MFRI and the Prince George’s County Department of Homeland Security have partnered to present a Teen Community Emergency Response Team (TEEN CERT) program. This program takes a group of teenagers and shows them how they can assist others in their neighborhood when a disaster occurs and professional responders are not immediately available to help. It also encourages participants to become more active in emergency preparedness projects in their community. This past January, 44 teenagers attended the TEEN CERT training held at MFRI.

The program has three goals: provide students with a knowledge base on the effects of natural and man-made disasters and their emotional, social, and economic impacts; build decision-making and problem solving skills and strategies to help students make informed decisions regarding readiness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts to reduce loss of life and property; and provide students with hands-on training using reality-driven drills and exercises.

The topics that were covered included disaster preparedness, fire safety, disaster medical assistance, light search and rescue operations, disaster psychology, terrorism, and disaster simulation. For example, in case of a small fire in a building with light damage, the students learned they could go into the house to try to turn off the gas. Students also learned the basics of triage and how to treat shock victims, telling them the facts versus telling them that everything was okay.

MFRI Instructor Robert Wells was one of the instructors for the day. Robert enjoyed working with the teenagers, he said, because the kids took initiative and worked together to solve the problems they were given. One of the things that impressed him most was that the kids were enthusiastic about what they were learning, especially by the end of the day, and that they passed the practical tests, showing that teenagers are a lot smarter than they are usually given credit for.

The students and instructors talked about how the skills learned could be transferred into real life. Robert recalled that outside of natural disasters, the kids were told that their skills could be used in case an event like September 11, 2001 ever occurred again. Robert was surprised that the students not only listened, but later asked questions on the 9/11 involvement, what they could do if something like that was to ever happen again, and whether the instructors thought it could happen again.

Megan Jones, a fifteen year old who attended, enjoyed taking the class. She said the training was easy to understand and that the
The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute of the University of Maryland is the state’s comprehensive training and education system for the emergency services. The Institute plans, researches, develops, and delivers quality programs to enhance the ability of emergency service providers to protect life, the environment, and property.

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From MFRI Director Steven T. Edwards

The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, at the request of many students and statewide fire/rescue organizations, has attempted to move in a prudent fashion to have more on-line educational opportunities available. Currently, the Institute offers the following on-line training programs:

- Hazardous Materials Response – Awareness
- Hazardous Materials Response – Operations
- Emergency Vehicle Operator
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)

At this time MFRI is completing the purchasing requirements to utilize the “National Paramedic Institute” to implement a program of distance education for EMT-B Recertification. The National Paramedic Institute has received CECBEMS approval. This program is expected to begin on July 1, 2008 and MFRI will have 1,000 seats available in this format for the fall semester. Basically, students will be able to take the 12-hour didactic portion of the three-year EMT-B Recertification online at any time of the day, either on-duty or at home. The National Paramedic Institute has a proven record of success and several major fire departments have utilized its services with a high degree of satisfaction. MIEMSS has indicated approval of this program as meeting the 12-hour didactic component of the EMT-B recertification requirements. EMT-B students will then have to complete the 12-hour practical component as well as any testing requirements. In addition, MFRI will continue to conduct regular classroom courses that will meet students’ requests for this type of training.

Currently MFRI conducts approximately 125 EMT-B recertification classes each year and trains over 2,500 students annually in this category. This is in alignment with other initiatives to make EMS and fire education more progressive and technologically advanced. Distance education technology, coupled with the increasing use of both medical and incident command simulation, benefit the student and the emergency services in substantial ways.

The program that we are receiving will be custom designed for MFRI and Maryland and will include appropriate support materials. We hope to be able to expand this program over time for more students, depending upon demand. More information will be available in the coming weeks as to how the program seats will be allocated and the details of registration and completion of the course. MFRI feels that this opportunity will be of great benefit to the students and the fire departments in our state.
TRIBUTE TO MSFA President Paul Sterling Jr.

As the year comes to a close for Maryland State Firemen’s Association (MSFA) President Paul Sterling Jr., he takes a look back over his presidency, how he got here, and where his future will lead him.

