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## **National Credentialing is Coming**

How will it affect your department?

*By Roger Willey, Assistant Chief, Argyle Fire & EMS*

Even if you are familiar with National Credentialing, there may be some aspects of it that you may not be aware of. If you have not yet been informed on this topic, as a chief officer, you certainly need to be. It is a set of standards that will ultimately affect every fire department whether you are career, combination or volunteer in some facet or another at some point in time in the near future whether you participate or not.

I was introduced to this discussion at a conference in Denver, CO in 2004. Since that time, I have been following the document trail and interconnection of multiple agencies relating to this subject and how it might effect fire operations. As a chief officer, I was particularly concerned as to how it would affect my department's day to day functions, in addition to our ability to be used as a resource for other agencies.

I have spent several months communicating with various national agencies in an attempt to clarify questions that I had. This communication produced a substantial amount of information relating to those questions. In some instances, the more information I collected the more questions that arose. I finally arrived at a point at which I believe I now have a firm understanding of the intent and implications surrounding these standards.

This article is not intended to discuss all the gory details because of the length required for such an article and the interaction and discussion potential that surrounds this issue. I am only surveying the interest level as to the possibility of further discussions on this matter via other means. This is a very condensed version of what is ahead and the presentation of some issues that you as a chief officer need to be focusing your attention towards in order to make an intelligent decision as to how your department will approach this change in the fire service.

### ***What Is "National Credentialing?"***

The fire service is about to join our EMS and Wildland Fire counterparts in providing a system of verifying and tracking certification and proficiency of all emergency response personnel. This is in large part being driven by the fire service itself due to many years of confusion and frustration in regards to who is certified and/or qualified to perform what tasks and in whose jurisdiction can they operate. This is directly related to liability involving many aspects of fire operations.

For those of you not aware, National Credentialing is part of NIMS. It is not separate or in addition to, but part of and will be required in the very near future in order for your department to be qualified as NIMS compliant. This is a broad area that includes programs that many of us utilize annually for equipment and training assistance in addition to state contracts and rebates. While it is not required that your department take part in National Credentialing, there are many ramifications that you need to be aware of before making a decision as to your participation or non-participation in that program no matter how large or small your departments operation.



# SOUTH DAKOTA FIRECHIEF

## Fire Chief Directory

We now have on our website a complete list of every fire chief in the State of South Dakota. Thanks go out to Fire Marshal Al Christie for helping us with this project. At this time, the list just contains the names of every fire chief. We're keeping the contact phone numbers and addresses confidential due to privacy concerns. We also have a web form you can use to update your department's information if your chief or their contact information changes. Please use this form only if your information has changed. We're getting several people who are using it to give us the same information we already have on file.

## New forms online

The new 2011 membership and scholarship applications are now online on our website. Dan Goodart has also sent these out by mail.



Fire Chief Ken Hart  
Ramona Fire Department  
1952-2010

Ken Hart, age 58, died at University of Minnesota Medical Center-Fairview in Minneapolis on December 14, 2010.

*Continued next page*

## *National Credentialing - continued*

By now, most of us are familiar with the 100/200/300/400/700/800 classes that are required for management level personnel and 100/200/700 for the rest of the response level personnel on our departments in order to be considered NIMS compliant. These classes are defined as "awareness" classes and are part of NIMS. In addition to these "awareness" classes, on scene emergency response personnel including Law Enforcement, EMS, Fire, Search & Rescue, etc., will be required to complete additional training to become credentialed so as to verify competency and qualifications as defined by the NIMS 5 yr. training plan. (ref. - NIMS 5YTP page 5 / NWCG 310-1)

## ***Who Will Need To Implement The Plan?***

"NIMS is applicable to all **stakeholders** including Federal, State, territorial, tribal, sub-state, regional and local governments, private sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, and nongovernment organizations involved in emergency management and/or incident response." (ref. - NIMS 5YTP intro page 1)

"**Stakeholders** include all emergency services-related disciplines such as EMS, hospitals, public health, fire service, law enforcement, public works/utilities, skilled support personnel, and other emergency response, support and volunteer personnel." (ref. - NIMS Q&A document / re: definitions)

