



North Star Women's Firefighter Association Quarterly Newsletter

1 S T Q U A R T E R 2 0 0 9

From the President...

2009 is here, and the North Star Women's Firefighter Association is prepared to offer you great training and networking events throughout the year! The Calendar of Events has been posted on our website, so check it out and mark your calendars in advance so you don't miss anything.

We realize that most Departments could be facing budget cuts during the next several months, but we do hope that you and other members of your Department are able to attend our quarterly training sessions and our Annual Weekend Conference in September. We had great sessions last year, and we try to keep all costs to a minimum.

In addition to training, we do have some networking events coming up on the calendar—The Governor's Fire Prevention Day at the State Fair is a great one! Not only do you get to visit with thousands of fairgoers, but it is a great opportunity to visit with other Minnesota Fire Departments, The Fire Explorers, the State Fire Marshal's Office, and many others.

As always, please let us know if you would like to help out at any of the events or if you have others that we should add to the calendar.

Thank you for reading our newsletter, and we hope to see you soon!

Stay safe,

Kim

*"If you only do what you know you can do—you never do very much."
Tom Krause*



Kimberly Cox
Eden Prairie Fire
kcummings@edenprairie.org

Future Firefighters ???

Maple Plain Firefighter, Sarah Mann, gave birth to a little girl this month. Pieper Jean was 8lbs., 11 oz., and 20-1/2 inches long. She is shown here with Mom, big brother Hunter.



LEADING THE WAY FOR WOMEN IN THEIR GOALS OF A LONGSTANDING
AND SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN THE FIRE SERVICE



Becki White, Vice-President, Eden Prairie Fire

As the cold weather is upon us we think of firefighting in a whole new light - freezing temperatures. We all know that we have to take extra precautions to reduce wear on our trucks during this frigid season. A lot of people forget to consider their personal safety during these cold weather months. Make sure you dress in extra layers when you respond to the station. You never know if that next call will be a quick false alarm, or the next big one, which may leave you exposed to the elements for a longer period of time.

We also have to consider our safety to and from the fire station, both in our personal vehicles and in the department vehicles. Icy roads only worsen the problems for those that feel they need to rush when traveling to the station. It's also a bad combination when you add icy conditions to the distracted, drowsy, drunk, or dumb drivers that have brain freeze when they come across a vehicle with full lights and sirens.

Be safe out there! Let's all hope this sub-zero weather moves past quickly!

Sherri Walsh, Treasurer, Chanhassen Fire



Here are a few cold weather tips and tricks that I use during these cold winter months:

1) Wool Socks. Always keep a pair of wool socks in your turnout boots. Putting these on over the socks you currently have on adds extra warmth and protection. Just make sure that the socks are not too bulky and that your feet adequately fit within your boots. If your toes are scrunched, your wool socks are too thick - get a thinner pair. There is nothing worse than walking around with boots that are too tight and getting blisters! **2) Hand Warmers.** Carry hand warmers in your pockets. You can purchase single use hand warmers at your local sporting good stores for about \$1.00 each. Since they are so small, they fit perfect in your gloves. **3) Mittens.** Carry fire approved mittens too. Based upon your task at the fire ground, you may be able to work effectively wearing mittens. Keeping your fingers together in mittens versus wearing gloves helps to keep them warmer. **4) Extra Gloves.** Carry an extra set of gloves (or have spare gloves on a truck for everyone). When yours get wet, put on the dry ones. **5) Nomex Hood.** Use your nomex hood as additional protection. There is nothing wrong with wearing your hood even if you don't have your mask on. It adds an additional layer to your head keeping the heat in, not to mention the added warmth around your neck. **6) Layers.** Pay attention to the layers under your gear. Wearing too many layers doesn't allow the sweat to absorb and limits your ability to move, making your body colder yet. I hope that these are not new to you, but rather a reminder. Even when we fight the hottest fires, we are still at risk for hypothermia. Stay safe and keep yourself warm!

