



NASFM News

National Association of State Fire Marshals

May 2013

In This Issue

Bleill to Keynote 2013 Conference

America Is Still Burning Guest Editorial

2012 Life Safety Achievement Awards

July Webinars to Launch FIEF

Safety and Health Week Focuses on Behavioral Health

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



June 15, 2013 Deadline for nominations for NASFM's Mineta and Olin Greene Awards

June 16-22, 2013 International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week

July 10, 2013 Fire Is Everyone's Fight™ Webinar for fire and life safety participants

August 7-9, 2013



One Strong, United Voice for Fire Prevention

Inspirational Speaker Josh Bleill to Keynote NASFM 2013 Annual Conference: Have You Registered Yet?



NASFM is pleased to announce that Marine Corporal Josh Bleill (rhymes with "smile") will be the Keynote Speaker during the Opening General Ceremony of our 2013 Annual Conference in Indianapolis this August. Bleill, an Indiana native, joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 2004 after graduating from Perdue University. He was activated for a tour of duty in Iraq in 2006, and was severely injured, resulting in the loss of both of his legs. After extensive rehabilitation, Bleill returned to Indiana in August of 2008, where he attacked his new life head-on. This new life included employment as the

Indianapolis Colts Community Spokesperson. He also authored a book entitled *One Step at a Time: A Young Marine's Story of Courage, Hope and a New Life in the NFL*, which reflects his undying enthusiasm, infectious joy, and sense of humor. Everyone has had that "one bad day"; Bleill discovered that life begins when we embrace our bad days and keep going forward. He now travels the country to spread his message of hope, "one step at a time."

To get the best deals, register now for the NASFM Annual Conference, August 7-9, 2013, at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown in Indianapolis, IN.

Take advantage of Early Bird rates: Registration fees will rise by \$100 after June 28, and July 17th is the last day to make hotel reservations at the negotiated rate of \$159.

[NASFM 2013 Annual Conference](#)
[Indianapolis Marriott Downtown Indianapolis, IN](#)

[August 9, 2013 Deadline for Applications for 2012 Life Safety Achievement Award](#)

Quick Links

[NASFM](#)

[NASFM Training Portal](#)

[Fire Safety and Green Buildings](#)

[Pipeline Emergencies](#)

[Residential Fire Safety Institute](#)

[Common Ground Alliance Monthly Update Newsletter](#)

[Crowd Manager Training](#)

[Yellow CSST Safety Campaign](#)

[Fire is Everyone's Fight™](#)



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Members, nonmembers, sponsors, exhibitors and spouses/companions can all register at <http://www.firemarshals.org/events/events.html>. We will update the website with new information as it becomes available, but rest assured that host State Fire Marshal Jim Greeson and his staff are working diligently with the NASFM staff to put together a relevant and exceptional conference that highlights the best of the city known as the "Crossroads of America." See you soon in Indy!

America Is Still Burning:

Guest Editorial from Iowa State Fire Marshal Ray Reynolds, NASFM Board Member

I have grown concerned about the anecdotal evidence that fires are developing faster, burning hotter, and consuming property much faster based on the factors discussed in this essay. This paper is a compilation of my thoughts shared with National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) Board members shortly after the 10th anniversary of the Rhode Island Station Nightclub Fire. It is intended to serve as a platform for NASFM to consider as modern-day methods and messages are not effectively reaching the general public, those that we as State Fire Marshals are sworn to protect; and fire prevention is lacking, underfunded, and not viewed as important except by a select few in society. I thought it was appropriate to share these thoughts on a broader scale this month, which represents the 40th anniversary since the historic *America Burning* report was delivered to President Richard Nixon.

Causes: 1) The pressure to build efficient, low-cost homes has created construction techniques that are based on wood chip and compressed fibers rather than whole grain legacy wood and lumber. While some argue the structural stability to sustain heavy loads is achieved, in a fire those structures collapse more often and sooner (see picture below, and Underwriters Laboratories research on "Structural Stability of Engineered Lumber in Fire Conditions," <http://www.ul.com/global/eng/pages/offerings/industries/buildingmaterials/fire/fireservice/lightweight/>).

