the objective of ultimately linking the grants program to equipment that complies with the appropriate standards. One example is the current effort to incorporate compliance with the NFPA 1994, "Standard on Protective Ensembles for Chemical/Biological Terrorism Incidents," into the ODP grants program.

*Question 2.* Could you briefly describe how NIST's research is factored into the process that standards development organizations use to formulate voluntary consensus standards?

Answer. NIST's research is integrally linked to the activities of standards development organizations and their members through a "cradle-to-grave" process as follows:

- NIST Listens to major national bodies in construction and fire communities to identify priority issues to address.

- NIST typically organizes workshops of interested parties to define problem, approach and desired products.
- NIST and its partners develop technical basis for potential change to practice or standards, typically in the form of a measurement, test method, performance prediction tool, etc.
- NIST generally seeks development of performance-based tools and to foster open systems and processes which create the maximum opportunity for innovation and competitiveness.
- Likewise NIST participates in international standardization activities and works closely with its international counterpart laboratories to maintain awareness of developments overseas, to help assure open and free markets, and to spot technical barriers to trade.
- NIST works with intended users to demonstrate value in use of the emerging product.
- NIST participates in technical committees of standards developing organizations, and publicly disseminates its product for peer comment.
- National professional, engineering, and standards developing organizations adopt.
- Some of the key players NIST works with in this process include NFPA, ASHRAE, ASTM, ACI, ASCE, NIBS, and the affected industrial, trade or professional organizations.
- The cycle time for this process from problem definition to change in use—from a minimum of a few years to a decade or more.

*Question 3.* You mentioned that equipment for first responders is very specialized and generally produced by small manufacturers.

a) How capable are small manufacturers to continue to provide this increasingly specialized type of equipment?

Answer. Very much so, in fact small and medium sized manufacturers, SMEs, tend to be very creative and innovative. They are quite adept especially at filling initially small new niches for specialized equipment. Their success often depends on partnering with others and drawing on the broad array of resources available to them in the private and public sectors.

NIST works closely with many such firms. For example, some 72 percent of NIST's Advanced Technology Program, ATP, projects involve SMEs many of which apply in partnership with other firms or Universities to bring the required capabilities together to deliver innovative products. For example, the Advanced Technology Program has recently awarded Valaran Corporation (Princeton, NJ) \$1.8 million to cover the direct cost of developing the software infrastructure that will overcome problems associated with low or unpredictable bandwidth and diverse communication appliances. If successful this project will significantly enhance communications between first responders, law enforcement agents, and other emergency response personnel using existing technologies and accelerate the development of new communication technologies that will enable new markets for the First Responder industry.

NIST has an active and vital Small Business Innovative Research, SBIR, program. A number of projects have dealt with equipment for first responders. One ongoing project involves development of new communications technology with application to firefighters.

NIST's Manufacturing Extension Partnership, MEP, program has over 400 locations nationwide. MEP provides additional services needed by many small firms in delivering new products to market and also provides a link for those firms with technical issues back to resources available in the NIST and other federal laboratories.

Many small manufactures do not have individual capacity to perform or fund research. Where there are common interests, manufacturers have come together to conduct jointly funded studies and share the results. NIST workshops often stimulate opportunities for such interchange. Many manufacturers and material suppliers have taken the opportunity to use specialized or unique measurement facilities at NIST to evaluate the performance of their present and prototype products. These measurements generally provide performance information that is not part of the testing that establishes compliance with present standards. For example, currently within NIST a new program is being developed to assist technology developers in this field. "NIST Distributed Testbed for 1st Responders" is a collaborative effort with NIST's Information Technology Laboratory, Building and Fire Research Laboratory and the Manufacturing Engineering Laboratory. This project will support

private sector firms developing new integrated communications and networking technologies to provide critical building situation information to first responders.

As mentioned in our response to question 5 below, the Department of Commerce's Technology Administration (TA) has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This agreement develops a formal working relationship with the DHS Science and Technology Directorate and NIST. This effort will include a wide range of initiatives including "interoperability" standards for first responders' equipment and thereby enhance the competitiveness of many small manufacturers.

b) How involved are the small manufacturers in the development of standards for first responders equipment?

Answer. They are quite actively involved since, typically, changes in existing or new standards or measures of performance are necessary to gain acceptance of their products, and generally there are no published performance requirements from first responder organizations of the sorts of equipment they seek.

In the fire protection field there is no central mechanism or responsibility for developing performance requirements, test methods, standards or compliance of new fire fighting equipment. Consequently, the process of innovation is long and typically frustrating. Similarly, particularly smaller, fire departments have no place to go for new equipment performance requirements and guidance on the capabilities on new products that marketers present to them.

In the fire fighting equipment standards writing committees in which NIST participates, we find active participation by manufacturers. Equipment standards adopted nationally establish *minimum* requirements for first responder equipment. Often, specialized new equipment is targeted initially for those seeking better than minimum capabilities.

For years, the NIST Office of Law Enforcement Standards, supported by the Department of Justice has been serving the law enforcement community by providing a central source for development of performance requirements, test methods and equipment standards. The scope of OLES is now being expanded to include similar support of the new Department of Homeland Security's Office of Domestic Preparedness, ODP. This should lead to an extension of the same capabilities to the needs of all first responders. Our participation in voluntary consensus standards committees provides a channel for bringing new developments into broader use.

*Question 4.* Your testimony describes NIST's research to develop the capability of having building emergency systems fire information transmitted through wireless communications to the responding firefighters before they arrive at a fire. Can you elaborate on the benefits of the advanced information to the fire fighters?

Answer. Today, when firefighters are called to respond to a building fire, they know very little about the conditions until they arrive at the building. The more reliable information that is available to firefighters, the better and safer their response will be. Firefighters are killed and injured because they are not fully aware of fire conditions in buildings and changes that can occur rapidly. Accurate knowledge of conditions and rate of fire growth at an incident is critical to fire fighter safety.

The first task after arrival is to "size up" the situation. Information is gathered from observation of the building from the outside and if it is deemed safe enough, firefighters go into the building to investigate condition. For example, part of the fire protection for modern buildings is an automatic fire alarm system. This system collects data from fire detection devices throughout the building. Generally, it is an alarm signal from this automatic system that through a central monitoring station notifies the fire department of fire in the building. Even though the fire alarm system continues to monitor conditions in the building after the initial alarm, only the initial fire signal is sent out of the building. Firefighters have to respond to the site to extract additional information about fire conditions from fire alarm system that is located inside the burning building.

