



SOUTH DAKOTA **FIRECHIEF**

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2010 Conference in review

By Nick Swinhart, President, South Dakota Fire Chiefs Association

The South Dakota Fire Chiefs Association Annual Conference was recently held in Oacoma, South Dakota at the Cedar Shore Resort. Despite some last minute cancellations we also had some people register at the door, which brought our attendance up to normal levels.

The conference kicked off with a social on Friday night at the resort with the main program starting Saturday morning. Local speakers included Fire Marshal Al Christie, Curt Hasart from State EMS, and Gary Myers from the Department of Health. We were also fortunate to have two out of state attendees. Crosby Grindle from the NFPA came in from Oregon and IAFC Missouri Valley Division President John Mullin drove up from Littleton, Colorado. The keynote speaker was retired Captain Larry Damrell from the Houston Fire Department. Captain Damrell is a frequent instructor at the National Fire Academy and gave an afternoon talk to attendees that covered topics ranging from leadership to communications to strategic planning models.

Finally, annual officer elections we held during the conference business meeting. Rick Gustad was elected to a full term as the East River Representative, Casey Warren was elected as the At Large Representative, John Niehaus was elected to a full term as Vice President, and Nick Swinhart was elected to a full term as President.

This year saw the first time vendors were invited to the conference. We only invited four for the first year to see how it worked out. The vendors who did attend contributed money that helped pay for all the snacks and coffee that the resort served to us. Thank you to Metro-Fire, Allegiant, Inc., Crimson, and Premiere Specialty Vehicles, for attending! We may look at adding more vendors for next year's conference.



While we're talking about next year's conference, I'd like to ask for your input on how we can get more people to attend. South Dakota has over 350 fire chiefs, and year after year we only get about 30 people that attend our annual conference. I've heard several theories on our perennially low attendance, ranging from the registration fees, to the location, to the time of year it's held. We're looking at two changes for next year's conference that we're hoping might increase attendance. First, we'll be exploring a corporate sponsorship, which a couple of companies have already expressed interest in doing. What this would allow us to do is get the conference provided for nearly free, which would enable us to lower our registration fees. As it is now, the conference is a break even proposition for us at best. This would also allow us to hire more high caliber speakers. Second, we may look at moving the conference to a different location. While Cedar Shore Resort has been good to us, some people believe we'd get more interest if we held the conference in a place like Pierre, where there are more things for people to do in the off hours. If you have some ideas, please drop me a line using the our e-mail address on the left.

This will likely be our last newsletter of the year as time is moving fast and we'll be in 2011 before we know it. Have a safe and pleasant holiday season!

Important notes:

The presenters at our annual conference brought up much good information, but there were a few key points from the local presenters that deserve a special overview in our newsletter.

Curt Hasart from the SD Department of EMS visited with the group about important changes at his office. One of the biggest was recent retirement of Director Bob Graff. Danny Hayes is now in charge in Pierre. Curt also talked about the many EMS certification changes that are coming that are going to require most of us to take refresher courses to stay certified. Don't panic yet, these requirements don't take effect for several years, but he wanted us to be aware they are coming.

We also received an informative talk from Gary Myers from the Department of Health. Gary discussed the new trauma system requirements that will affect many of us. If you are a transporting EMS agency, you are required to file a trauma transport plan with the state by 2012. Even if you are only a first response agency, there are still some things you need to know about the new program. For information, visit the DOH's website at <http://doh.sd.gov/trauma>



The Weight of the Gold Badge

By Janet Wilmoth, Editorial Director, Fire Chief Magazine

Comment from President Nick Swinhart: This is a recent blog posting from my colleague Janet Wilmoth at Fire Chief Magazine. While written for another publication, I found the posting to be inspiring and wanted to share it with our members.

Last month, the [Globe and Mail](#) featured a profile of Chelsea Kuzman, the fire chief of a 12-person volunteer fire department on Vancouver Island, B.C. The article made note of the educational opportunities she's pursued and the training and certificates she's earned to better serve her firefighters and her community's 300 residents

But that's not why Kuzman is newsworthy. Nor is it because she is a female head of a department. What's newsworthy is that this chief is 20 years old.

Like many firefighters, Kuzman joined the fire department in part because she is a self-described "adrenalin junkie." When the chief's position opened up, she quickly volunteered to assume the responsibility.

Is anyone really prepared for the weight of responsibility that comes with a new gold badge? Where does a new chief turn for help during that career transition? The answer may depend on how position became available — through a retirement, a move or if the previous chief was fired.

Regardless, fire chiefs — current and aspiring — need all the help and resources they can find to effectively lead their organizations. And the IAFC is aiming to give these new chiefs such help. The association will host its first [New Chief Leadership Symposium](#) Jan. 18-19, 2011, in Phoenix.

"The single most influential impact on my career as a fire chief was networking with other fire chiefs," Stafford County (Va.) Chief Rob Brown said. "The New Chief Leadership Symposium is a great way for new chiefs to learn from those who have faced the many challenges of 'chiefdom.' This forum puts emerging leaders with seasoned professionals — turbo-networking, if you will."

Symposium presenters include longtime chiefs like Dennis Compton and Mary Beth Michos and more-recent appointees like Brown, Alexandria (Va.) Chief Adam Thiel and Phoenix Chief Bob Khan.

"The symposium is an opportunity to share information with my colleagues (new, existing, or aspiring chief officers) and hopefully help someone avoid, or through, the many challenges associated with the job," Thiel said.

The role of the fire chief has evolved more in the past five years than in the past 20. "Anyone who wants current insight on executive fire service trends should attend the symposium," Kahn said. "Over the last two years, these dynamics have dramatically changed and there are new rules of engagement."

And the dynamics will continue to change as infrastructures are rebuilt in this economy. FIRE CHIEF is proud to support this symposium as one of the IAFC's media partners. Together, we will work to educate and develop new generations of emergency-service leaders. That is our mission.

Kuzman might be both exceptional and an exception to the rule. But her passion isn't worth less because she is only 20 years old. Her gold badge weighs just as much.

Help her and others like her carry it.