



## MINNESOTA – NVFC DIRECTORS:

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**1-800-fireline**

## NVFC Fall Conference Update

Greeting to one and all, as many of you know, the MSFDA in partnership with the MSFCA was challenged for the representation to the NVFC for the state of Minnesota. After presenting our case to the membership committee of the NVFC, the committee recommended that the MSFDA in partnership with MSFCA remain the voting delegates for the state of Minnesota. On Friday October 26<sup>th</sup>, the NVFC Board of Directors took a vote and the result of this vote was unanimous in retaining the MSFDA/MSFCA for Minnesota. Following the vote, a decision was made that will require all “challengers” to have been in operation for a minimum of three (3) calendar years, and other items to be determined by the membership committee must be met as well.

I can sum the conference up in a few words and I think President Winkel would agree with me. “The amount of information is unbelievable”. I will attempt to give a brief summary on the meetings and events to which I was able to participate in. Unfortunately I could not make all of the meetings as many of them do take place at the same time.

**New Directors/Alternates Committee**, Here I was able to get a better understanding on how the NVFC works and what the purpose of the NVFC is. It was highly recommended that if your state can afford to send two people, please do so, this will allow your state to participate in the vast majority of the happenings during these conferences. One item of discussion was raised during this committee that dealt with donation of used equipment to another fire department. Currently there is a federal law

that allows this to occur, the issue is that the equipment must be recertified to meet operational standards. The issue regarding the recertification is currently being addressed.

**Homeland Security Committee**, Much discussion focused around credentialing, the use of “smart cards” and the physical fitness program in regards to NFPA 1582. The concern raised here was the fact that many of the firefighters across the country will have many issues maintaining the physical requirements in NFPA 1582 at the same time many departments can not afford the costs associated with bringing their members up to this standard. Discussion was also brought forth regarding the NFIRS system and the current situation. When a department sends in the NFIRS information to the state level that is where much of the info stops. The current plan would be to have this information submitted to USFA and your state at the same time. This would allow for better information gathering as well as reporting statistics.

**Volunteer Advocacy Committee**, This committee currently is dealing with the two-hat issue (A career FF that also participates when not on duty with a volunteer FD) currently they are still working on the small details of HR980 at the federal level that will allow a career firefighter to also work for a volunteer fire department. Approximately 22 states would be affected if this legislation passes. The unions are backing the bill and the IAFC have drafted a position paper and a legal paper on the issue and that can be found on their website. The NVFC fully supports this bill and will keep it on the radar screen. It was mentioned by a former delegate from MN that this issue will not fly in Minnesota. As some of us know in the metro area, that is not the case. More information regarding this issue and the language of the federal bill can be found at [www.right-to-work.org](http://www.right-to-work.org)

**EMS Committee**, The committee went through a list of 42 potential organizations that are at the national level, in an attempt to bring the EMS into the NVFC board of directors. After much discussion the committee had chosen NASEMS and invited them to present their case. After speaking to the representative from the National Association of State Emergency Medical Services, the committee was left with many questions and felt it would be best to bring this information back to the NVFC fall conference for discussion. At the conference, a motion was made during the committee meeting, to have a member of the NASEMS be a liaison to the NVFC EMS Committee and that the chair of the committee be placed on the NVFC executive committee. Motion passed. The committee also brought fourth information regarding NFPA 450 which was set to expire 2009. Revisions to NFPA 450 have been completed and NFPA 450 will be extended beyond the 2009 sunset date.

**1-800-Fire Line Committee**, Today we have 32 states across the country on line with the 1-800- Fire Line. Those states that are not up and operating the system themselves, are answered at the NVFC offices. During the conference, the committee was able to get three of the states that are not on line to complete the paperwork and 11 other states have made a verbal agreement to fill out the paperwork and get online. A tool kit is being finalized that will help the states publicize the 1-800-Fireline across their state.

**Disaster Relief Committee**, Discussion was held in regards to allowing a disbursement of funds to firefighters that may be affected by a disaster. A motion was sent out and during this meeting some clarifications were made. The motion will be brought forth to the entire board for a vote. The motion from this committee will be listed later in this report.