Looking to the future, this situation can be improved with advanced technology. All of the information contained in the alarm system can be transmitted by wireless communications to the fire station and to the responding vehicles. Having a continually updated flow of information about conditions in the building would allow responders to match the response to the fire. For example, this will allow for earlier response of additional equipment when more than the first alarm and pre-emergency planned response is needed.

Pre-emergency plans prepared by firefighters for buildings in their area can be cast in an electronic form that can receive and display the fire information from a building as well as information from other building systems. The merging of building design information, fire department pre-emergency plans, and the dynamic data

from building sensors during emergencies, provides the foundation for a future fire-fighter decision support systems. These systems can use predictive fire models, based on the fire science developed at NIST and elsewhere, to provide reliable guidance to fire officers in their decisions about how to best utilize limited resources in an emergency response.

*Question 5.* As you stated, NIST signed a Memorandum of Understanding with FEMA in March 2002 and is about to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Science and Technology Directorate of the new Department of Homeland Security. Could you please describe the research that NIST will carry out under these agreements?

*Answer.* A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Directorate of Science and Technology, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce was signed on May 22, 2003. This MOU sets forth the basic principles and guidelines under which the two organizations will collaborate upon mutually agreed research and planning activities. The focus will be upon NIST's unique capabilities and expertise in measurement science and standards development. NIST is also participating in the newly chartered ANSI Homeland Security Standards Panel (HSSP), which is serving as a focal point for integrating DHS priorities for standards development with activities in key standards development organizations.

Additionally, an Interagency Agreement has been signed between the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP), formerly of the Office of Justice Programs, now part of the Borders and Transportation Security Directorate, Department of Homeland Security, and NIST's Office of Law Enforcement Standards (OLES) to continue a program managed by OLES for the development of a national suite of CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive) protective equipment standards for emergency first responders. Initial funding for this program was provided by the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), and subsequently funded by the National Institute of Justice. These earlier efforts led to a NIOSH standard for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and produced an important set of guides and databases to help emergency first responders in the evaluation and purchase of chemical and biological detection, personal protective, and communications equipment. The continuation of this program under ODP will be significantly expanded to address nuclear/radiological threats, decontamination standards, and explosive detection standards.

The Office of Law Enforcement Standards has been working in close collaboration with DHS S&T to ensure that the two efforts, those sponsored by S&T and ODP will be mutually supporting. Preliminary coordination with S&T indicates that OLES will serve as the NIST technical point of contact and focal point for program coordination for the S&T sponsored efforts, and this will further ensure that these efforts will not be in conflict.

*Question 6.* One issue related to fire safety research is the need for better research into structural materials and how they react to fire. Can you describe the research that NIST is conducting in this area?

*Answer.* NIST, as part of the multi-year WTC R&D program, is conducting research into a number of areas to provide the technical basis for developing improved performance of structural materials and systems exposed to fire, with the following objectives:

- To develop an efficient test method for evaluating the fire resistance of bare structural steel.
- To provide tools and practical guidance for the design and selection of fire-protective materials and systems, and support for the development and implementation of performance-based standards of fire-protective materials and systems for structural steel.
- To develop and support the implementation of significantly improved standards, tools, and practical guidance for the fire safety design and retrofit of structures.
- To provide the technical basis for accurate measurement and simulation methodology for inclusion of fire resistance properties of non-load-bearing, gypsum-based walls and ceilings in performance-based fire safety design.

The burn-through and collapse of non-loading bearing walls and ceilings greatly impact the rate at which the fire spreads through a building, and the thermal load on the structural materials. Hence, the fourth objective above is a prerequisite to developing predictive capabilities of the performance of the load bearing structure during a fire. Unambiguous measurements on real-scale systems are a critical element of the NIST research. Also, such measurements and tests are essential to

move the results into practice and to achieve timely adoption of improvements in building and fire codes.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN MCCAIN TO  
RANDY R. BRUEGMAN

*Question 1.* S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act would authorize \$2.2 million in FY2004 to allow the federal government to work with the private sector to develop basic uniform performance criteria and technology standards for new technologies. How important are equipment standard for firefighters?

Answer. The fire and emergency service remains one of the only industries in which mandatory equipment standards have not been established. These standards are important because they address multi-dimensional needs for fire departments. Without more stringent adherence and incentives for manufacturers to meet industry standards and fire department to buy items with standards, fire departments often buy equipment and/or components that do not operate with existing equipment within their own department or in a case where several departments are working together. There are a growing number of good consensus standards being developed within the fire community and the federal government but there remains no means to appropriately test their applicability and there is not accountability to adhere to these standards.

*Question 2.* How does your organization view the transfer of the U.S. Fire Administration to the Department of Homeland Security?

Answer. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the fire community recognize the vitally import role of first responders within the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). First responders will be at the backbone of the reaction to any homeland security breach this country may face and we take that position very seriously. A very serious concern for the fire and emergency service is the continued reduction of the fire service presence in the DHS. In addition to our continuing publicly voiced concern about the FIRE Act, the recent elimination of the Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration and the cancellation of a significant number of National Fire Academy classes sent the wrong message to our community. Although Secretary Ridge has pledged to temporarily rectify these problems, the fire service got the message; DHS is not taking the best interests of the fire service into consideration in making important decisions about fire programs. We have good reason to be concerned about the representation of the fire service in this process.

*Question 3.* In a number of reports, the General Accounting Office has criticized the duplication of fire responder training programs by federal agencies. How does this duplication affect firefighters?

Answer. We do not believe there is any, certainly not much, duplication of fire service training programs sponsored by federal agencies.

*Question 4.* It appears that the government is providing some funding for new equipment, but yet staffing problems persist. Do you envision nay new technologies that may actually reduce the amount of staffing needed by fire departments?

Answer. Firefighting, rescue work, hazardous materials handling, emergency medical services and the other activities performed by firefighters are labor intensive. New tools, new technologies can certainly be helpful but can not supplant the trained, human firefighter.

