



**FIREFIGHTER SAFETY & SURVIVAL MESSAGE**



**COLORADO STATE FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION**

**Safety, Health and Survival Challenge - Winter 2009  
"Changing our Culture to Improve Firefighter Safety"**

As we complete the month of February 2009, tragically we stand at 15 LODD's. We realize that firefighting and our all-hazards approach to emergency response is inherently dangerous 24/7. But what can we do as fire service leaders to promote a safety driven culture within our departments and reduce the number of LODD and injuries? I can think of no worse scenario then a fire department and community receiving a phone call that one of their firefighters has responded to their last alarm due to a LODD.

We can begin by reviewing the 16 Life Safety Initiatives that were developed in 2004 at the Life Safety Summit held in Tampa, FL. For the sake of time, I want us to focus on Initiative #1, which states:

*"Define the need for culture change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility".*

This statement is huge and can mean many things to many chief officers, firefighters, fire departments, etc. What do we mean when we say "Culture of an organization"? Culture can be defined as an organizations set of norms, behaviors, attitudes, and practices.

This leads to my next question: What is it about your department's culture that needs to be changed for the sake of improving firefighter safety which equates to better protecting our communities? In other words, what are the norms and attitudes in your department that are practiced 24/7 that promote safety or could be improved upon to ensure everyone goes home safe and healthy at the end of their shift?

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**What is it about your department's culture that needs to be changed for the sake of improving firefighter safety?**

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As we proceed in the process of assessing and promoting "culture change", I think it's important to thank our firefighters for their current commitment to safety while taking a hard and honest look at what may need changing within our department's culture to improve firefighter safety.

I would like to conclude this brief message with a simple challenge for all of us within the CSFCA: Participation of all departments in this years "Safety, Health, and Survival" week, scheduled for June 2009. Although focusing on safety needs to be practiced year-round, this program is a great opportunity for our members to take our safety initiatives to the next level. If you have already participated in this yearly program, build upon your previous success.

You can review this safety information at the following links: [www.iafc.org/safetyweek](http://www.iafc.org/safetyweek) or [www.everyonegoeshome.com/initiatives](http://www.everyonegoeshome.com/initiatives).

Thank you taking the time to read this message and I wish everyone a safe and healthy 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

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#### **About the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association**

The mission of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association is to provide leadership, education, and support to the Chief Officers of Colorado fire departments, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and to protect Colorado's citizens and institutions from all types of emergencies.