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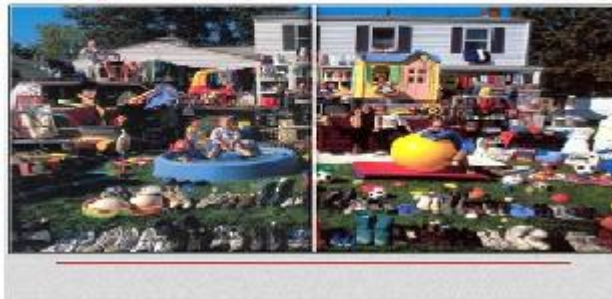


The photo above is compressed chip and glue joists of pre-engineered lumber. The fire occurred outside but traveled into the home. The response time of the fire department was within minutes of this fire being discovered due to smoke alarm activation. Yet the entire structural support of the floor is consumed.

Current firefighting techniques of entry and knockdown create a tremendous risk of firefighter injury and death when these structures burn.

2) The change in society over the past 40 years that nothing holds value and everything is disposable has contributed to plastics invading our homes. Wood shelving has been replaced with lightweight plastic shelves. I would guess one would be hard pressed to not find plastics in every room of a home, down to the bowls we eat from. The increased fuel of plastics has increased smoke toxicity, speeded up flame development, created fires that burn more intensely and with reduced visibility during fires, as well as a drastically reduced time to flashover. NIST smoke alarm research (see http://www.nist.gov/el/fire_protection/buildings/home-smoke-alarm-tests.cfm) confirmed that individuals caught in a flaming fire (as opposed to a smoldering fire) have only about three minutes to escape untenable conditions in a typical modern home, as opposed to the 17-minute escape time NIST reported from its smoke alarm research in the 1970s.

Plastics in Homes of Two Average Households of Four



3) The lack of meaningful flammability standards for clothing and upholstered furniture.

According to the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), more than 4,000 consumers a year suffer severe burn injuries and an estimated 150 or more die when their clothing ignites from even minimal exposure to ordinary household ignition sources. In most cases, these clothing and apparel items had met the requirements of the federal standard for the flammability of clothing textiles (16 CFR Part 1610), also known as the General Wearing Apparel Standard. That's because it is an absolute minimum standard that is 60 years old this year (it was part of the original Flammable Fabrics Act passed by Congress in 1953) and was designed primarily to remove only the most dangerous and intensely flammable textiles from the clothing market. The vast majority of textile products subject to the test specified in this standard pass - but so do newspaper and tissue paper. So consumers are misled in to believing that their clothing is safe when, for the most part, it will ignite in real-world conditions, often with tragic results. For years, NASFM has been calling on the CPSC (who enforces the standard) to strengthen the General Wearing Apparel standard so that it provides a greater measure of protection, particularly for our most vulnerable populations. But the CPSC has had no inclination to address this issue.

The CPSC has also been struggling with residential upholstered furniture flammability since it was first established as an agency in 1973 - 40 years ago this year, the same year that America Burning was issued. Currently, the only fire-related standard the furniture in your home might meet is a rather weak industry voluntary standard against cigarette-ignited fires - and because it is voluntary, there is no guarantee that it does meet that standard. NASFM petitioned the CPSC to establish mandatory flammability standards for cigarette and open flame ignitions of upholstered furniture in 1993 - 20 years ago this year. Since then, there has been a great deal of study and many changes in direction, but we are still waiting for a proposal that addresses both smoldering and open flame fires in a meaningful way that protects the furniture's outer covering as well as the filling materials. which can burn

intensely and quickly once ignited. Meanwhile, during 2005-2009, upholstered furniture was the item first ignited in an average of 7,040 home fires, causing 500 civilian deaths, 890 civilian injuries, and \$442,000,000 in direct property damage every year ("Home Fires That Began With Upholstered Furniture," August 2011, by Marty Ahrens, National Fire Protection Association).

If the CPSC were to act on federal mandatory standards for general wearing apparel and upholstered furniture flammability, you can bet that in both cases there will be a strong industry lobby waiting to impede its progress.