*Question 5.* One issue of great concern to me that is discussed in your statement is the issue of public safety communications interoperability. Besides the spectrum, issue, are there other actions that the federal government should take to address this problem?

Answer. Yes there are. At this time SAFECOM, an e-government initiative, is being established in the Department of Homeland Security *within the Science and Technology Directorate*. Emergency first responder organizations of state and local government are being included in the decision-making process which is essential. We urge that your Committee play an active oversight role to ensure that local and state first responder organization *in fact* have an *appropriate* voice in SAFECOM.

*Question 6.* From the fire chiefs perspective, do you feel that the review process for the Assistance to Firefighter Grant program is working properly? Are there improvements that can be made?

Answer. The peer review process is critical to the success of the Firefighter Grant program and is working properly. *In fact, the single most significant "improvement" that can be made to the program is to allow it to continue under its present management by FEMA.*



*Question 7.* Many state and local governments are developing mutual aid plans to deal with terrorist attacks and natural disasters. What role can the federal government play in efforts by state and local governments to improve their coordination efforts?

Answer. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the federal government made much of the financial assistance it provided to state and local governments contingent upon the development and implementation of robust mutual aid agreements among local jurisdictions and regional entities. This policy was consistently applied by FEMA's Office for National Preparedness and the White House Office of Homeland Security. As the Department of Homeland Security reviews the financial assistance it provides to state and local governments for the purpose of enhancing response to terrorist attacks and natural disasters, it should continue to enforce this policy.

*Question 8.* Can you elaborate on how the current placarding system for the transportation of the hazardous materials works and what the Department of Homeland Security proposed changes would mean to public safety?

Answer. The current placarding system for the transportation of hazardous materials is required by law and administered by the Department of Transportation. Firefighters and other first responders have been trained in dealing with hazmat incidents and the placarding system is very important to the identification of product. Firefighters are required by federal law, administered by OSHA, to be trained to the awareness level in hazmat response and need annual recertification. The IAFC cannot condone the removal of placards from hazmat shipments until such time as a proven system is in place and America's firefighters, and other first responders, are trained in its use. Otherwise, emergency response personnel *and the public they protect* will be unduly endangered.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO  
RANDY R. BRUEGMAN

*Question 1.* Fire departments in my state of Washington, and Across the United States, are very dependent on the funds provided through the FIRE Act grant program. By mandating that funding be distributed to meet the needs of individual fire departments, the FIRE Act program ensures specific needs are addressed. However, the Administration's fiscal year 2004 budget not only reduces this funding to \$500 million, but also proposes to shift the program to a separate first responders grant that would be distributed by states. What effect do you believe this change will have on local fire departments?

Answer. We strongly believe that moving the FIRE Act program from the Federal Emergency Management Agency will have a negative impact on America's fire service. Currently, all of the funds appropriated for the FIRE Act program reach fire departments for the purposes intended. Such is not the experience with formula grant programs that run through the states. Section 430 of the Homeland Security Act for 2002 clearly states the Federal Emergency Management Agency shall have the primary responsibility within the executive branch to prepare for and mitigate the effects of nonterrorist-related disasters in the United States. The FIRE Act is not a counter terrorism program. It is a program to build the base of local fire departments to prepare for and respond to all risks, all hazards. This, of course, better prepares these departments to respond to incidents caused by terrorists which is just another risk in our society.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN MCCAIN TO  
KEVIN O'CONNOR

*Question 1.* S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act would authorize \$2.2 million in FY 2004 to allow the federal government to work with the private sector to develop basic uniform performance criteria and technical standards for new technologies. How important are equipment standards for firefighters?

Answer. Given the current condition of incompatible firefighting equipment afflicting the fire service—largely caused by lack of equipment standards—it is critical that future equipment meet minimum standards that would make them interoperable.

*Question 2.* How does your organization view the transfer of U.S. Fire Administration to the Department of Homeland Security?

Answer. Transferring of the U.S. Fire Administration to DHS is generally a positive development. It assures that the fire service will be recognized as an integral

component of our nation's homeland security system. Our lone concern stems from the current focus on threats from terrorism. While preparing for a terrorist attack must remain a top national priority, we must never forget that terrorism is only one component of national security, and only one job of the fire service. Every day, firefighters respond to thousands of life threatening situations throughout the nation. USFA's mandate must remain broad enough to address the full range of fire service issues.

*Question 3.* In a number of reports, the General Accounting Office has criticized the duplication of first responder training programs by federal agencies. How does this duplication affect firefighters?

Answer. While on the surface some training programs may seem duplicative, they often address different needs. For instance, both the Energy and Transportation Departments provide hazardous materials training programs for first responders. However, the DoT training program addresses the unique circumstances involved when responding to hazmat transportation incidents, while the DoE training prepares firefighters for incidents that occur at Dept of Energy Nuclear facilities. Care must be taken in any attempts to eliminate seeming duplication so as not to dismantle programs that serve unique and important roles.

*Question 4.* It appears that the government is providing some funding for new equipment, but yet staffing problems persist. Do you envision any new technologies that may actually reduce the amount of staffing needed by fire departments?

Answer. While technology can make firefighters more efficient, firefighting has always been, and it will continue to be, labor-intensive, requiring distinctly human traits like agility, mental dexterity, and overall ability to respond to unforeseen events. We do not foresee any technology in the near future that can mitigate the need for adequate staffing.

*Question 5.* In your testimony, you state that the IAFF is "especially supportive" of creating a national credentialing system for emergency responders.

a) Why is a national credentialing system so important?

Answer. Unlike the other major emergency response disciplines - police and emergency medical care—states generally do mandate specific training or skill levels for fire fighters. As a result, firefighters may be entrusted with responsibilities that they are not adequately trained for. A recent survey conducted by the National Fire Protection Association found that 27 percent of fire fighters providing emergency medical care and 40 percent of fire fighters performing hazardous materials response had no formal training in these fields. The lack of a credentialing system poses particular problems during large-scale disasters. Local emergency management officials who have orchestrated responses to disasters ranging from the World Trade Center attacks to Hurricane Andrew have cited the lack of consensus about what a fire fighter is capable of as a key obstacle in making the best use of the mass influx of fire fighters from around the country, many of whom arrive on their own, rather than as part of a company.

b) How should such a system be designed?