**Legislative Committee**, Hometown Hero's Act – the Department of Justice in the past was seeking 10 years worth of medical information from families looking to receive these funds. That however has since changed during the past month. If the DOJ requests the 10 years worth of medical information, they must approve the claim. If anyone has submitted a claim and was denied, you are STRONGLY encouraged to appeal the claim. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program (AFG) looks like it will accomplish the second straight year of increased funding. There was discussion at the federal level about moving some of these funds to EMS and preparedness levels. It was urged that the program not be changed and that it continue to be distributed the way it is. It was also discussed that the evaluation period be moved from the current one year after award to further out than a year to allow for a more respective and appropriate review of the programs awards. Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (HR943/S1466) the bill as originally introduced was to eliminate federal taxes on FF pensions and benefits. A compromise was reached that would eliminate up to \$350 per year. More info on this issue will follow in the coming months. The protection act which would allow a FF to miss work without the fear of being fired has passed the House and is being introduced in the Senate. This bill would allow a FF to miss up to 14 days in a calendar year, to respond to and assist in any Presidential declared disaster. (I was not able to stay at this meeting, as I had to head over to the membership committee for our presentation)

**VIP Program**, The VIP program has been seeing cuts to the classes being offered. Because of low turnout from FF across the country, the NFA has been eliminating some of the courses and cancelling at the last minute. It was strongly encouraged, that each state helps in promoting these classes to the FF. The classes are week long and they are free to any FF that wishes to attend. The only fee the FF must pay for is a meal ticket for the week. Please encourage your departments across your state to send FF to these programs.

**Membership Committee**, The committee took up the issue of representation to the NVFC board of directors for the State of Minnesota. Both organizations were allowed to be in the room and watch each others presentation. The MSVFA presented their case first as to why they should unseat the MSFDA. Woody Walter, the former delegate for Minnesota, gave the presentation and was cut off when his 15 minutes had expired. The MSVFA was represented by Woody Walters and Warren Jorgenson. The MSFDA in partnership with the MSFCA was then given the chance to present their case as to why we should remain on the board of directors. Dan Winkel spoke on behalf of the two organizations while I passed out many pieces of literature. Following the presentation, both organizations were asked to step out of the room so that the membership committee could discuss the issue. I should let you know that the room was filled with onlookers. After about 15 minutes, both organizations were asked to step

back into the room to answer some questions. One questions dealt with membership, and another dealt with funding. The MSVFA never answered the question regarding membership nor funding, however we explained that that unlike the other organization, we could wrap our hands around 15,000+ dues paying firefighters today and that as for funding, those issues where created by the former leadership of the association and we have since made a change not only in leadership, but in the way we operate our funds. After the questions where answered, the 6 members of the membership committee then stepped out and discussed the issue. This brought to a close the membership committee.

**Executive Board Meeting**, This meeting is open only to the delegates of each state along with the states representation. The first thing brought fourth in the meeting was the Challenge for Minnesota. Chairman Stittleburg had asked if the membership committee has come to a conclusion. The chair of the membership committee informed the delegates that the committee decision was to maintain Minnesota's delegates to the NVFC with the current partnership of the MSFDA and MSFCA. A vote was taken and the decision was unanimous. Further discussion followed with a recommendation that a group that wishes to challenge a sitting organization, must be in operation for a period of three (3) calendars years prior to the challenge. The membership committee was also instructed to come up with a list of criteria that must be met along with the three years of existence.

April 3<sup>rd</sup> will mark the CSFI dinner, CSFI Director Bill Webb spoke to the group and what some of the plans are. This will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CSFI dinner and one of the plans are to have fire apparatus lined up and down the mall of the capitol. More information regarding the CSFI can be found at [www.csfi.org](http://www.csfi.org) or by contacting Mr. Webb at [bwebb@csfi.org](mailto:bwebb@csfi.org)

Following the roll call of those in attendance, it was mentioned that 42 states are here at the conference, with 38 directors and 24 alternates present.

