

*Distributed by  
Indiana Fire Chiefs Association  
The State Fire Marshal*



# Indiana Fire Chiefs Handbook

*The New Fire Chief's Guide  
to Getting Ahead From the Start*



**Indiana Fire Chiefs  
Association**  
In Partnership with  
**The State Fire Marshal**

## Why this book is needed

Fortunately, many fire chiefs mentor and prepare their successors for promotion. But many times the new fire chief has to learn the methods of managing a fire department through “On the Job Training.” We all know that preparation is the key to success and many times chiefs are placed in the position without the tools necessary to succeed. So often this can result in injury or death.

Chiefs often acquire their positions by many methods: seniority, popularity, and the “right” connections to name a few, but these are no guarantee for success. Today, a chief must be well versed in tactical issues as well as human resource management, applicable laws and standards, local ordinances, and labor laws. Safety in the workplace and at incident scenes is the chief’s ultimate responsibility. In the end, he/she will be the one who will be held accountable if something goes wrong.

By realizing the many methods through which chiefs acquire their respective positions, it becomes obvious that some guidelines are necessary in order for the newly-appointed chief to succeed. The Indiana Fire Chiefs Association, together with the Indiana State Fire Marshal, is taking a leadership role by offering this quick reference guide for chiefs, especially those new to the position. The IFCA is dedicated to assisting Indiana Fire Chiefs and it is the hope that, with this reference guide, we can continue to do so as you continue down your “career path”.

## References

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## Indiana Fire Chiefs Association

The Indiana Fire Chiefs Association (IFCA) is here to provide you with the information you need to succeed as you face your new challenges and responsibilities as chief. Since 1926 the Indiana Fire Chiefs Association has been working to further the professionalism of the Fire Service. IFCA reaches out to all fire service professionals – Active Members are Chiefs of Departments or any Chief Officer Rank individual. Associate Members include individuals from any Indiana fire department not holding the title of any chief officer rank. Many of these professionals have faced the same issues that you will encounter and are all familiar with this transition period.

For more information, you may access the IFCA website at [www.indfirechiefs.org](http://www.indfirechiefs.org) and locate the name and number of your area representative. The area representative will provide you with access to a network of professionals, all of whom will assist you in your goal to take your department to the next level. In addition, the IFCA hosts conferences and seminars that offer valuable information and training for the chief officer. The Fire Leadership Workshop course is one that every chief officer should take. Even the most experienced chiefs take something home from this course, as it provides attendees with a wealth of information and resources.

## How to use this book

This booklet is intended to aid the newly-appointed fire chief in achieving the goals necessary to take his/her department to the next level. These proven methods have helped many fire chiefs achieve improved levels for their respective departments throughout the state and nation. This publication's goal is to increase the new chief's knowledge and improve the safety of his/her most important resource - personnel.

There are various types of fire departments in Indiana. These departments account for over 850 organized groups and range from small volunteer departments to large metropolitan departments, and combinations of each. In these pages, you will find information that will be beneficial to each type of department, including some methods that will not pertain to your particular department. Our hope is that you will use these ideas and adapt them, if necessary, to benefit you, your staff, and your community.

This book is divided into easy-to-read sections that you may keep as a pocket reference to guide and aid you in your decisions.

# Index

The First Meeting .....5  
 Honesty (vs. “Honest”) and Trust.....6  
 Officers and Staff.....8  
 Critical Decision Making.....10  
 Recruiting and Retention .....11  
 Training.....13  
 Professional Development.....15  
 Funding.....16  
 Budgets, Records, and Reports.....18  
 Safety .....19  
 Resources.....21  
 Customer Service.....23  
 NIMS .....24  
 Organizations.....26  
 More than Fire .....28  
 “Who To Call” .....30  
 Risk Management .....31  
 Office of the State Fire Marshal .....32  
 Mayors, City Managers, Councils & Commissioners .....33  
 Indiana Codes Supporting FD Operations & Responsibilities.....34  
 Reference List .....36  
 Indiana Fire Chiefs Association .....38