Answer. We believe the U.S. Fire Administration is the best organization to examine various options and propose an answer to this important question. We therefore strongly endorse the approach contained in S.321: asking USFA to issue a report to Congress on credentialing and related issues.

*Question 6.* Some critics of S. 544, the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Firefighters Act of 2003, have stated that the grant program for hiring new firefighters will not be successful, because the new firefighters will simply be laid off after the federal funding ends in the fourth year. While the bill would require a grant recipient to keep the firefighter for a fifth year, what will ensure that the firefighter remains employed after that?

Answer. S. 544 has four safeguards to prevent such occurrences. First, as part of its application, jurisdictions must include a detailed plan that answers how the jurisdiction would pay for the position in out years. A jurisdiction that does not have a viable plan to retain the position would not receive a grant. Second, the federal share of the cost decreases each year of the grant so that by the fourth year, the localities will pay 70 percent of the costs. This sliding support makes localities more likely to be self-sufficient in out years. Third, S. 544 requires federal audits. Lastly, the experience of the COPS program shows that jurisdictions generally retain personnel with 4 years of experience and training.

*Question 7.* S. 544, the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Firefighters Act of 2003 is expected to hire close to 75,000 new firefighters. What evidence do you have that 75,000 is the number that is required to solve the firefighter staffing problem?

Answer. The National Fire Protection Association recently completed a comprehensive needs analysis of the U.S. fire service. The NFPA estimated that between 75,000 to 85,000 additional firefighters are needed to safely and effectively respond to daily emergencies.

*Question 8.* If the federal government creates a grant program for hiring firefighters, what is to prevent the burden for hiring firefighters from shifting from the state and local governments to the federal government?

Answer. S. 544 is designed to assist localities with the initial costs of hiring additional firefighters. Because of the sliding level of support, it would be virtually impossible to permanently shift the responsibility of hiring local firefighters to the federal government.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO  
KEVIN O'CONNOR

*Question 1.* Fire departments in my state of Washington, and across the United States, are very dependent on the funds provided through the FIRE Act grant program. By mandating that funding be distributed to meet the needs of individual fire departments, the FIRE Act program ensures specific needs are addressed. However, the Administration's fiscal year 2004 budget not only reduces this funding to \$500 million, but also proposes to shift the program to a separate first responders block grant that would be distributed by states. What effect do you believe this change will have on local fire departments?

Answer. These two proposals would do great harm to the FIRE Act grant program and effectively end the first federal program that directly assists the nation's 30,000+ fire departments. The unique success of the FIRE Act is due to the fact that it is a merit-based, peer reviewed, direct grants to fire departments. Each application undergoes at least one level of scrutiny and only the most deserving departments are awarded grants. If the FIRE Act was converted to another form of block grants, the purpose of helping those departments most in need would be lost and the overall impact on the fire service would diminish. Additionally, funding the FIRE Act at \$500 million, instead of the authorized level of \$900 million, would be a step backwards for the program. Considering that the FIRE Act was funded at \$750 million in the current year and the total requests in just the first two years of the program amount to \$5 billion, the full \$900 million is entirely warranted.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN MCCAIN TO  
PHILIP C. STITTLEBURG

*Question 1.* S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act would authorize \$2.2 million in FY 2004 to allow the federal government to work with the private sector to develop basic uniform performance criteria and technical standards for new technologies. How important are equipment standards for firefighters?

Answer. Standardization has always been of major importance to the fire service. With the current efforts toward achieving real "interoperability" the need is becoming even more apparent. The fire service, through standards making bodies such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), has set standards for our personal protective equipment, apparatus, training, and management which the fire service relies on when making purchases. Overdue are standards for our other firefighting equipment, data collection, credentials, and terminology. Often we are forced to rely on the integrity of the manufacturer or the salesman.

Equipment standards are helpful to an incident commander (IC) because they provide him the knowledge he needs regarding the abilities and equipment that he has requested. In addition, equipment standardization saves the department (and the taxpayer) real dollars. With standards an agency can purchase an item and be confident of interoperability, equipment capability, and use.

*Question 2.* How does your organization view the transfer of U.S. Fire Administration to the Department of Homeland Security?

Answer. From the beginning, the NVFC supported the move of the U.S. Fire Administration and FEMA to the new Department of Homeland Security. In fact, in July 2002, the NVFC and other major fire service organizations released an official position paper on the proposed Department of Homeland Security. The document, entitled "Protecting our Nation: The American Fire Service Position Paper on the Department of Homeland Security," was issued to provide guidance to Congress and the Administration on the concerns of the fire service regarding the functions and structure of the proposed new department and our priorities.

However, we have been concerned that the U.S. Fire Administration, and by extension the fire service, has not been as vital a part of the new department as we had envisioned. This has been evident in the recent attempts to cut classes at the National Fire Academy and the proposed elimination of the U.S. Fire Administrator position, which would severely hamper the ability of the fire service to carry our message to the President and the Secretary of Homeland Security. The Department cannot forgo the Federal government's commitment to the basic needs of America's fire service in the name of Homeland Security.

In addition, the NVFC is strongly opposed to the proposal by the Department of Homeland Security to move the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program into ODP within its Border and Transportation Security Directorate. The NVFC does not understand the benefit of moving a program aimed at equipping and training America's firefighters out of the lead federal agency for the fire service and into a section of the department that exercises little, if any control, over federal fire programs. The move will require the government to reinvent the wheel, with new staff new training, and new infrastructure, at a time when the Federal Government should be completely focused on delivering these dollars to our local first responders.

*Question 3.* In a number of reports, the General Accounting Office has criticized the duplication of first responder training programs by federal agencies. How does this duplication affect firefighters?

Answer. The NVFC continues to be concerned about the duplication of first responder training programs by federal agencies. More specifically, we have serious concerns regarding ODP's training programs and their unwillingness to work with state training agencies that are well-established and have a proven track record in the training of the fire service such as state fire training agencies and the National Fire Academy.

