

**GATEWAY IV CONFERENCE  
SEA TRAILS CONFERENCE CENTER  
FEBRUARY 4<sup>TH</sup> & 5<sup>TH</sup>, 2004**

Representatives of some eighteen (18) North Carolina fire and rescue service organizations came together for the Gateway IV conference in the Conference Center at Sea Trails resort in Sunset Beach, North Carolina on February 4th for a two day meeting on matters important to the fire & rescue system. The diversity of the groups represented underscores the need for such a gathering and the complex issues that face each of them as they attempt to meet the needs of their communities. The purpose of the conference is to identify issues that can improve the work of the state fire and rescue services and to find ways to become change agents through the collaborative efforts of the organizations represented.

This process, in place for some four (4) years, has successfully cooperated in working with the State Legislature in the passage of the "Home Town Hero's" legislation, providing coverage for fire and rescue personal for heart attacks on duty, increasing the death benefit from the State of North Carolina, and establishing the workman's compensation fund for volunteer fire & rescue personnel.

This years conference represents the first time and outside facilitator has be used to assist the group find consensus. **R. David Blackman & Associates of Greensboro, North Carolina** served as the facilitator. He has facilitated strategic planning efforts for a wide variety of municipal governments and not for profit organizations such as elected city councils and commissioners, fire, police and city recreation departments and the North Carolina State Fireman Association.

**THE ISSUES**

The first task undertaken was to get on the floor all the issues that concerned any of the organizations represented. The list that follows includes all of those issues.

- Twenty- five (25) year retirement and related multipliers.
- Authority issues related to the Office of EMS.
- Instructor's death & workman's comp insurance benefits
- Fire & Rescue Pension Fund equity.
- State OEMS reorganization.
- Creation of a common benefit structure.

**Comment [PM1]:** Would the word "services" be more appropriate in this sentence?

**Comment [PM2]:** Not sure I understand this statement.

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- Relief Fund structure- common benefit structure.
- State Emergency Training Academy.
- Standard incident command structure.
- Regional mutual aid.
- Interoperability of communications & equipment.
- Distribution and use of Homeland Security funds.
- Sprinkler requirements.
- Fire Department Training and Certification standards.
- Hospitals reporting burn injuries,
- Fire Service employment background checks.
- Smoke detector issues.
- Volunteer tax break.

The group was then asked to give priority to the list they had created. This was accomplished by giving each organization five (5) votes for any of the issues with the understanding that any issues that received twelve (12) of the eighteen (18) would automatically become a common topic of discussion. The following issues emerged from that process:

- Twenty- five (25) year Retirement
- Instructor's benefits
- Sprinkler and smoke detector issues
- Certification and minimum competency
- OEMS reorganization and authority

### **AGREEMENTS**

The group agreed to undertake these issues and confine themselves to ways the issues could be approached from a legislative perspective. Accountability for implementation of the agreements is a matter of concern. Past Gateway efforts have bogged down in matters of accountability. It was agreed that we would find one of the organizations in the room to assume responsibility to facilitate the planning for each of the issues and the direction provided by this conference. Facilitating organizations will be responsible to:

- Invite organizations that have agreed to assist in planning and implementation to be on the Task Force.
- Keep written records of meetings, actions and attendance.
- Report quarterly, through the NCSFA, progress, conclusions and actions.

The NCSFA will provide updates to conference participants quarterly.

- Provide a final report on results and the next Gateway Conference.

**Comment [PM3]:** NCSFA

## **Retirement**

### **(Professional Firefighters & Paramedics of North Carolina-Facilitators.)**

**Objective: Introduce legislation for a voluntary compliance comprehensive retirement program for North Carolina fire and rescue personnel.**

The conference recommends the following for consideration by the task group:

- Twenty-five year maximum length of service requirement
- Include a 2.1 multiplier.
- Conduct careful research and documentation on the case for this legislation.
- Include the League of Municipalities and County Commissioners in the development of the case.
- Support for the legislation is to be formally sought and organizations identified. Get a strong grass roots support for this legislation.
- Consider inclusion Firefighters who work for not for profit organizations.
- Seek advice from legislative leadership on language, sponsorship and support.
- Educate Gateway Conference organizations on changes in the bill.

## **INSTRUCTORS BENEFITS**

### **(North Carolina State Fireman's Association-Facilitators)**

**Objective: Bring Fire/Rescue Instructors benefits to the same level as other Fire and Rescue personnel.**

- Arrange for statute modification that includes Instructors in the definition of firefighters.
- Modify the workman's compensation law to include Instructors in coverage.
- Language will be drafted by the Instructors organization and the North Carolina State Fireman's Association.
- Research the impact of any changes on Instructors employed by the State Community College system.
- Include a process to educate Instructors of what coverage they are eligible for under retirement and workman's comp statutes.

## **SPRINKLER & SMOKE DETECTORS**

### **(North Carolina County Fire Marshals Association- Co-Facilitators)**

### **(North Carolina Fire Marshal's Association- Co-Facilitators)**

**Objective: Modify the sprinkle and smoke detectors code to make coverage retroactive to group living housing.**

- Modify code to require all rental and group housing (nursing homes, college dorms and hospitals to be covered.

- Include Fire Chiefs in drafting and approval of final results.
- Carefully identify institutions for coverage.
- Arrange for grass roots support from groups like AARP, Public Housing Coalition and Justice & Community Development.
- Establish a compliance timeline.
- Get input from NC Division of Facility Services.