	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
14	City Manager / Mayor / County Board Chair		
15	Local Dive Team		
16	Local Hazmat Team		
17	Local TRT Team		
18	LEPC Chairperson		
19	Animal Control		
20	Local Trauma Center		
21	Local Hospital		
22	Area EMS		
23	Area Helicopter Services		
24	American Red Cross		
25	County Regional Planning		
26	Salvation Army		

	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
1	Office of the State Fire Marshal 24Hr. Hotline		
2	County Emergency Management Agency Contact		
3	IDHS Request A Fire Inv. During Business Hours		
4	IDHS Request a Fire Inv. During Non Business Hrs.		
5	Indiana Firefighter Training System		
6	Indiana Fire Chiefs Assoc. District Representative		
7	Indiana Dept. of Transportation		
8	IEMA Regional Coordinator		
9	Local Law Enforcement Official		
10	County Law Enforcement Official		
11	Indiana State Police Contact		
12	Indiana (EOC) Emergency Operations Center		
13	Indiana Dept. of Environmental Mgmt.		

## The First Meeting

Your first meeting as the new fire chief will set the tone for the rest of your appointment. At this first meeting your leadership skills will be of utmost importance. Some of the following suggestions and guidelines will aid you in preparing for the first meeting.

- Prepare a detailed agenda.
- Follow the agenda and try not to deviate from it.
- Make sure that your meetings are in accordance with the Indiana Open Door Law (IC 5-14-1.5).
- State your goals for the department. Ask yourself, challenge your department and know the answers to:  
Where are we going? How will we get there?  
When will we get there?
- Make sure that your staff and members of your department KNOW that they are your community's greatest resource.
- Let them know what your priorities are: firefighter safety, customer service, and trust.
- Listen to your employees' ideas and be open to new methods.

## Honesty and Trust

One of the most important aspects of being placed in the chief's position is being trusted by community members. However, in order to gain the trust of community members, department members must also trust in you. Earn their respect and:

- Provide recognition for individual accomplishments.
- Remember to recognize the department as a whole as their accomplishments are a direct reflection of you and your organization.
- Treat your firefighters with respect and expect the same from them.
- Be open and honest about changes with your personnel as this will lessen their anxiety about things to come. In addition, they may have suggestions to make the task easier.
- Allow input from employees when you can.
- "Lead, don't Boss".



## IC Codes Continued

IC 36-8-12.2 Hazardous Materials Emergency Action Reimbursement

IC 36-8-12-13 Schedule of Charges

IC 36-8-17 Fire Safety Inspections; Arson Investigations

IC 36-8-17.5 Pre Planning Inspections

IC 36-8-19 Fire Territories

IC 9-19-14.5-1 Green Light Law

IC 36-8-12-11 Blue Light Law



# Indiana Codes Supporting Fire Department Operations & Responsibilities

IC 5-22-7 Competitive Bidding

IC 34-13-3 Tort Claims Against Governmental Entities & Public Employees

IC 34-13-4 Civil Rights Claims Against Public Employees

IC 36-4-1 Classification of Municipalities, City Status & Town Status

IC 36-4-9 City Departments, Boards & Appointed Officers

IC 36-8 Public Safety

IC 36-8-3 Safety Boards; Disiplinary Procedures

IC 36-8-3.2 Employment Standards for Firefighters

IC 36-8-3.5 Police & Fire Merit Systems

IC 36-8-4 Police & Fire Employment Policies in Cities

IC 36-8-4.3 Police & Fire Employment Policies in Special Service Districts

IC 36-8-10.5 Minimum Training Requirements for Firefighters

IC 36-8-11 Fire Protection Districts

IC 36-8-12 Volunteer Fire Departments

- Don't always take control from your officers.  
Let them be in charge (teach and coach them). Be a mentor.
- Be Patient.
- Be Consistent.
- Do not gossip - kill rumors through good communication before they take on a life of their own. (period)
- Follow through on promises (Do what you say and say what you mean).
- Do not refer to yourself as chief.
- Delegate responsibilities, you cannot do it all.
- Meet regularly.