Each year the state fire training systems train over 750,000 students nationally, many of them volunteers. While ODP's training consortium has developed some excellent terrorism programs for first responders, these centers service a small number of students at very high costs. We feel that some first responder terrorism training dollars need to go to enhance and strengthen the state training system. Unfortunately, terrorism training dollars are not going to them at all. In fact, the small amount of terrorism funding that these agencies received in the past through the National Fire Academy has been redirected to ODP. The NVFC is concerned that the Federal government is reinventing the wheel and not utilizing the most efficient methods of delivering services to the fire service, which is already in place, state and local fire service training agencies.

*Question 4.* It appears that the government is providing some funding for new equipment, but yet staffing problems persist. Do you envision any new technologies that may actually reduce the amount of staffing needed by fire departments?

Answer. Regardless of the new technologies that may reduce the amount of staffing needed by fire departments, fire suppression will continue to be a labor intensive job and able-bodied people are needed to perform many firefighting tasks. This is true for communities of all sizes.

However, there is technology already available that would help to make a firefighter's work safer and reduce the risk associated with fire. This technology is fire sprinklers and efforts need to be made at all levels of government to promote their use. At the Federal level, legislation has been introduced (H.R. 1824), which would provide tax incentives for the voluntary installation and retrofitting of buildings with automated sprinklers. We encourage Congress to pass this legislation.

Another area where technology will help increase the effectiveness of personnel is in the field of resource management. This includes equipment, supply, and personnel tracking both at the incident, and during daily routines. This technology exists; the problem is that many of the fire agencies do not have sufficient computers, networks, or internet connections that allow them to take advantage of it.

Finally, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) will soon be able to provide officers the ability to track their firefighter on the fireground. However, the fire service lacks the financial resources to afford this technology, as well as the standardization that would provide true interoperability.

*Question 5.* Do you support the development of a national credentialing system for first responders?

Answer. The NVFC supports the establishment of a national credentialing system for first responders. In fact, in an August 2002 report by the NVFC entitled "The Role of the Volunteer Fire Service in the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks," one of the major problems that was identified was the self-dispatching of agencies to the incidents.

The importance of command and control on the fireground cannot be overemphasized. All personnel, career and volunteer, must be aware of and conform to standard operating procedures for response to major incidents, his imperative that the IC knows what units and which personnel are operating on the scene of an emergency incident. Self-dispatching by fire service personnel is dangerous and should be actively discouraged.

The need for national credentialing has been apparent to agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Department of Interior agencies since the late 1980's. The municipal, police, fire, and to some extent EMS agencies have been slow to catch up due to the perceived lack of need for mutual aid and regional planning. The need to work together has become more necessary as budgets get tighter.

Most agencies can handle the "average" incident. They now must rely on neighboring agencies for assistance on large incidents or during times of personnel shortages. As no IC should allow a responder to perform work that they lack training or skills in, they have two choices. The IC may take a person's word that they are qualified or they are forced to refuse to use them. A national credentialing system can serve to promote safety, reduce resource requirements, and reduce liability.

a. How should such a system be designed?

Answer. A good system should be designed that identifies not only personal information but training qualifications. The system would take advantage of machine readable media, computerization, internet based centralization (for standard ID production), and automated data collection, credential verification and reporting. The system must be low cost to access, low cost for identification, easy and simple to use. Natural control points would be the Department of Homeland Security, State Emergency Management, through local emergency management agencies. An internet based system could allow the local department to produce identification cards at a low cost based on rules and credentials set by a national system. This could provide both a national database of emergency responders and standardization for interoperability on a local or regional basis. If the system used is optional it will not work. We require a driver's license to drive a vehicle, why can we not require an "emergency responder" ID for saving lives and property?

*Question 6.* In your testimony, you recommend that S. 544, the SAFER Act, should include provisions for a grant program for volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention.

a) Could you expand on the recruitment and retention programs that you envision under such a grant program?

Answer. The NVFC feels that any initiative by Congress to address the personnel shortfall in the fire service must include a significant recruitment and retention component to account for the nearly 90 percent of America communities that are protected by volunteers. The recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel has become the number one challenge facing America's volunteer fire service. The ranks of the volunteer fire service have decreased close to 15 percent in the last 20 years. Combining grant to hire firefighters with funding for volunteer recruitment and retention will lead to increased staffing in every firehouse in America.

Some possible programs that could be implemented with recruitment and retention grants include: national and local recruitment campaigns; the creation and augmentation of length of service award programs and other pension programs for volunteers; tuition assistance for higher education; and affordable housing programs. In addition, Congress should consider tax credits and deductions for volunteers and increased proliferation of on-line training for volunteers.

Finally, recruitment money included in the SAFER could be directed towards a national campaign in conjunction with the Citizen Corps initiative. In the last year, national PSAs and other advertising have been encouraging Americans to volunteer in their communities. However, there has been little focus on encouraging citizens to join their local volunteer fire or EMS departments.

b) How much would such a grant program cost?

Answer. A grant program for recruitment and retention should be authorized at \$75 million per year. That is less than one-tenth of the proposed hiring grants authorized in the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act (S. 544 /H.R. 1118).

*Question 7.* In your statement, you have proposed funding the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program at \$900 million in FY 2004, as opposed to \$500 million as proposed by the President. What is the impact of the additional \$400 million to the nation's volunteer firefighters?

Answer. The proposed cut in funding by the Administration would have a very significant impact in our efforts to meet the basic needs of volunteer fire departments across this country. These needs have been demonstrated in a variety of ways.

First, on January 22, 2003 FEMA and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) announced a comprehensive study that examined the needs and response capabilities of the nation's fire service. The study established a current understanding of problem areas to guide future planning and initiatives to enhance fire services and firefighter safety. Among other things, the Needs Assessment Study of the U.S. Fire Service found:

- Just over 13,000 fire engines (pumpers) (16 percent of all engines) are 15 to 19 years old, another 17,000 (21 percent) are 20 to 29 years old, and just over 10,000 (13 percent) are at least 30 years old. Therefore, half of all engines are at least 15 years old.
- An estimated one-third of firefighters per shift are not equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Nearly half of SCBA units are at least 10 years old.
- Nearly half of the emergency responders per shift are not equipped with personal alert system (PASS) devices.
- An estimated 57,000 firefighters lack personal protective clothing, most in departments protecting communities with less than 2,500 population. An estimated one-third of personal protective clothing is at least 10 years old.
- In general, fire departments do not have enough portable radios to equip more than about half of the emergency responders on a shift and most radios lack intrinsic safety in an explosive atmosphere and are not water-resistant.
- An estimated 40 percent of fire department personnel involved in hazardous material response lack formal training in those duties, most of them serving in smaller communities.

