



SOUTH DAKOTA **FIRECHIEF**

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The return of South Dakota Fire Chief Magazine

I recently received an e-mail from a gentleman in Fargo who asked if we had any back issues of South Dakota Fire Chief Magazine from 1975. He sent me a photocopy of the cover of the issue he was looking for (below right). This e-mail piqued my interest because until then I had never heard of our organization publishing such a magazine. Former SDFCA president Darrell Hartmann of Brookings confirmed for me that our organization indeed published such a magazine up until 2001, when lack of advertising revenue started making it too expensive. Further research leads me to believe the magazine was published, at least on a semi-regular basis, between 1972 and 2001.

Flash forward ahead to 2010. Electronic desktop publishing is a relatively inexpensive tool

found on most computers. E-mail makes it possible to send out newsletters and entire publications with the click of a button, and without having to pay for postage. We now have at our disposal the ability to publish a newsletter or magazine without having a dime of advertising revenue.

For the immediate future, I plan on distributing this newsletter occasionally, depending on what kind of interest and submissions we get from our members. Perhaps we'll send it out just two or three times a year instead of having the pressure of putting together a monthly publication. The size can also vary from one page to several pages, depending on how much information we have. If you're interested in seeing this newsletter continue, please feel free to send submissions, news articles, and photos, to

sdfca@southdakotafirechiefs.org.

Finally, if any of you happen to have a copy of the September 1975 issue of South Dakota Fire Chief Magazine, please let me know. I can scan it and send a copy to the gentleman in Fargo who asked for it.



Business Meeting in Rapid City and Annual Conference

Each year the South Dakota Municipal League holds a conference in various cities around the state. Last year's conference was held in Watertown and this year it will be hosted by Rapid City. The SDML always sets aside a room for the South Dakota Fire Chiefs Association in case we want to hold a business meeting. This year we'll also be holding a business

meeting at the SDML Conference. The meeting will be the morning of October 8th, in the Roosevelt/Jefferson Room of the Rapid City Ramkota. I don't have an exact time yet. Check our website for updates.

The SDFCA's annual conference has also been set for November 12 and 13 at the Cedar Shore Resort in Cham-

berlain. We're still working on getting a speaker lined up. Again, check our website for updates as they become available.



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Resident Sleeper Programs, by Nick Swinhart



Yankton Fire Department recently completed construction on their new Station #2, completed in February of 2010.



In August, Watertown Fire and Rescue held the ground breaking for their new west fire station/airport firefighting complex. The station, to be completed by September of 2011, will be the first new fire station constructed in Watertown in over 40 years.



Rapid Fire Chief and SDFCA President Mark Rohlfling was recently hired as Milwaukee's newest fire chief. Good luck, Mark!

That the volunteer fire service is struggling in the United States should come as no surprise to those of us in the business for even a short period of time. While we all read about the occasional departments (that seem to be mostly East Coast) that have 100 volunteer firefighters that serve populations of 50,000, they are certainly the exception as opposed to the norm. What are far more common are departments that are struggling to attract new volunteers as well as maintain the ones they have. Many volunteer departments across the country are close to shutting their doors and turning over their coverage to nearby cities because their numbers are so low. This crisis in our profession led one writer in another publication to opine that the current volunteer fire service as we've known it for well over a hundred years may be going through a slow, painful, and irreparable death.

This article isn't meant to dissect the reasons why the volunteer fire service is struggling. Entire EFO papers and countless articles have taken on that task already. The purpose of this article is to suggest an answer to the crisis that proved very successful in the Pacific Northwest where I started my career.

Resident sleeper programs are not new to the fire service, but they seem to be foreign concepts in some regions of the country. Resident programs are basically an extension of a volunteer program whereas a certain number of volunteers live at the fire station 24 hours a day. The station becomes their home where they cook their meals, sleep, and respond on calls when they're present. The payback they get is a free place to live and no utility bills. I know the value of these programs first hand. From 1990 through 1992, I was also a resident firefighter while I was going through paramedic school. I gained invaluable on-the-job experience and training, and had the advantage of having very few bills, which made my part time private ambulance paycheck go a lot further.

Resident programs are not that difficult to set up and many volunteer departments, even the smallest ones, have kitchen and shower facilities and at least one spare room that could be turned in to a bedroom. For those that don't, trailers parked behind the fire station have been used to great effectiveness. Perhaps the biggest challenges to effective resident programs are picking the right people and setting the ground rules. College students who wish to become career firefighters are often the best choice, but they're also the ones who won't stay long. Don't discount someone just because they have a family either. One of our stations (that had larger living quarters) in my aforementioned department was occupied by one of our career firefighters along with his wife and kids. Detailed resident policies are necessary before any program is established. Setting hours or days that the resident needs to be present, as well as defining if and when visitors are allowed, are often some of the most pressing issues that need to be addressed. The ever-present alcohol issue must be addressed as well.

The benefits to your department should be clear. You have the advantage of having a firefighter(s) in your station nearly full time, or at the very least in the evenings, for very little to no ongoing cost outside of initial training and gear. It's like gaining a career firefighter in even the smallest volunteer department. Career departments in cities struggling to hire new personnel due to economic constraints can also benefit from such programs, so long as you have cooperation and buy in from your union personnel. My own department will be implementing their first resident program with completion of a new substation we're building.

The economic crisis in this country and our ongoing volunteer firefighter struggles require all of us to think of innovative ways to continue to provide services to our communities. A resident sleeper program could be the answer for your department.

This article will appear in a future issue of Fire Chief Magazine (www.firechief.com)