## Officers and Staff

These administrative positions and other key personnel are your main team members. With their assistance and that of your officers and firefighters, you are now able to set department goals and objectives and **meet them. Meet** with officers and administrative staff on a regular basis in order to share ideas, review procedures and to inform employees of any upcoming changes.

- The former chief can be a valuable resource to you. Try to enlist this individual's cooperation.
- Assistant chiefs should be aligned with the chief's goals and future department plans. Ideally, they should also be open-minded individuals capable of independent thinking. He/she should be someone the chief can brainstorm with and who is able to perform in a leadership role.
- Establish an effective training program. Select a training officer who will be enthusiastic about the job and highly motivated.
- Your administrative assistant should possess strong clerical and communication skills. He/she should understand the confidentiality issues that go with the position and remain loyal to the chief at all times.

## Mayors, City Managers, City Councils and Commissioners

Like it or not, your role as fire chief will require some political involvement if you wish to accomplish your goals. These goals may or may not be in alignment with those of the elected officials. If they are not, it will be your job to educate and inform them on the services you provide for the community and why your goals for the department are necessary. Remind elected officials that public safety is your main focus. Many elected officials are not aware of the serious responsibility that was placed upon them when elected. Take the time to get to know these officials, as they are part of the community too. In time, they will soon realize your role and how you can help them when needed. If you have established a friendship, you will have an ally when needed.

Take the same approach with these elected officials that you have with your staff. Give them the respect they deserve, and you will earn theirs in return. Show them that you are willing to help them with their job as an elected official. They will soon come to rely on your expertise, input and opinions. Thank them often for their time and consideration in matters of importance to you and be sure to compliment them whenever possible.

# Office of the State Fire Marshal

James L. Greeson

Indiana State Fire Marshal

The IDHS Division of Fire and Building Safety investigates suspicious fires, promotes prevention, administers building plan review, enforces fire and building safety codes in all public buildings, regulates and coordinates emergency services, emergency medical services and hazardous material response and oversees and conducts inspections of child care facilities, boilers and pressure vessels, elevators and amusements.

IC 36-8-17-7, Fire Chiefs are required to determine the origin and cause of fire that occur in their areas, State Fire Marshal's investigators are available to assist you in these efforts.

The impact of arson is astounding. The Investigation Branch aggressively pursues the cause and origin of fires to reduce death, injury and property loss from accidental fires and to solve cases of intentionally set fires.

In cooperation with the Indiana Arson and Crime Association, the Arson Hot Line is stationed in the Office of the State Fire Marshal. (1-800-382-4628)

For more information about Fire and Building safety

Log on to [www.in.gov/dhs](http://www.in.gov/dhs)

- Praise your staff regularly.
- Solicit input from your staff.
- Encourage initiative from your staff.



## Critical Decision Making

- Know the NIMS system and train on its use.
- Remember: *“Good decisions come from experience, and experience comes from bad decisions”*.
- Use honest and accurate information on which to base your decisions.
- Use trusted resources.
- Promotion to chief does not result in technical and tactical expertise. This comes from training, education, and experience.
- Get comfortable being able to say, *“I don’t know, but I will find out.”*
- Don’t be afraid to rely on experts. Many times there are individuals with more experience at an incident that will be more than happy to assist and guide you through this difficult time. The end result is a quicker response that may slow the progression of an incident and create a safer ending.
- Practice risk vs. reward.
- Network and get involved with local and regional associations.
- Plan - create opportunities.

## Risk Management

Risk management is the process of looking at what can go wrong. This includes the smallest forms (seat belt usage) to the most complex forms (disaster management). Good risk management can help avoid having these things go wrong by looking for them before they happen and either preventing them from occurring or at least minimizing their impact.

- Create a risk management program.
- Empower your employees to recognize and assess risks.
- Identify risks (personnel loss, property loss, legal liabilities).
- Evaluate risks (frequency, severity, costs - direct and indirect).
- Prioritize risks (cost / benefit, time, implementation, effectiveness).
- Control risks (training, education, SOP’s, accident investigations, safety efforts).
- Monitor risk management programs (always be looking for ways to improve or adjust). A good risk management program always re-evaluates.