Laura McCarthy, Member-at-Large, Bloomington Fire



Oofdah, pow, grunt, ouch, you *&##\$. Aah the sweet sounds of women battling it out while honing their self-defense tactics. Officer Josh Seifert from the Bloomington Police Department put on a great class. We learned many release moves and "hurt" points. Believe it or not hitting someone in their private parts doesn't always have the most impact although it can bring a lot of satisfaction to the one doing the hitting. All in all great training. 2009 will be better yet! There are many great training opportunities and events to attend. Watch for the calendar of events. I hope to see you there. Take care and stay warm.

Rachel Kansanback, Secretary, Eden Prairie Fire



Accountability"...PersonNEL or PersonAL?

*Some ideas taken from Ted Bownas, Millbrook Fire Department, NY

"Accountability" is a word that's tossed around like the word "hose" at the fire station... What does it really mean? From Wikipedia: **Accountability** is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, decisions, and policies...*encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences*. Lets apply this to the fire service, you need to be able to differentiate between the two words in the title..."personal" vs. "personnel"... those two words are transposed almost daily. If you know the difference, great; if not... here are the definitions and some explanation:

Personnel means the body of persons employed by or active in an organization, business, or service.

Personnel accountability means, literally, being able to account for where we are and what we're doing. We all know what this means...we discuss it constantly in our business. A successful outcome at a fire or emergency scene demands that we account for all of our firefighters. The systems developed to accomplish this vary from old-fashioned pen and paper, to tags (PAR) that are turned in and used to direct and record our movements and assignments within the operation, to high-tech electronic tags that track individuals and transmit their GPS coordinates to the IC or accountability officer. These systems share a common purpose: to keep track of our firefighters and alert us if someone's (a) missing or (b) acting outside the system. Either can be disastrous to the operation, for many reasons. We all know it; some of us practice personnel accountability religiously... others are still slightly behind the curve. Unfortunately, it often takes a tragedy to open our eyes.

Personal means "of or pertaining to a person, or belonging to a person in some way".

Personal accountability is therefore: our ability or desire to be responsible for our actions, decisions, and policies...and our understanding and acceptance of the consequences of those actions, decisions, and policies.

Here's my point: **You cannot have successful PERSONNEL accountability without first inspiring PERSONAL accountability in your membership.**

Think about the people in your organization. Chances are, there's a small group you know you can always rely on to do the right thing and get every job done, even if it's not exciting or popular. Then there's a group you know you can't rely on for anything - they're going to evaporate at the slightest sign of hard work or controversy. In the middle is a (usually larger) group that will, simply put, follow whomever makes them feel better. These are the people who will make or break your department. Our job as fire service leaders is to inspire these "middle-grounders" to be accountable to themselves and to our job. And you cannot do that without displaying that accountability yourself.

In a nutshell, we each need to make our department a better place by our own actions. That starts by being accountable for our actions - accountable to ourselves...and accountable to each other.

"A strong woman is a woman determined to do something others are determined not to be done."
Marge Piercy



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More information on NSWFA events, along with other Fire Service events, can be found on our website at www.nswfa.org

**“Limitations live only in our minds.
But if we use our imaginations,
our possibilities become limitless.”
Jamie Paolinetti**

March 5th—Fire Service Day at the Capitol

March 7th & 8th—State Fire School
North Mankato

**March 21st—NSWFA 1st Quarter Training
Hazardous Materials**

March 21st & 22nd—State Fire School
Alexandria

March 28th & 29th—State Fire School
Brainerd

April 4th & 5th—State Fire School
Rochester

**April 11th—NSWFA 2nd Quarter Training
Ice Rescue**



Are you ready to *tri* to inspire others, to be stronger, to support other women, to challenge yourself, to have fun and adventure? We do this everyday as firefighters, now let's extend ourselves both as individuals and as a group. Join us in the YWCA of Minneapolis Women's Triathlon event on **August 16, 2009** at Baker Park. The event consists of a 500 yard swim, 15 mile bike, and a 5K run (3miles) with endless support along the way!! Registration opens February 4th, and it fills fast so enter early. Check out their web site at

<http://www.ywcawomenstri.org/>

to learn more about their free 12-week training plan template, noodle swimmers, transition area pit crews, buddy wave and countless other ways to make this challenging event a successful event!

