At the conclusion of the 2015-2016 academic year, we had seen marked improvement in the pass rate on the National Registry examination for MFRI EMT students, but we still felt that there was room to improve. In the summer of 2016, our EMT program received a complete revision. A number of modifications were made, designed to maximize instructional time, increase the validity of the test instruments and ultimately better prepare students for success not just on the certification examinations, but also in practice.

The program enhancements included:

- The adoption of MyBradyLab 2.0, which includes an interactive text, allowing students to be more engaged as they watch videos and complete activities instead of simply reading the text alone.
- Reorganization of course content in a more logical order to mirror the layout of the text.
- Elimination of module examinations and replacement with three formal cumulative examinations throughout the course.
- Reallocation of time previously spent on module testing to several lectures and practical sessions where instructors have reported the most difficulty in covering the content in the allotted time.
- Addition of computer-adaptive practice testing allowing students to take an unlimited number of tailored exams that are constructed in real-time based on the test-taker's responses, just as the National Registry examination will be.

These changes were piloted last summer with overwhelmingly positive feedback from instructors and students alike. As those students started to make their way through the National Registry examination process we were seeing positive results. We entered the fall semester hoping that these greatly improved pass rates would be sustained as our sample size increased. We are pleased to report that as we enter 2017, the National Registry pass rate for MFRI students is 9 percentage points higher than the national average on the first attempt.

These program enhancements, coupled with the skill and dedication of our instructors, are contributing to one of the primary goals of the MFRI 2025 Strategic Plan—Student Success.
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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I do not often write about myself, but the year 2017 represents my 50th year of being a member of the fire service in Maryland so I thought perhaps I would reflect a little. I began in 1967 as a junior member of the Forestville VFD in Prince George’s County. My older brother was a member at Company 23 and if he had not joined I do not think I would have ever thought about it. As you may expect there were not a lot of rules and regulations back then and I responded on a house fire the first night that I was a member. I had on my aluminum helmet, canvas coat and three-quarter length boots and had not a clue as to what I was doing.

Forestville VFD was managed quite well and they did require training within so many months of membership. I completed the then Fire Service Extension Basic and Advanced Fire Schools within my first year and at the time thought I had everything I needed to know. Medical training was not really required back then, other than an American Red Cross First Aid card. The first time I used SCBA was before I attended a training class. The person in the left bucket of the engine showed me how to put it on while we were responding to a working apartment fire and I actually used it when we arrived on scene. At times I often wonder how I made it to having 50 years of emergency service.

My reflections in the two preceding paragraphs are to illustrate a point. Often we all sit back and state that things are not as good as they used to be and the fire service never makes any progress. That is a patently false assessment for many reasons. The training and education that is available to fire and EMS personnel is vastly improved, there are national professional qualification standards, the protective gear that we now use is much better and the environment of enhanced health and safety in training and response has saved the lives of many emergency response personnel.

Of course if you joined the fire department three years ago you may not have recognized as much progress. Give it some time and you will soon recognize the efforts of numerous people and organizations and how they have impacted the emergency services in many positive ways. Yes, we have much more to do but at the same time let’s appreciate what has been accomplished. I certainly do.
MEET OUR INSTRUCTOR
Robby May

Robby May not only loves his job as a MFRI EMS instructor, but also his career as a history teacher at Fort Hill High School. And while finishing his Paramedic program at Hagerstown Community College, Robby still finds time to devote to being an EMT with the LaVale Volunteer Rescue Squad as he has for the past eleven years.

Robby says, “I truly love using the EMS side of my brain.” He surely knows how to put it to good use in teaching his EMT students. Keeping the in-class scenarios real is very important to Robby. He believes that it is easy to “normalize” scenarios, but normal is not what an EMT will likely find in the field. Instead, Robby has his students go through a full scenario from arriving on scene to transporting the patient by ambulance. When teaching CPR to students in his EMT classes, he puts them in situations that they might actually face in the field, including going through a call with limited resources. On the other hand, he also utilizes resources like the LUCAS device (electrical chest compression system) and has his students practice alongside a paramedic.

The most memorable students to Robby are those who have hectic lives, yet still have the desire to become EMTs and serve their community. He recalls a student who happened to have a full time job, was a mother of two, and had a child diagnosed with Down Syndrome. That student consistently scored the highest in the class and is now an active volunteer EMT.