## When things go wrong “Who are you going to call?”

A Fire Chief cannot always think of every circumstance that may occur. However, there are those who can help you get the answers and resources that you may need when unusual or extraordinary situations arise. Always keep contact information readily available on individuals and resources that you may need at these times.

Suggested contacts:

- IMARP Contact Information
- Law Enforcement Contacts
- Indiana Fire Chiefs Association Area Representative
- Emergency Management Agency Representatives
- Department of Natural Resources Representative
- District Task Force Commander
- City, Town or Village Contact Information
- Water Plant Supervisor
- 911 or Dispatch Supervisor
- Public Health Department

## Recruiting and Retention

- Hire in groups as opposed to one here and one there. This starts them all on the same baseline and can actually instill camaraderie as well as a little friendly competition to complete developmental benchmarks.
- Conduct mandatory orientation for prospective members and their spouses/significant others so everyone hears the same message about time requirements and what is expected.
- Be very detailed in your explanation of requirements and expectations so prospective members can make an informed decision. It can be very expensive to train new members and they need to be able to commit up front.
- Assign new personnel to experienced personnel for mentoring. This also helps build relationships and makes the tenured members feel good about their positions and contributions.
- Develop minimum requirements and a check-off booklet for each member to help ensure that nothing “falls between the cracks” and that incorrect assumptions are not made. Require mentors or officers to sign off on each benchmark to ensure members have the knowledge and training in a given area.

- Establish an earn/reward system. Don't give new personnel everything all at once. Make them earn their badge, dress uniform, etc. by completing various requirements. This gives them incentive, appreciation for accomplishment, holds their attention and gives them something to look forward to.
- Establish benchmarks for department service awards such as ribbons, patches and award certificates. Volunteers have little else to look forward to in their "careers" so recognition for a job well done is very important. These awards show employees that you appreciate their efforts and are also an incentive for them to continually improve.



Other services that Fire Departments may provide for their community include:

- Dive Teams
- Hazmat Teams
- Rope Rescue Teams
- Confined Space Teams
- Structural Collapse Teams
- Trench Rescue Teams
- Family Assistance Programs
- Medical Services
- Home Inspection Programs
- Community Knox Box Programs
- Safety Programs
- Citizens Fire Academies
- Smoke Detector and Carbon Monoxide Programs
- Emergency Management
- CO Detection

## More than Fire

Today's fire service is completely different than it was ten years ago. However, some things have not changed. We still burn buildings down, people still do careless things, and people still call us when they don't know who else to call. The latter of these is something of which to be proud.

The fact that the fire department is the first group that the general public thinks of in their time of need is something we should value. It demonstrates that the people in our community respect us. This is why we are doing more than fighting fires.

We, at times, are our own worst enemy. We always seem to find a way to solve the problem and, in most cases, come up with a better solution, thereby adding to our workload.

We continue to successfully address the problems of EMS, hazmat, technical rescue and other issues. In doing so, we have placed ourselves in a light that endears us to the community and fosters goodwill among the citizens we serve.

Keep this in mind when someone calls. Be prepared to help them in other ways and to provide them with the customer service they deserve.

## Training

Training is the most effective means to make your personnel proficient and to make them realize how serious this duty is. It is through lessons learned that we enjoy the safety we are accustomed to today. Training does not have to be boring and training can be for special groups or for the entire department. It does not need to be the same year in and year out; however, it does need to be consistent.

- Set up a training calendar.
- Have defined training topics with objectives at regular intervals.
- Try to increase the effectiveness of your department's training each year.
- Make sure that you meet the most important safety requirements in order to satisfy compliancy with state, local statutes, OSHA and NFPA standards.
- Bring in respected authorities to expound on what you have been learning.
- Share the training responsibilities.
- Place an emphasis on being safe during training and train to stay safe.
- Look for additional "hands on" training at regional training centers.
- Train using the Incident Management System and train on the Incident Management System.

- Make self-rescue a priority.
- Have standard operating guidelines (SOGs) for training.
- Access the Indiana Firefighter Training System for training needs. indianafiretraining.com As the State's resource for training, they can help you with free training or training at a minimal fee.
- The Indiana Fire Chiefs Association and the State Fire Marshal's Office offer free training for fire chiefs and chief officers with programs such as the annual "Fire Leadership Seminar".