ISO representative Fred Brower spoke to the group about ISO and the functions that ISO does for the insurance community. This was a very informative presentation at the same time it did some members into a nap mode.

**General Membership Meeting**, the NVFC has just received a grant for \$988,000 from the Department of Homeland Security to continue the Heart-Healthy program. The NVFC is looking to implement a program called "Adopt the Program" to get more and more firefighters involved in the Heart-Healthy program.

Fire Corps program now stands at 684 city participations. As a result of the program in these cities, 61% have seen an increase in help from others along with an increased level of support from the community regarding the Fire Department and its services.

The NVFC recently launched the Junior Firefighter program and shortly after the launch of the program, the NVFC received over 500 emails from those that are interested in the program.

The NVFC wrote out nearly 900 checks to those firefighters that where affected by hurricane Katrina. Of the \$470,568.56 taken in from donations, \$441,206.02 was given to firefighters in the affected areas.

The NVFC will be moving to a new office in December. The telephone number will not change. The date for the move is slated for December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Locations for the future meetings of the NVFC are as follows; spring of 2008 will be in Washington DC, fall of 2008 will be in Grand Rapids Michigan, spring of 2009 will be Washington DC and fall of 2009 will be in Iowa. Those interested in hosting the fall conference for 2010 or 2011 should get their information into the office prior to the spring 2008 meeting. Issues have been raised in the past regarding the spring meeting in Washington DC and costs associated with that location. The NVFC will continue to work on a solution.

LOSAP or HR2160/S1840 which is the Volunteer Emergency Services Recruitment and Retention act of 2007 has been introduced but is lacking co-sponsors to the bill. This bill looks like it is headed to a dead end unless we can get our legislators to sign onto the bill.

A motion was made and passed, that the NVFC opposes a recommendation in the National Academy of Public Administrations report that AFG funding should be distributed primarily to prepare for response to major incidents rather than the basic needs of the local fire departments.

A motion was made that the NVFC oppose NFPA1582 Physical fitness requirements in order to be credentialed. The costs for this would range from \$600 to \$1,000 per firefighter. An amendment was made to have this motion withdrawn when a government funding source is available. Motion was made to table this which passed. No action was taken.

Motion made and passed that in the event of any Presidential or Governor declared disaster, funds would be made available to any ACTIVE volunteer or paid on call firefighter, who's department is a member of the state association that represents their state to the NVFC. The firefighter must have sustained a minimum of \$5,000 in uninsurable loss to his or her house or housing caused by a catastrophic events including but not limited to earthquakes, floods, wildfires etc. eligibility for payment will be made following approval of the Chief of the members department, and must be signed off by the states Director or Alternate Director to the NVFC. Payments may not exceed \$250.00

A motion was made to reconsider the previous motion in regards to the NFPA 1582 physical fitness requirements. This motion failed

Discussion was held and motion made to have the NVFC staff members get in touch with the USAF and the NFA to encourage them to print hard copies of the program announcements and descriptions of the VIP programs, since this is the only way some states can reach their remote fire departments in their states. Motion passed

A motion was made and passed, that the NVFC endorse the "Move Over Policy" adopted by the NTIMC and encourage all states to adopt this legislation and implement it. This requires you to move over one lane when approaching a public safety vehicle. (We already have this law in Minnesota)

It was brought to the attention of the group that Geico insurance company is going across the country and starting to deny insurance to first responders.

CDG a large telemarketing company is currently under investigation by the Attorney Generals office in Oregon. (This is the company that former members of the MSFDA wanted to bring into MN)

The day ended with a former fire commissioner speaking on behalf of former NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani and why he would be a president of the fire service. Following his presentation, Congressman Pascrell from N.J. spoke to the group as to why Sen. Clinton would be a President of the fire service.

This concluded the Fall Conference and will also conclude this report of the NVFC fall Conference. If you have any questions regarding the NVFC or things that occurred at the fall conference, please don't hesitate to contact your NVFC Directors.

Thank you,

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