In addition, in the current FY 2003 Assistance to Firefighters grant cycle nearly 20,000 fire departments requested close to \$2.1 billion to meet basic needs. At a time when billions of federal dollars are being spent on preparing first responders for terrorism incidents, the federal government cannot lose sight of the fact that fire departments must have local fire departments have the basic tools they need to do their jobs on a daily basis, before we can ask them to be fully prepared to respond to large-scale incidents.

*Question 8.* You have mentioned that the USFA has cut 36 courses from its curriculum due to budget cuts. Can you discuss the practical impact of these reductions to the local fire departments?

Answer. A few weeks after the NVFC testified before the Senate Commerce Committee, the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA announced that the cancelled classes had been reinstated. The NVFC is obviously very encouraged by these developments but is concerned that the Department of Homeland Security has simply diverted funds from other fire programs to cover the shortfall. At the same time billions of dollars are going to the states for terrorism training, the U.S. Fire Administration should not have to choose between funding classes at the Academy and funding public education or other key programs.

*Question 9.* Are there any special needs that apply specifically to districts that rely upon volunteer firefighters?

Answer. One of the largest problems faced by America's volunteer fire service is funding. Many volunteer fire departments struggle to provide their members with adequate protective clothing, safety devices and training to protect their communities, as mandated by regulations and standards. These fire companies, in towns across America, are being asked to respond to emergency calls involving hazardous materials, structural fire suppression, search and rescue, natural disasters, wildland fires, emergency medical services, and terrorism.

In these difficult times, while volunteer fire departments are already struggling to handle their own needs and finances, they are now forced to provide more services. Often, local governments are unable to afford the extensive training and specialized equipment that these activities require. In addition, many volunteer fire companies receive little or no tax money and must use fundraising to pay for these items.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO  
PHILIP C. STITTLEBURG

*Question 1.* Fire departments in my state of Washington, and across the United States, are very dependent on the funds provided through the FIRE Act grant program. By mandating that funding be distributed to meet the needs of individual fire departments, the FIRE Act program ensures specific needs are addressed. However, the Administration's fiscal year 2004 budget not only reduces this funding to \$500 million, but also proposes to shift the program to a separate first responders block grant that would be distributed by states.

What effect do you believe this change will have on local fire departments?

Answer. Thanks to the leadership of many members of Congress, the Federal government took a giant step in addressing the basic needs of America's fire service by creating the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. Every fire department across the country is now eligible for direct funding for equipment, apparatus, training, fire prevention and education, and wellness and fitness programs.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program has proven to be the most effective program to date in providing local volunteer and career fire departments not only with the tools they need to perform their day-to-day duties, but it has also enhanced their ability to respond to large disasters as well. As we move to prepare for terrorist incidents at home, we must first ensure that local fire departments have the basic tools they need to do their jobs on a daily basis, before we can ask them to be fully prepared to respond to large-scale incidents.

This program has been successful for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, it is the only federal program that provides funding directly to fire departments for training and equipment. Far too often federal funds intended to aid fire departments are diverted to other uses by state and local officials.

As you stated, in February, President Bush included \$500 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program in his 2004 budget request. The Administration also proposed moving the program out of FEMA and USFA, which are in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security, and into the Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP), located in the Border and Transportation Security Directorate.

While \$500 million in funding is a good start and this is the first time that the program has been in an Administration budget, the NVFC feels that Congress needs to fully fund the program at the \$900 million level to meet the increased responsibilities that we face and the staggering demand for grant funds.

In addition, the NVFC is strongly opposed to the proposal to move the program into the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP), located in the Border and Transportation Security Directorate of Homeland Security. The NVFC does not understand the benefit of moving a program aimed at equipping and training America's firefighters out of the lead federal agency for the fire service and into a section of the department that exercises little, if any control, over federal fire programs. The move will require the government to reinvent the wheel, with new staff, new training, and new infrastructure, at a time when the Federal Government should be completely focused on delivering these dollars to our local first responders.

In addition, we are concerned that the proposed move will eventually lead to consolidating the program into other state-based block grants that ODP currently administers. This consolidation was proposed by the Administration in their FY 2003 budget and fortunately was not supported by Congress.

Finally, many of these departments who are receiving aid through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program are rural and suburban volunteer fire departments that struggle the most to provide their members with adequate protective gear, safety devices and training to protect their communities. They are being asked to respond to emergency calls involving hazardous materials, structural fire suppression, search and rescue, natural disasters, wildland fires, emergency medical services, terrorism, and more. Our recent experience tells us that these small and mid-sized departments will receive little or no funding if the program combined with a separate first responders block grant that would be distributed by states.

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN MCCAIN TO  
R. DAVID PAULISON

*Question 1.* This Committee held the confirmation hearings for your nomination to the position of U.S. Fire Administrator on November 1, 2001. Now there is some question about the status of the position of U.S. Fire Administrator after the transfer of the U.S. Fire Administration to the Department of Homeland Security.

a) What is the status of the position of U.S. Fire Administrator?

Answer. While the position of U.S. Fire Administrator was retained by the enactment of H.R.5005, its status as a Senate-confirmed appointment was not. However, S. 1152, the U.S. Fire Administration Reauthorization of 2003 (P.L. 108-169), reauthorized the Senate confirmed position of U.S. Fire Administrator through FY 2008.

b) If the U.S. Fire Administrator position is eliminated, who is actually running the agency?

Answer. The U.S. Fire Administrator position was not eliminated. R. David Paulison, who had been Senate-confirmed as the U.S. Fire Administrator prior to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remains so today.

*Question 2.* The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is suffering from a budget shortfall for fiscal year 2003, which almost resulted in the canceling of 36 classes at the National Fire Academy. What caused this shortfall, and what role did Congressional earmarks play in this shortfall?

Answer. While there were relatively few "earmarks" within the FY 2003 appropriation for the FEMA account that funds the Fire Administration, Congress did re-allocate existing funds to various other programs. USFA costs have increased on an annual basis, while funding has remained level. In order to maintain existing classes at the National Fire Academy (NFA), the final 2003 program allocations required an across-the-board reduction in other programs, particularly within Mitigation, Response, and Information Technology programs.