Some of the most important organizations and associations that the chief should belong to and know include:

- IFCA (Indiana Fire Chiefs Association)
- IFA (Indiana Firefighters Association)
- IVFA (Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association)
- PFA (Professional Firefighters Association)
- IFIA (Indiana Fire Instructors Association, Inc)
- IFSI (Indiana Fire Services Institute)
- IAAI (International Association Arson Investigators)
- IAFC (International Association of Fire Chiefs)
- IMARP (Indiana Mutual Aid Response Plan)
- Local or County Chiefs Association
- Local Emergency Planning Commissions



## Organizations

Belonging to an organization is one of the most beneficial ways a new chief can develop new contacts. This type of involvement creates the networking that will assist you during your tenure as chief.

There are many organizations to which you can belong. Depending on your department's budget, you may need to prioritize the organizations to which you belong. Even if there are no funds available for this, many organizations will allow you to participate for nothing. There are many Indiana chiefs who must pay for this involvement out of pocket. It is money well spent, so consider it a wise investment.

As you embark on new ventures, you will find that the members of these organizations are able to assist you with proven methods.

A new chief should keep the name and phone numbers of the representatives of these organizations close and refer to them often. These people are more than willing to help and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Most of their methods are tried and true as they have figured out a way to make it work.

## Professional Development

There are many ways to become a better officer and leader. A college degree speaks volumes about one's dedication to his career. However, continuous education and training are a personal statement of your commitment to your development as a chief, officer and leader. A chief should be ever-mindful that his/her professional development starts from the first day on the job and continues until his/her last day. Remember to set the standards and lead by example.

- Attend the National Fire Academy.
- Read Brunacini's books on "*Customer Service*" and "*Functional Boss Behaviors*".
- Develop relationships with other chiefs.
- Set goals to attend certain courses each year that will help you attain Fire Officer certification levels.
- Finish your degree or work on another.
- Attend conferences and seminars.
- Be an instructor or teacher.
- Speak to community organizations; this is an excellent way to inform the community of your needs and what you have been doing.
- Become involved in associations and organizations and become part of their boards.
- Attend the "Fire Leadership Seminar".
- Read Fire Chief's Checklist (Proven Tips and Tactics for Career Success (Distributed by International Assoc. of Fire Chief's Foundation (IAFC)

## Funding

Funding is a topic that every fire chief should take very seriously. One of the first things the new fire chief should do is identify the source of every penny that the fire department receives. This includes the percentages from real estate taxes, sales taxes, donations, district levies and any other source.

The chief needs to take the attitude that he/she will be part of the solution and not a part of the problem. Most Indiana fire departments state that funding, or the lack thereof, is the biggest issue they are facing. However, there are many outside sources of funding available.

FEMA has a free publication that you can download or order that addresses how to fund your fire department. It should be one of the first publications you order. Many chiefs will not apply for some grants because they think they will not receive the funding, which outcome is certain if you do not apply.

A large number of departments have written grants only to be denied; but each time there was a lesson learned and eventually these same departments were awarded their request. As you search for funds, keep in mind there are many grant and funding venues out there and some have yet to be created. Think outside the box and be creative.

Your local Emergency Management Agency can assist you in attaining access to this training. Understanding the IC system and the functions of the “Great Eight” positions is a must for all department members:

- Incident Commander
- Public Information Officer
- Liaison
- Safety Officer
- Operations Chief
- Planning Chief
- Finance Chief
- Logistics Chief

These are all “possible” positions that the local chief in the affected jurisdiction may perform or assign.



## **NIMS (National Incident Management System)**

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a systematic method for managing incidents from local incidents that may affect a small community to large incidents which may affect a state or several states. Many grants now require that the applicant be NIMS compliant. The new chief should inquire with the local or county Emergency Management Agency to ensure what is required of the local fire department regarding compliancy.