Paul became interested in the fire service as an elementary school child, not because of a family history but because of an experience he had. Paul was taken to the hospital and became fascinated with the fire service. The crew who took him to the hospital stopped by to visit him at the hospital and invited him back to the station. With that one visit, Paul was hooked; he wanted to be involved in the fire and emergency services.

In August of 1966 Paul became a member of the Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad after being a cadet member there for two years. Paul served on the duty-crew for both firefighting and EMT and slowly worked his way up to the Elected Chief from 1979-1999 and 2001-2005. At that time, Paul was active on many other committees including the Montgomery County Fire Board and the MSFA. Outside of his volunteer work, Paul was a dedicated police officer for 34 years.

In 2004, with his upcoming retirement from the police force and at the urging of others, Paul decided to run for the 2nd Vice President position with the MSFA. Paul won and spent three years working from 2nd Vice President to 1st Vice President to President. Throughout this past year, Paul has worked to continue the services that the MSFA provides to the fire companies throughout the state.

Paul started by reaching out to the County Association Presidents in order to find out what their needs were and identify ways to improve communication between them and the MSFA. This was accomplished through a series of face-to-face meetings. In addition, Paul worked with the MSFA Training Committee and MFRETC to develop guidelines and a training manual to be handed out throughout the state to help companies conduct live fire exercises in accordance with the standards set in NFPA 1403. Many other areas have also been the focus of Paul’s attention including strengthening the relationship between the MSFA and the Emergency Medical Services Systems Operations Fund (EMSSOF) coalition, stressing the need for annual physicals for the state’s volunteers, and maintaining state funding for the MSFA during a time of fiscal crisis.

Paul has worked to improve all of these issues and concerns and hopes that next year and beyond the relationships and work will continue to endorse the health and safety of volunteers, the need for an executive director for the MSFA and continued financing to assist the 377 member companies of the MSFA.

With his presidency over, Paul looks forward to enjoying his retirement and spending time with his family. He has enjoyed the three years that he has spent traveling the state because he’s had a chance to meet really good people. Paul said that he will remember the past year because of the “nice people everywhere you go.” As you go into a station it’s filled with hospitality, friendship, and brotherhood, the same principles that Paul enjoyed as a member of Wheaton VRS.

top: An instructor demonstrates the use of a portable fire extinguisher during a practical exercise.
bottom: An instructor briefs students on light-rescue operations.
All photos courtesy of the Prince George’s County Department of Homeland Security
MFRI conducted the 2008 National Fire Service Staff and Command Course in Nashville, Tennessee in March. Over 70 participants, from Alaska to the U.S. Virgin Islands, attended the course, which was held at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel. The week-long series of presentations was interesting, educational and thought-provoking. Nearly all the attendees indicated they were extremely satisfied with the program.

Among the most captivating speakers were Chief Kelvin Cochran of the Atlanta Fire Department (formerly of Shreveport F.D.), and Chief Dennis Rubin of the District of Columbia Fire and EMS Department (formerly of Atlanta F.D.). Both presenters spoke about leadership, although from different aspects. Chief Cochran focused on the development of personal leadership qualities to effectively lead fire service organizations. Chief Rubin’s presentation introduced the group to innovative methods of enhancing the services and public image of the fire department. Chief Rubin also discussed Crew Resource Management as a means of improving safety in fire service operations.

Several of the presentations were devoted exclusively to firefighter health and safety. Ronald Siarnicki, Executive Director of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), spoke about the current statistics and trends in fire service line-of-duty deaths. The NFFF has a goal of reducing LODDs by 25% over ten years. Mr. Siarnicki reviewed the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives that have been adopted to help ensure that “Everyone Goes Home!”

Chief Richard Gasaway of the Roseville (MN) Fire Department gave an intriguing review of his doctoral thesis studies concerning fireground decision making. In his presentation, entitled “Fifty Ways to Kill Your Brother or Sister,” Chief Gasaway drew contrasts between recognition-primed decision-making (intuitive) and rational decision-making models. According to Chief Gasaway, Incident Commander training should blend classroom and practical elements to enhance any fireground commander’s decision-making style and abilities.