*Question 3.* S. 544, the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Firefighters Act of 2003, was referred to this Committee. Last year, Secretary Ridge said that the "hiring of personnel for emergency response has been, is now, and should be either a state or local responsibility." What is the Administration's position on this legislation?

Answer. Both President Bush and Secretary Ridge have stated that the hiring of local personnel such as firefighters should be viewed as a local matter and a local responsibility, and not dependent upon Federal funding. Furthermore, the SAFER Act grants are not target based on threats and vulnerabilities to terrorism, which is the Administration's top priority for responder assistance. The Administration believes Federal funding is more appropriate for developing new capabilities through equipment, training, and exercises. Providing short-term salary grants to fire departments will impose a hidden burden on the local governments and communities that will assume the long-term payroll costs when the grant funds expire, as dictated in the statute.

*Question 4.* This Committee is beginning the process of reauthorizing the USFA. What issues should this Committee consider as we draft this legislation?

Answer. The U.S. Fire Administration is now fully authorized. The President signed into law S. 1152, the U.S. Fire Administration Reauthorization Act of 2003 on December 6, 2003.

*Question 5.* In its fiscal year 2004 budget, the Administration has proposed transferring the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program to the Office of Domestic Preparedness. What is the Administration's rationale for this move?

Answer. In FY 2004, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program was consolidated with other DHS grant programs in the one stop shop for grants in DHS, the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, of which the Office of Domestic Preparedness is a part. The purpose of this consolidation was to enhance overall coordination among all of the grant programs and improve efficiency wherever possible.

*Question 6.* Senators Hollings, Brownback, Cantwell, Biden, Carper, DeWine, Graham and I have introduced S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act. Are there any recommendations that you have for changes that should be made to this legislation as we consider it?

Answer. S. 321 became Title II of S. 1152, the "United States Fire Administration Reauthorization Act of 2003" and was signed into law on December 6, 2003, and became Public Law 108-126. Title II may be cited as the "Firefighting Research and Coordination Act."

*Question 7.* State and local fire departments in Arizona and across the country have raised concerns about the need for communications equipments that will allow fire departments to talk to police departments, other fire departments, and federal government agencies. What role is USFA playing in meeting the public safety communications interoperability challenge?

Answer. The Assistance to Firefighters Grants encourage the coordination of specifications with items of equipment purchased under the grants. Currently we are waiting for the development and implementation of a covering standard or stand-



ards regarding equipment, training, and communications interoperability. As these are developed, we will incorporate those standards into grants and programs.

*Question 8.* You have mentioned that a localized fire suppression system in kitchens would dramatically reduce the number of civilian fire deaths by 25 percent. You further stated that the cost of retrofitting a kitchen would be minimal. Can you be more specific about the cost of retrofitting and would insurance companies recognize the reduced risks through lower premiums?

*Answer.* On the average, it is estimated that the cost to provide localized sprinkler protection in a typical residential kitchen would cost about \$500 (labor and materials). The \$500 estimate is provided by the American Fire Sprinkler Association and is based on localized retrofitting (over a stove perhaps) one sprinkler head in an average kitchen. Costs would vary depending on the geographic location and the size of the kitchen to be protected. It is a fact that most residential fires start in the kitchen. It is our hope that the insurance industry will give the homeowner a credit for installing localized sprinkler protection in the kitchen much the same as some insurance companies do for a complete residential sprinkler system. However, in addition, USFA is working with NIST and will have a report in November 2004 on the efficacy of retrofitting kitchens, design parameters, including available water supply, room characteristics, etc. One additional comment regarding Q8: USFA is not on record as stating that localized fire suppression systems in kitchens would reduce the number of civilian fire deaths by 25 percent.

*Question 9.* A growing problem is the spread of wildland fires into urban areas. What actions are USFA taking to deal with this problem?

*Answer.* USFA is a member of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, consisting of policy-makers in the area of wildfire response. The wildfire community has the lead on these issues with USFA providing support.

- USFA has been working with the national wildfire community as well as with State and local wildfire and structural fire departments to improve training and coordination. USFA has developed, in conjunction with the above listed communities, five training programs that are designed to meet the needs of fire departments in the wildland/urban interface. They include command and control, leadership, and firefighting. These programs seek to improve the understanding, safety, and operations of structural fire departments operating within wildland/urban interfaces and at wildfires in general.
- USFA now has a full-time permanent staff person assigned to the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, ID, to maintain a continual presence/liaison between the USFA and the wildfire community.
- USFA has an ongoing affiliation with the National Association of State Foresters to further the efforts of both organizations in safety, prevention, and control of wildland fires.
- Other USFA wildfire-related projects include the FIREWISE Program and FIRESCOPE Incident Command System. USFA collaborated on the United States Department of Agriculture's draft report to Congress titled, "The Changing Role and Needs of Local, Rural, and Volunteer Fire Departments Suppressing Wildland Fires in the Wildland-Urban Interface". In addition, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program has begun coordinating with other Federal wildfire agencies.

*Question 10.* The Federal Response Plan currently makes the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service the primary agencies for responding to a fire-related disaster. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, occurred in urban areas, where USFA may have greater expertise. What steps are the Administration taking to revise the Federal Response Plan and create a National Response Plan that will handle fire-related disasters or terrorist attacks in urban areas?

*Answer.* USFA is actively participating in the finalization of the National Response Plan and was closely involved in the development of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). USFA does not directly respond to fire-related emergencies, and components of these systems need to continue to rely on the State/local responders within fire, rescue, EMS, arson, hazardous materials, and incident management cadres. Specific issues USFA is working on include development of national standards for all risk incident management teams (IMTs) and training programs geared specifically toward the use of IMTs have been developed and are currently being used in Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

*Question 11.* Both the General Accounting Office and fire service organizations have cited duplication in the training programs of the different federal agencies as

a source of confusion for firefighters and other first responders. What steps have USFA taken to address this issue?