Although Robby has held many leadership positions in public schools and has even achieved the Eagle Scout status through Boy Scouts of America, the accomplishment that means the most to Robby is simply the title of “teacher.” Robby is certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and The College Board and holds a Maryland Advanced Professional Certificate in Social Studies. He has been teaching in public schools since 2009 and has been a MFRI instructor since 2015. Robby recognizes the time it has taken him to become a teacher and instructor, and now that he is living this life, he says he would not change a thing.

MFSPQB Celebrates 25 Years of Accreditation

The Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board is celebrating its 25 years of accreditation through The ProBoard. The MFSPQB is accredited to 47 levels and has improved the professionalism of the fire service through quality training and exceptional testing. Bob Rose and Grace Sokolowski do a great job keeping the office, located at MFRI HQ in College Park, up and running daily. Read more about the certification process online at www.mfri.org/mfspqb.
This past December, the second Chinese delegation in two months visited MFRI. Ten science, investment, and civic leaders from the People’s Republic of China representing the Pudong district of Shanghai visited the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute. Shanghai is a global financial center, is home to the second tallest building in the world (2,073 feet), and is the world’s busiest container port.

The primary purpose of the delegation’s visit to MFRI had the specific goal of learning about standard and innovative ways to protect buildings in Shanghai, particularly high rises, and possible training opportunities that MFRI might be able to provide. The delegation members also came to discuss fire protection technology solutions. To that end, invited to the meeting was Dr. James Milke, the Chair of the Department of Fire Protection Engineering at the University of Maryland as well as Director Steve Edwards and Kai Duh, the Director of the University’s International Incubator program.

The visit started with overview presentations by Director Edwards and Dr. Milke, which included a brief history of MFRI, and an overview of the fire protection engineering program here at the university, followed by a summarization of our mission and the programs we offer on campus and around the globe. This was followed by an in-depth discussion about Shanghai’s significant issues regarding firefighter training, fire protection systems and fire prevention efforts. Much was learned on both sides of the discussion. Of particular note, it was learned that firefighting in China is handled largely by the military, and is not as training-intensive as it is here in the U.S.

The group then took a tour of the MFRI facility, starting with the SIM center. As with the Chengdu delegation, the Shanghai group was equally impressed with the potential learning opportunities the SIM center offered. The Shanghai head delegate was particularly interested in the software used in the simulations and our ability to train delegation members in its application for their potential use.

The delegation members, based on the discussions, were also intrigued by the level, rigor and depth of MFRI’s training programs, and expressed an interest in future collaborations along those fronts. MFRI expressed its ability and willingness to offer its expertise in their efforts to improve their emergency fire response capabilities and fire protection systems. As with all things related to governmental business ventures and funding MFRI Special Programs will pursue and follow through on the possibility of working with the city of Shanghai. In terms of the exchange of ideas that occurred, the delegation’s visit to MFRI was an important first step.
EMT Students Collect Gifts for Local Children in Need

This past December, the MFRI Upper Eastern Shore Regional Training Center EMT students came together to help local children in need. EMT candidate Brittany Schwartz led the effort as the class collected items for children between the ages of 1-12 years old. They filled stockings and then donated them to a local care drive. The project was a success thanks to all the students who contributed to the cause. Thanks to MFRI Instructor Scott Wheatley for allowing the students in his class to go above and beyond for their community.

MFRI Welcomes Retired Assistant Chief Eric Proctor

Now that Assistant Chief Eric Proctor of the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services Training Academy has retired after many years of service, he has joined MFRI's Quality Assessment Team at MFRI Headquarters in College Park. Chief Proctor has been a MFRI instructor since 2005. With his well-rounded perspective of academy-style and MFRI-style training, Chief Proctor excitedly accepted this position to continue his positive impact on Maryland and fire emergency services.