## ***How Will Non-Compliance Or Not Participating Effect My Department?***

This is an area of that is multi-faceted and includes many variables that relate to both the individual departments operations and the individual response personnel. In brief, "Adoption and implementation of the NIMS by **stakeholders** is one of the conditions for receiving Federal preparedness assistance through grants, contracts, and other activities." (ref. - NIMS 5YTP page 1) "Participation in the National Emergency Responder Credentialing System is voluntary. However, emergency responders who volunteer must meet the requirements to support an incident." (ref. - NIMS Q&A document) "Personnel that are not credentialed will not be used on complex multi-jurisdictional incidents." (ref. - NIMS Q&A document)

There are many other factors that will be realized on a local basis that may indeed have a significant impact on day to day operations of our departments. As I stated earlier, this is a condensed version of this information and that further discussions needs to take place in order to fully understand all the implementation variables.

## ***How Does A Department Apply For Credentialing?***

This is by far the most complex portion of my research due in part to the lack of national standards existing at this juncture. For some it will be very simple, while others will have to put forth more effort. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking into account a multitude of variables. Once again, this topic would encompass a very large portion of this article and definitely would be better suited in an open discussion format. Realize that this is not an insurmountable task, but one that needs to be approached with a concise and detailed orientated plan of attack. There is a very specific set of parameters that needs to be adhered to in order for your department to be considered and ultimately certified by a nationally accredited agency.



# SOUTH DAKOTA **FIRECHIEF**

*Ken Hart - continued*

Kenneth Dwight Hart was born on October 21, 1952 at Sleepy Eye, MN. He married Barbara Dietz at New Ulm, MN on May 25, 1974. He is survived by his wife - Barb of Ramona. One son - Nathan and a daughter - Tasia Hart both of Madison, three grandchildren - Caydra, Brandon & Delaney, two brothers - Ralph Zimanski and Raymond Zimanski both of Minnesota. Six sisters - Sherrie (Rex) Milligan of Ione, CA, Connie (Marv) Piotter of Sisseton, SD, Shirley (Rolin) Nething of Dassel, MN, Pat (Rich) Rauch of Langford, SD, Shelly (Fred) Philley of Ripon, Ca and Dawn (Ken) Towner of San Francisco, CA. He was preceded in death by his parents, 3 brothers and 2 sisters. Funeral Mass will be held at 10:30 AM on Saturday, December 18, 2010 at St William Catholic Church in Ramona with Rev Paul Josten officiating. Burial will be in the church cemetery. He grew up in the New Ulm area graduating from Nicollet High School. He worked in the mobile home industry both in building and transportation. They moved to Ramona in 1976. He owned and operated Ken's Repair and was Ramona Fire Chief for 13 years. There will be a parish scripture service at 7:00 PM on Friday at the Weiland Funeral Chapel which is in charge of the arrangement.

*National Credentialing - continued*

## **Summary:**

Although this is a somewhat complex issue, that should not deter a department from acquiring the facts as to what is expected and required if one desires to take part in the credentialing program and the collateral effects of non-participation, positive or negative, on your agency. Arming yourself with as much information as possible so that you may decide what the ultimate path is for your organization is in my opinion, the best option. You as a chief officer know your department better than anyone else. Be forewarned, the clock is ticking!!! This 5 year plan was initiated in Feb. 2008 and is to culminate in Jan. 2013. The more lead time you have, the easier it will be to make the transition if you so desire.

This is an issue that is not going to go away. Ignoring it will only intensify its negative impact on your department and in some cases, challenge your very existence as a viable entity. Dealing with change is not always easy, but pretending that change is something that is a long way off in the future or that it will not affect my agency is a definitive way to drive your organization over the proverbial cliff. By the time you realize it's there and it is for real, it is too late to react and compensate.

Since a concise written document that would include all of the detailed information that I have acquired would probably be so lengthy that most individuals would not read it, and due to the fact that open discussions with Q&A would be advantageous to getting questions answered on a department-by-department basis, I have had several individuals suggest the idea of conducting a class at all the district fire schools so that all departments would have the opportunity to send a representative so as to be informed as to the details surrounding this matter. I would appreciate your thoughts and comments. E-mail me at [argylevfd@custercountysd.com](mailto:argylevfd@custercountysd.com)



A detached garage fire on December 16 kept Watertown Fire and Rescue crews busy as venting propane and exploding ammunition delayed extinguishment efforts. The garage was a total loss but no other structures were damaged. If you have action shots you'd like to include in future newsletters, please e-mail them to us.