Answer. It is important to note that in the 2001 Report to Congress—A Comprehensive Curriculum Review for the United States Fire Administration, the study examined 119 NFA courses, and 753 courses delivered in State, local, and college curriculums. The analysis found, in some instances, that some USFA/NFA courses were available in local colleges or fire training academies, but the local college or academy wasn't accessible to every firefighter and officer in the country, only those in that particular region/area.

Duplication in Federal agency training is a common complaint, and one that we have wrestled with for several years. Both the National Strategy for Homeland Security and Homeland Security Presidential Directives 5 and 8 called for better integration of Federal training programs. The DHS Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness will be examining this issue in an effort to bring greater coherence and coordination to Federally sponsored training.

*Question 12.* S. 321, the Firefighting Research and Coordination Act would require that equipment purchased through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program would have to meet or exceed applicable voluntary consensus standards. What role do voluntary consensus standards currently play in the application review process for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program?

Answer. The AFG program currently gives competitive advantage to grant proposals that include equipment that meets either National Fire Protection Association standards or OSHA requirements, as appropriate. However, P.L. 108-126 provides that applicants may request that the U.S. Fire Administrator waive the requirement (see Title II, Sec. 202).

*Question 13.* Has the \$1 billion provided in the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program accomplished its purpose? Are the fire departments better prepared because of it?

Answer. A voluntary survey of the recipients from 2001 indicated that grantees felt better prepared to attack fires. Empirical data is still being collected on the extent to which actual response capabilities have been enhanced by these funds.

*Question 14.* You have mentioned the success of the streamlined grant application process for the fire departments. Will this process be maintained if the grant program is transferred to the Border Transportation and Security Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security?

Answer. As stated previously, the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program has been consolidated with other grant programs in the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, which is now under the Office of the Secretary. USFA works closely with OSLGCP, including ODP, on the implementation of the Assistance to Firefighter grants, and the automated system has been maintained.

*Question 15.* Based upon your work with the firefighters and their needs, what would you say is the most pressing need at the moment for the nation's fire departments?

Answer. Basic equipment and training for capacity building continues to be the most pressing need for the nations fire service. Even as the Department of Homeland Security provides funding to meet some of this need, it is critical that local communities continue to make investments in their fire service.

*Question 16.* Some members of the fire service have raised concerns that the mission of the U.S. Fire Administration will change now that it is part of the Department of Homeland Security. The concern is that the agency will concentrate its focus on anti-terrorism efforts to the detriment of its other traditional roles. What is your response to these concerns?

Answer. There is no question that terrorism has become an important part of the Department's mission. We are working closely with the Department to continue USFA programs for all-hazards planning and response while ensuring that our programs also enhance the nation's terrorism preparedness. In fact, the Homeland Security Act placed the Office for Domestic Preparedness outside of EP&R in order to preserve its focus on all-hazards preparedness. Our commitment to that has been confirmed repeatedly by Secretary Ridge, and we will work with the Secretary and the Office for Domestic Preparedness to fulfill all of those important missions.

The decision to move the administration of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (Fire Act) to DHS's Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, which includes the Office for Domestic Preparedness, from the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate is part of the Department's efforts to provide first responders a "one-stop shop" for grants and other forms of assistance. The purpose of this consolidation was to enhance overall coordination among all of

the grant programs and improve efficiency wherever possible, not to reduce the focus on all-hazard preparedness.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO  
R. DAVID PAULISON

*Question 1.* Mr. Paulison, in February 2003, I proudly cosponsored Chairman McCain's Firefighter Research and Coordination Act that focused on the crucial importance of developing effective training and coordination among firefighters. I believe that these needs are amplified by the events of September 11, 2001, and the anthrax attacks of October 2001, a concern that firefighters and other first responders in my state of Washington have expressed.

Can you provide additional insight into how your office is addressing these training and coordination needs?

Answer. The United States Fire Administration (USFA) National Fire Academy's (NFA's) strength is its partnership and coordination with State and local fire training systems. The USFA/NFA provides many courses to each State, as well as \$25,000 in grants to support the delivery of NFA curriculum. In addition, each State receives nine 2-day courses, and each FEMA region receives three 6-day courses per year. The USFA/NFA provides the costs for instructors and texts, the States and local organization provides the training facilities in that partnership.

To highlight the increased capability of the NFA, in fiscal year (FY) 1995, the USFA/NFA trained 8,000 students in residence on the Emmitsburg campus, and 7,000 students in off-campus courses. In FY 2002, we trained the same number in residence, 8,000, but we trained 87,000 first responders through State and local systems and Distance Education methods. Over that same period, the budget has remained relatively flat. We are taking better advantage of partnerships and technology. We work very closely with Washington State Fire Marshal Mary Corso (who is responsible for training in Washington), and with each State training director in the country.

Between 1997 and 2002, the USFA/NFA administered \$5 million in terrorism training grants each year. In addition to new course development, this fund provided \$80,000 per State to conduct terrorism awareness and response training, including incident command and hazardous materials training. In FY 2002, our State Fire Service Training Agency partners trained 55,508 students in courses specific to terrorism.

*Question 2.* Mr. Paulison, the Fire Administration is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is now part of the Department of Homeland Security. This has raised concerns that the Fire Administration's training, assistance, and research programs may become overly focused on terrorism response and prevention. While I strongly endorse support for these functions of the Fire Administration, I share concerns that traditional Fire Administration services may be neglected.

Please express your thoughts on the future direction of the services provided by the Fire Administration in light of its location within the Department of Homeland Security.

Answer. There is no question that terrorism has become an important part of the Department's mission. We are working closely with the Department to continue USFA programs for all-hazards planning and response while ensuring that our programs also enhance the nation's terrorism preparedness. In fact, the Homeland Security Act placed the Office for Domestic Preparedness outside of EP&R in order to preserve EP&R's focus on all-hazards preparedness. Our commitment to that has been confirmed repeatedly by Secretary Ridge, and we will work with the Secretary and the Office for Domestic Preparedness to fulfill all of those important missions.

The decision to move the administration of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (Fire Act) to DHS's Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, which includes the Office for Domestic Preparedness, from the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate is part of the Department's efforts to provide first responders a "one-stop shop" for grants and other forms of assistance. The purpose of this consolidation was to enhance overall coordination among all of the grant programs and improve efficiency wherever possible, not to reduce the focus on all-hazard preparedness.