**FIRE & RESCUE MINIMUM COMPETENCY**

**(Instructors Society- Facilitators)**

- Research potential impact on fire service personnel, local governments and educational institutions and programs.
- Research other competency models.
- Include OSFM, CLS, NCSFA, & PFP in drafting.
- Suggest a list of standards for review by the 2005 Gateway Conference.
- Consider Health and Fitness issues for inclusion in the standards.
- Consider that competency may be different from job to job.

**FIRE SERVICE BACKGROUND CHECKS**

**(North Carolina State Firemen's Association- Facilitator)**

**Objective: Modify statute to allow for background checks on fire service personnel.**

- NCSFA to pursue technical change with General Assembly to allow chiefs to request background checks.

**OEMS**

**(North Carolina Association of Rescue and EMS-Facilitator.)**

- Determine how the Medical Care Commission communicates with OEMS and the fire and rescue service.
- Seek assistance from Charlotte to influence Representative Black to assist in getting the Medical Care Commission to respond to fire service concerns.
- Seek help from the Metro Fire Chiefs group in getting the attention of the Medical Care Commission.

**GATEWAY ORGANIZATIONS****200- CONCERNS/PLANNING**

Listed below are areas of work of the organizations represented in this Gateway Conference. Participants are encouraged to note common concerns and find ways to assist/collaborate with each other in moving forward on their concerns and plans.

**North Carolina Association of Rescue & EMS.**

- OEMS
- Minimum standards for rescue personnel

**Professional Firefighters & Paramedics of North Carolina**

- District workshops on health & safety
- Kerry for President

**North Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs**

- Completion of Fire & Rescue reference manual
- Improvements in the Executive Development program
- Begin a new three-year strategic plan
- Establish a networking group e-mail

**International Association of Fire Chiefs**

- Increase in Federal grant programs
- Homeland Security Funds distribution
- Safety bill through Congress
- New Strategic Plan
- Russia trip

**North Carolina Association of Hazardous Materials Responders**

- Keeping responders up to date on training and technology
- Web site with training standards

**North Carolina Fire and Life Safety Educators**

- Education Conference
- Increase in the number of certified instructors
- Increase marketing of educational opportunities

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**Fire Marshals Association**

- Training on new International Fire Code
- Joint training with Building Inspections
- Focus group on Department of Insurance testing
- Day Care Council procedures

**County Fire Marshals Association**

- Sprinkler & smoke detector legislation

**North Carolina Association of International Arson Investigators**

- Establish advanced schooling
- Rewrite Arson Guidelines
- Certification for Courtroom Testimony
- Subrogation training for Fire Service personnel

**State Fire Marshals Office**

- Unified command structure
- Training in Homeland Security
- Monitor Federal issues
- Development of Risk Management class

**North Carolina Community College**

- Review of Fire Service training and data collection
- Addition of Appalachian State University & Western Carolina University to training system with bachelor and masters classes

**Society of Fire & Rescue Instructors**

- Conduct State Instructors Conference
- Plan and implement Fire College
- Maintain newsletter
- Implement new planning session
- Upgrade Instructors programs
- Improve Scholarship Program

**North Carolina Emergency Management**

- Renew Regional Response team contracts
- Develop a strategic plan for Homeland Security
- COOP plan
- Expand CERT

**North Carolina State Fireman's Association**

- Monitor Homeland Security activities
- Develop the Heart Health program
- Implement Chaplin network
- Establish benefits for Fire Marshals
- Implement Tax Incentive Bill
- Write Policy & Procedures for Association Officers
- Complete renovation of office building

**GATEWAY CONFERENCE****EVALUATION & DISCUSSION**

Conference participants took time to review the work and validity of the Gateway Conference process and came to the following conclusions:

- The Gateway Conference provides an important and valuable umbrella for the sharing of ideas and the development of collaborations.
- It is a very important relationship building opportunity for Fire Service Organizations.
- Invite Office of Emergency Medical Service next time.
- A hotel setting improves opportunities for networking.
- Improving the implementation of agreements is important to future success.
- One-person from each Fire Service organization should be at the table plus any paid Executive staff and National Committee Members.
- North Carolina State Fireman's Association should continue to be the facilitator of the Conference and decide who should be invited.
- Consider establishing a registration fee to cover some of Conference expenses.
- Consider adding EMS administrators and the State Department of Labor.

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**Gateway 2004 Conference**

**Participating Organizations**

**NC Association of Hazardous Materials Responders**

**Eastern NC Firemen's Association**

**Professional Firefighters & Paramedics of NC**

**NC Fire & Rescue Commission**

**NC Association of Fire Chiefs**

**I – 40 Fire Chiefs**

**Department of Community Colleges**

**AB Technical & Community College**

**NC Association of International Arson Investigators**

**NC Division of Emergency Management**

**National Society of Executive Fire Officers**

**Raleigh Fire Department**

**Durham Fire Department**

**NC Community Colleges/ Western NC Association**

**NC Fire Marshals Association**

**NC Association of Fire- Rescue & EMS**

**National Volunteer Fire Council-NC Director**

**NC State Fireman's Association**

**Greensboro Fire Department-Metro Chiefs**

**NC Office State Fire Marshals**

**Charlotte Fire Department-IAFC Metro Chiefs Chair**

**Volunteer Safety Workers Compensation Fund**

**NC Fire & Life Safety Education Council**

**Western NC Firefighters Association**

**Gastonia Fire Department-Commission on Firer Accreditation Chair**

**Piedmont Fireman's Association of NC**

**NC County Fire Marshal's Association**

**NC Society of Fire-Rescue Instructors**

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**THE GATEWAY IV**

**CONFERENCE**

**February 4-5, 2004**

**Sea Trails Conference Center**

**Sunset Beach, North Carolina**

**Facilitated by:**

**R. David Blackman**

**Blackman & Associates**

**Greensboro, North Carolina**