MFRI Launches Stop the Bleed Initiative for Instructors

This past January, MFRI held its first Stop the Bleed course for instructors. Two instructors were chosen from each of MFRI’s six regions in hopes of efficiently hosting the course throughout the state of Maryland in the upcoming months. The “Stop the Bleed” campaign is a federal initiative that aims to save lives and build resiliency in our communities. This new two-and-a-half-hour course teaches participants the basic life-saving medical interventions, including bleeding control with a tourniquet, bleeding control with gauze packs or topical hemostatic agents, and opening an airway to allow a casualty to breathe. The course is designed for non-tactical law enforcement officers, firefighters, security personnel, teachers and other civilians requiring this basic training. The purpose of this course is to equip the EMT, Paramedic and EMS Educators with a course that they can roll out in their fire departments and their communities. For more information on the initiative go to dhs.gov/stopthebleed.

Stay up to date with the MFRI regional Facebook pages for more information on upcoming opportunities to take the Stop the Bleed course. There will also be more information on how to participate in this initiative at the MFRI booth during the #MSFA2017 Ocean City Convention.
This past November, a group of 35 participants, made up of U.S. Congressional staff members and University of Maryland Human Resources staff, visited the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute for training to simulate a “day in the life” of a firefighter. This relationship between MFRI and the Congressional Fire Services Institute allows the opportunity for those who approve equipment funding to understand the necessity of each piece when it comes to providing safety for both fire service personnel and citizens.

Participants had the opportunity to test the new Scott Safety SCBA face piece that has a thermal imaging camera incorporated into the mask itself. This enabled participants to see how having a hands-free device that can assist in locating victims or downed firefighters would allow for a quicker and more efficient search effort.

The National Fire Sprinkler Association also brought its side-by-side burn trailer to show participants the difference between a sprinklered and non-sprinklered residence and how seconds could make the difference between life and death.

The Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute has joined the efforts of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network in reminding firefighters to wash their Nomex hood every Sunday (once a week). This initiative is meant to bring attention to tactics that can help prevent occupational cancer. Please share this idea with your department and encourage your firefighters to clean their gear regularly to remove harmful carcinogens. #SafetyNotSalty
MFRI’s Special Programs Section Conducts
Fire Investigator Course

Every year, MFRI Special Programs puts on a Pro Board Certified Fire Investigator Course. This ten-day program is intended for delivery to fire investigators, police officers, and other fire service personnel whose primary responsibilities include the investigation of fire incidents to determine point of origin and cause as well as performance of criminal investigations. The program includes instruction and practical exercises in the areas of cause and origin determination, report writing, scene processing, evidence handling, and courtroom testimony. Topics on burn pattern recognition, scene documentation, interviewing techniques, and scene safety will also be addressed at length during this course. This program provides the participants with the skills required by the Fire Investigator Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) of NFPA 1033: Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator. Acceptance into this program is contingent upon receipt of a letter from the applicant’s department head attesting that the applicant does perform fire investigations. Email specialprog@mfri.org for more information about the October 2017 course.

MFRI Hosts Social Media Workshop for Maryland State Firemen’s Association

Social media has become the new marketing strategy for most major corporations around the world to now include the fire and emergency services. MFRI’s Public Relations Specialist, Jennifer Williams, was asked to host a workshop informing the Maryland State Firemen’s Association of the basics and best practices of social media in order to help members brainstorm new strategies for reaching their audiences and equipping fire departments. During the training, members inquired about the creation of new training for volunteer departments’ Public Information Officers or the chosen individuals who run department social media accounts. Jennifer, along with Maryland PIOs, will be developing a break-out session to be held at the #MSFA2017 Ocean City Convention. For more information, follow MFRI on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
Spring PDI to be held April 1, 2017

MFRI’s spring Professional Development for Instructors will feature keynote speaker Rom Duckworth, LP. He is a dedicated emergency responder and an award-winning educator who has over 25 years of experience working in career and volunteer departments, hospital healthcare systems, and public and private emergency medical services. Rom is a career fire captain and paramedic EMS coordinator as well as the founder and director of the New England Center for Rescue and Emergency Medicine. He is an emergency services advocate, author and frequent speaker at conferences around the world. Topics include *Connecting Theory to Real World Practice*, *Dealing with Problem Students*, *Managing Multitasking*, *Educational Technology*, *Safety in Instruction*, *Facilitated Instruction*, and more. Registration for the spring PDI opens February 1, 2017 online at www.mfri.org/seminars.