Space does not permit us to adequately describe all of the other informative presentations during Staff and Command. We would, however, like to thank each of the faculty for his or her participation and commitment to the fire service family. Rounding out this year’s program were: Dr. Jeffrey T. Mitchell: The Power of the Peer; Assistant Chief Brian A. Crawford: Media Relations; Mr. M.H. Jim Estepp: Interfacing with Elected Officials; Chief John Rukavina: Disciplinary Action and Grievance Management; Chief John Sinclair: State of the Union – Fire Service Based EMS; Mr. Paul Brown: Fire Service Management with an Equal Opportunity Twist; and Chief Jack McEllish and Chief Rich Marinucci: Fire Chiefing in the Real World.

Throughout the week, the attendees took part in various extracurricular activities as well. On Friday, the class enjoyed a private buffet at the Wildhorse Saloon in Nashville’s entertainment district, followed by a concert by the band Journey. On Sunday, the Nashville Fire Department hosted a dinner at Fire Station 9, which had just recently moved to its newly constructed firehouse. Afterwards, the class toured the Country Music Hall of Fame. On Tuesday, a banquet was held in the penthouse of the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel.

Staff and Command is one of the seminars of which MFRI is most proud. Each year’s cadre of faculty is selected from an elite group of subject matter experts from across the nation, presenting topics of significance to today’s emergency services leaders. The course is held in Ocean City, Maryland on odd years and elsewhere in the country on even years. The next program will be held March 11-18, 2009 in Ocean City, Maryland.
Record Attendance Set for Chief Officers Seminar

Andy Levy, NCRTC Coordinator and Chief Officers Seminar Coordinator, MFRI

The Chief Officers Seminar was held on March 1-2 at the University System of Maryland’s Shady Grove Conference Center in Rockville, Maryland. A record attendance of 264 fire service leaders from more than 100 career and volunteer fire departments across the state of Maryland were represented.

The seminar is a result of a true partnership between the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, the Maryland Fire Chiefs Association, and the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. The theme of the seminar was “Firefighter Survival...Not Everyone Goes Home.”

The program featured U.S. Fire Administrator Gregory Cade as the keynote speaker; Jack Sullivan of Loss Control Innovations presented the program “Roadway Incident Safety;” Don Abbott of Phoenix Fire Department presented the program “Big Box Fires and Incidents;” and Billy Goldfeder of Loveland, Ohio Fire Department presented his dynamic program on firefighter safety, entitled “Scared Straight: Not Everyone Goes Home.”

Each of the speakers presented thought provoking, no-nonsense information on firefighter safety and survival. The attendees walked away with numerous concepts and ideas with regard to the reduction of firefighter deaths and injuries during incident operations. Many of these fire service leaders have pledged to institute programs and procedures within their departments to foster safety and make it a prime objective in their operational planning and procedures.

top: Chief Billy Goldfeder holds his audience spellbound with his frank and matter-of-fact discussion on firefighter deaths and injuries while encouraging change in the fire service culture.

center: Don Abbott of the Phoenix, AZ Fire Department presented an operational perspective on “Big Box” fires and incidents that promoted firefighter survival.

bottom: MFRI Director Steve Edwards (left) is pictured with Maryland Fire Chiefs Association President Robert Small Jr. (right) and U.S. Fire Administrator Gregory V. Cade after a dynamic keynote address.

All photos taken by Amber Reamy.
WILLIAM MICHAEL COLLINS

Michael Collins, an instructor in the Lower Eastern Shore region, has been a MFRI instructor for 25 years. During that time, Mike has taught in the North Central, Upper Eastern Shore and Lower Eastern Shore regions. Mike started as an EMT instructor and is currently teaching Rescue Technician Vehicle and Machinery Rescue and Haz Mat Technician. His favorite classes to teach are auto extrication and management courses. Mike enjoys teaching management classes because a lot of time is spent learning the trade of the fire department and when you start to master that trade a new challenge is thrown in to learn and become proficient in management techniques.

Mike has worked his way through the ranks, learning and mastering his trade since he first started as a volunteer in 1977 at the Cambridge Rescue Fire Company. Four years later, Mike started working as a career firefighter in Montgomery County. While with Montgomery County, he spent three years at their training academy where he was in charge of paramedic training while teaching various other courses. For the past three and a half years, Mike has been the Shift Captain at Station 31, where he is currently assigned.