4) Juvenile fire setting anecdotally seem to be on the rise as we attribute the #1 cause of arson in our state to youth fire setters. The fourth overall leading cause of fires can be tied to a juvenile being involved.

5) Apathy in preventing fires. Quite simply, fire prevention in society is an afterthought. Recently four people died in a home fire where no smoke alarms existed. I shake my head and ask, Why didn't they take one simple action to save their family? There are so many bad decisions people make that affect their fire safety that it is hard to start to categorize them. Removing batteries from smoke alarms, overloaded extension cords, unattended cooking and so many more things that cause fires. Why do people risk their lives on these behaviors? The common response after the fire is, "I didn't know better." Or "I wish I had done something different." Why does it take the fire to educate people about the danger of fire?

6) Fire service tradition of protecting the Holy Grail of "fighting a fire" vs. "preventing a fire." The day we created fire engines is the day we lost fire prevention. Some believe that the macho nature of donning gear to fight the beast is much more impressive than teaching people to prevent a fire. Isn't that counter-intuitive to the very principle we stand on? Aren't we supposed to put every fiber of our being into stopping fires before they start? Wouldn't that be a better way to serve and protect the public? Or do we honestly believe busting down a door, and applying thousands of gallons of water into living rooms shows that we actually care about the public?

7) There is no formalized national fire prevention program. There are hundreds of ad-hoc ideas and classes with our traditional Fire Prevention Week school visits. While I generally support the idea of getting into the schools because kids are where we need to focus to make any gains on fire prevention, it is better to get into every home. In the UK, villages do home fire inspections in the entire village of some communities. Do we even know if our fire prevention messages in this country are effective?

8) While the value of a working smoke alarm cannot be overstated with many lives saved to its credit, we still find only 10% of homes adequately covered with smoke alarms that work. Many times battery giveaway and smoke alarm giveaway programs make us as a fire service feel like we are making a difference; the reality is we are putting our finger in the leaking dike. Even after a tragedy in a small community in Iowa that took four lives, we still found 500 homes just 3 weeks later without working detection. At some point we must get serious about taking the human intervention out of saving lives.

9) Economy. The economy is such that people are not spending money in drive-throughs. Fast food costs more, gas costs more, and people are getting less wealthy. As such, many people are working multiple lower-paying jobs, causing fatigue and resulting in less time to do things correctly. Unattended stove fires have increased in our state as people are walking away from stoves to do other hustle-and-bustle tasks or simply falling asleep after working long hours. Quick, grease-laden foods are the norm. No one cooks; we heat things up or fry it in a pan.

Secondly, the economy is blamed for the push against residential sprinklers. It's interesting how many people tell me sprinklers cost too much, yet they don't know the actual costs. The network that is working against public education is much more effective than the fire service efforts to promote sprinklers.

10) Combine 1-9 from above, and the question needs to be asked... Are we creating a conflagration problem like years past, but with different products involved? Many failures of the past were related to the lack of mechanical inventions. Hose couplings did not match, doors were locked and chained, and stairs were not separated. We have that now, and the materials are different in fires now.

Needs of the Fire Service:

1) Virtual training and advanced fire training for inspections, code enforcement and firefighters

2) Effective flammability standards for furniture and clothing

3) Standard of care to identify and treat juvenile fire setters

4) Advances in technologies that take human intervention out of life safety

5) Leadership on safety in green energy and fire safety education in this "new green world"

6) Vocal messages about fire prevention, involving a national effort and a consistent sales pitch

7) Consistent application of fire and building codes to ensure fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems, fire sprinkler systems, fire walls, doors and separations, and any other features and provisions required by code are installed and maintained.

Other possible solutions:

- 1) Assistance to Firefighter grants that focus on prevention, not trucks
- 2) More trade-offs for sprinklers, but none that sacrifice additional layers of safety and built-in fire protection
- 3) Experts, not lobbyists, setting policy
- 4) All community development grants tied to a percentage of prevention and safety
- 5) Safe model communities that can establish small "wins" for others to emulate.