Many of the requirements are easily attained online through the FEMA's NIMS Resource Center. These courses can be taken online. The chief should have more training, as he/she may need to move into a different position should an incident escalate; in a large incident, his/her staff may need to assume the chief's previous duties.

NIMS should be applied at all incidents and the chief should be well versed on the Incident Action Plan (IAP) for which he/she may be responsible. The following are the basic independent study programs and NIMS courses necessary for fire department personnel:

- IS 100 and IS 200 or Unified Command
- ICS 300 and ICS 400 or Command and General Staff
- All Hazards Incident Management Team
- Position Specific Training

The following are a few of the funding and grant resources for which you may be eligible:

- Property Tax
- Sales Tax
- Income Tax
- Use Tax
- Fines
- Donations
- Grants
- Assistance to Firefighters Grant
- SAFER Grant
- Fire Prevention & Safety Grant
- Indiana Department of Homeland Security (Foundation Grant)
- Smokeless Tobacco Grants
- Local Grants from Wal-Mart
- Block Grants
- Fees for Services (EMS)

These are just a list of funding and grant resources. Log on to Indiana Department of Homeland Security (Grants Management Section) for more details.



## Budgets, Records and Reports

- Understand and track your budget.
- Most budgets are broken down into Operating expenses and Capital expenses.
- Know what kind of budget your department is operating under (Line Item, Program, etc.).
- Maintain records and reports to aid in preparation of the budget.
- Records should be kept for all emergency incidents (using the NFIRS system), investigations, training, maintenance, and personnel.
- Another effective tool is the annual report (this report will supply your city/board with the statistical information needed to determine your department's needs).
- Supply your mayor, city manager or board of trustees with a weekly or monthly report on all of your activities and that of your department.
- Ensure that NFIRS reports are being sent to the State of Indiana by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the following month.

## Customer Service

- Foster positive relationships with the media (know the media staff prior to the big incident).
- Remember that there are multiple forms of media other than just print media (i.e.: television, radio).
- On the fire ground be sure to give the media quick attention. If needed, appoint a Public Information Officer (PIO) to speak to the media for you.
- Establish good relations with government (these are the people that fund your department).
- Establish good relations with other emergency services (EMA, police chief, public works, water department supervisor).
- Look for ways to say "YES".



- Hazardous Materials Team
- Technical Rescue Team Contact
- Dive Team Contact
- Animal Control Contact
- EMS Services
- Helicopter Services
- Mayor/City Manager/County Board Chairperson
- Public Officials
- Members of the Health Department



## Safety

Statistics show that the leading causes of death or injuries to fire-fighters are heart attacks and vehicular accidents. The majority of these incidents could be prevented by making health and safety top priorities. In some departments, this will be an unpopular decision, but ultimately a life saving one.

- **ALWAYS** wear your seatbelt.
- Look at who should be driving your apparatus (Are they under 25 years old with no experience? What is their driving record like?).
- Are lights and sirens needed every time we leave?
- Have SOP's on responses.
- Enforce the driving rules and have consequences for violations.
- Are "live" fire trainings done in accordance to NFPA 1403?
- Practice that no firefighter operates with exposed skin or breathes smoke.
- All fire apparatus STOPS at stop signs and red lights.
- Study building construction.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get annual physicals.
- Train every shift (or every week if volunteers).
- Allow absolutely NO alcohol in the stations.

- Adopt the 16-point safety initiative from the National Fallen Firefighters Association.
- Train on safe driving response from home to the station.



## Resources

The new chief should familiarize himself with where and how to acquire the needed resources when an incident occurs. Learn where these resources are, what they are, how to get them and where they are located.

The chief should carry a resource list in his/her vehicle so that it is at his/her disposal at all times. It should be current and up-to-date. He/she should introduce his/her self to local resources and be a part of their resource list as well. If you belong to an organization, this is a great time to gather business cards for future reference. You will meet many people on your resource list at conferences, meetings and seminars. The following individuals should be listed in the resources book and their emergency contact information included:

- Emergency Management Agency Coordinator
- State Emergency Operations Center
- LEPC Chairperson
- Local Law Enforcement Agency
- County Law Enforcement Agency
- State Police Contact