One of the tools that has just recently begun being used is a computer program in the fire officer classes in which students act as incident commanders based on the scenario presented on the computer screen. This gives the students a chance to practice the skills they are learning in the class in various scenarios. With programs like this, Mike feels that students get the benefit of the hands-on practice they need without the additional worry about the cost.

When Mike first started teaching, computer simulation was not available in the classroom. Instead Mike used overheads with sand and flip charts with food coloring in order to present various scenarios. The use of computer simulation has made techniques like that obsolete. Mike has embraced the new teaching techniques and still tries to help his students to the best of his ability.

Mike spends his time in the classroom questioning his students, trying to make them figure out what they should be doing in order to challenge his students. Mike feels that by forcing the students to think for themselves and figure out the new ideas he’s teaching, the students really understand the information versus pretending to understand the context. This concept is extremely important to Mike because one of his most memorable students forgot what was taught in a class and mixed chemicals together, creating a fume. When the student claimed to not know that would happen, Mike quickly reminded him that yes he had because Mike had taught it to him in class.
ALS Simulators Showcased on National Mall
Les Becker, Advanced Life Support, MFRI

On April 2, staff of the MFRI ALS Program and their regional and corporate partners participated in the Congressional Fire Services Institute’s Exhibition on the National Mall. The Congressional Fire Services Institute is a non-profit organization that focuses on educating members of Congress on issues important to the fire service, EMS and rescue communities. The annual exhibition provides a convenient opportunity for members of Congress to observe equipment and interact with front-line members of the fire service community. MFRI was joined by personnel and equipment from area jurisdictions including Montgomery County and Prince George’s County, and federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service.

The MFRI exhibit featured an array of full-body medical simulators. Joining the MFRI exhibit were members and equipment from the Washington D.C. unit of the National Medical Response Team (NMRT) and MFRI’s corporate simulation partners, Gaumard Scientific and Medical Education Technology, Inc. (METI). At MFRI’s request, the NMRT team deployed a hazardous materials decontamination tent and conducted a mock decontamination drill featuring the METI iSTAN simulator. The assembled simulators attracted media attention, as MFRI personnel were interviewed and featured on area news outlets as well as on Firehouse.com.

Scouts Learn Emergency Preparedness at Camporee

Jenilee Jay, Institute Development Section, MFRI; Alan Caho, Advisor for Boy Scout Venture Crew 476 and Member of Middletown VFD

On Saturday, March 29th, MFRI instructor Bill Hamilton drove to the Middletown Fire Company’s Fire and Carnival Grounds to join 160 boy scouts and their leaders at their Spring Camporee. MFRI was joined by other representatives from various fire companies throughout Maryland and the National Guard to help teach emergency preparedness for a large-scale disaster situation, this year’s Spring Camporee theme.

Bill and members of the Braddock Heights Volunteer Fire Company taught the Boy Scouts how to use a fire extinguisher. After a brief lesson plan covering the ABC’s of fire extinguishers and pull, aim, squeeze, sweep (PASS) the boys broke into two groups and were able to try out what they had learned. “The boys were apprehensive at first since the extinguishers make a lot of noise, but once the first boy extinguished the fire, the other boys were excited to do it themselves” said Bill.

The day was spent rotating the groups of Scouts who ranged in age from 6-16, their parents, and Scout leaders through the extinguisher props.

During the three day Camporee, the boys were taught basic first aid skills; attended lectures on medical disaster scenarios, methods of triage, techniques of self rescue in the event of a building collapse, and types of fires and methods of fire suppression; and participated in a mock tornado strike. The mock “Tornado Alley” let the boys practice many of the skills they had learned over the weekend as they tried to rescue themselves and anyone they came across on their escape.

The coordinator of the event, Alan Caho, a member of Middletown VFD, said that the training was to teach the boys not “to be responders, but prepared reactors to events that might unfold around them.” At the end of the weekend, Alan believes that the objective was met and that the boys enjoyed learning new skills.

photo: MFRI Instructor Bill Hamilton teaches scouts fire extinguisher skills.