Will we still be having this conversation 40 years from now? I sure hope not.

Applications Being Accepted for 2012 Life Safety Achievement Awards

The NASFM Fire Research & Education Foundation, along with Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, presents the 2012 Life Safety Achievement Award.



Since 1994, the Life Safety Achievement (LSA) Award has recognized fire departments for outstanding fire safety statistics and effective fire prevention programs during the preceding calendar year. In recognition of these proactive fire prevention efforts aimed at improving a community's fire and life safety behaviors, a fire department may be eligible for the Life Safety Achievement Award.

The Life Safety Achievement Award criteria are as follows:

- Zero fire deaths or at least a 10 percent reduction in fire deaths from the previous year.
- An active fire prevention program is in place within the department. Briefly describe the program.
- Dedicated commitment to fire prevention activities. Briefly describe the department's commitment and the resources committed, which may be financial or in-kind.
- Evidence by some measure (department-determined) that fire prevention efforts increased over the previous year and are making a positive difference.

To apply for the 2012 Life Safety Achievement Award, fill out the online application at <http://www.grinnellmutual.com/LSAAapplication.aspx> or download the PDF version of the

application at <http://www.grinnellmutual.com/Upload/Resource-Center/2013-Life-Safety-Achievement-Award-Application.pdf> and email it to info@firemarshals.org by August 9, 2013.

For other information, including information about last year's recipients and a link to a list of fire organizations, visit the LSA page on Grinnell Mutual's website at <http://www.grinnellmutual.com/resource-center/life-safety-achievement-award>.

USFA Launches "Fire Is Everyone's Fight" Campaign with July Webinars



The United States Fire Administration will be launching Fire is Everyone's Fight™ with two webinars in early July. On Wednesday, July 10th, there will be a webinar for fire and life safety members moderated by Deputy Administrator Glenn Gaines and featuring Administrator Ernest Mitchell and IAFC President Hank Clemmensen. On Thursday, July 11th, Deputy Administrator Gaines will moderate another webinar for the media that will feature Administrator Mitchell as well as a few nontraditional partners. After this webinar, there will be interest from the media for Fire is Everyone's Fight™ as well as the fire problem in the U.S.

We are looking for representatives from around the country who would be willing to speak with the media. It would be wonderful if they were also partnering with USFA on Fire is Everyone's Fight™, but that is not a prerequisite.

If you are interested in being available for the media, please contact Teresa Neal at Teresa.Neal@fema.dhs.gov or 301-447-1024. All media representatives will be provided with talking points and other background material from the USFA.

If you are interested in learning more about Fire is Everyone's Fight™, please go to www.usfa.fema.gov/FireisEveryonesFight or contact Teresa Neal. Information about the July 10 and 11 webinars will be posted there.

Focus on Behavioral Health During International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week, June 16-22

International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week is a joint initiative of the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the National Volunteer Fire Council. The event is coordinated by the IAFC Safety, Health and Survival Section and the NVFC Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, and is supported by national and international fire and emergency service organizations, including NASFM, as well as health and safety-related organizations and agencies.



The 2013 event will take place from June 16-22.

This year's theme is "Saving Our Own... An Inside Job." Fire departments are encouraged to suspend all non-emergency activity during Safety and Health Week in order to focus on safety and health training and education. An entire week is provided to ensure all shifts and duty crew can participate.

International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week is the unification of the IAFC's Fire/EMS Safety, Health and Survival Week with the NVFC's National Firefighter Health Week. The goal of both organizations is to reduce the number of preventable injury and death in the fire and emergency services. Safety and Health Week focuses on the critical importance of responders' taking care of themselves both on and off the emergency incident scene. The week is designed to increase awareness and action so that safety and health become a priority in all fire departments.

Visit the Safety and Health Week website

at <http://safetyandhealthweek.org/> for several tools to help plan their activities during the week. You may use them as-is, or customize them as needed.

If you have questions about International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week or have a health, safety, or survival resource you would like to share, contact kimberly@nvfc.org or Victoria Lee at vlee@iafc.org.