

## **Conference Call with USFA regarding NFIRS**

(Summary Presented by Melissa Gannie, NFIC Vice President)

The National Data Center (NDC) is working to improve the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). As a result, Brad Pabody, Director of the NDC, held a conference call on May 17, 2010 at 1 p.m. EST to discuss the status and progress of the program. Due to the time change differences, I missed the scheduled call, but was able to have a one-on-one conversation with Brad later that day. Below is a summary of that conversation.

### **Web Based Data Entry Tool**

Brad indicated that the user acceptance testing is nearing completion on the new Web Based Data Entry Tool. The vendor has made modifications based on the feedback from those participating in the acceptance testing and comments from the National Fire Information Council (NFIC) training. All existing features of the standard United States Fire Administration (USFA) software will be incorporated into the new application along with additional features. It is anticipated that the program will be rolled out at the end of this month.

The current USFA software program will still be available after the release of the Web Based system.

### **Status of the NFIRS Hardware Move to the New DHS Data Center**

June is the target month for moving the servers and other hardware that support the NFIRS program to the new DHS Data Center. It is anticipated that the move and equipment upgrade will increase performance and lay the ground work for future.

### **New Data Warehouse Requirements Gathering**

USFA is in the midst of gathering input from stakeholders (NFIC members, NFPA, CPSC, and others) regarding the need for advanced report generating capabilities. The long term objective is to provide more data mining capabilities. USFA is looking at using Business Objects to improve data analysis capabilities.

I had an opportunity to provide input into what was needed from the state program perspective. Having the ability to query on any given data element and extracting information in various formats is essential (Excel, CVS, etc.). Options such as charts, graphs, and GIS capabilities are being explored as well.

### **NFIRS 6.0**

USFA recognizes the need to improve the current NFIRS standard. They have had some preliminary conversations with the administrators of the National Emergency Medical Service Information System (NEMSIS). The National Wildland Coordinating Group, Alcohol Tobacco & Firearms, Consumer Product Safety Commission, and other organizations will be consulted to

determine common data elements and explore the possibility of a more seamless reporting system.

Input will be sought from various groups when USFA actually starts a formalized process. NFIRS 5.0 will not be replaced anytime in the near future.

My comments/input on this discussion:

1. There is a need for USFA to explore what other data needs or data collection systems the fire service is being asked to participate in. NHTSA has NEMSIS and ATF has BATS. There are other programs out there including Near Miss, AIMS, a juvenile fire setter system, wildland data collection elements, and more. There is definitely a need to get the various groups together to discuss the possibility of streamlining the data collection process to make it easier and more cost effective for the fire service.
2. There is a need to improve data collection in the area of fire investigation findings. It is clear that there are a high number of “Undetermined” fires that are reported to NFIRS. NFPA 72 does speak to “Undetermined” fires, so this is a valid cause/heat source category. One of the problems lies in the fact that not all fire investigation findings are making their way into NFIRS. Example: firefighters extinguish the fire and complete the incident report marking “Undetermined” in several areas because they did not conduct the investigation. The fire investigation unit/fire marshal conducts an investigation, but their findings are not entered or updated into NFIRS. The fire investigation unit/fire marshal may be a member of the fire department or a member of the County Fire Marshal’s Office.

The Crime Reporting System has a Supplementary Report that correlates the two reports, so the most accurate information can be reflected. This is just one idea that might work to fix the problem. Discussing the issue with the International Fire Chiefs, International Association of Arson Investigators, National Association of State Fire Marshals, and other interested parties would be beneficial.

## **NFIC Training**

Brad and I briefly discussed the NFIC training. He indicated that the NFIC training at the National Fire Academy was successful.

I pointed out the need for additional training opportunities for NFIC members – such as basic and advance tracks. I gave an example that in Washington State, the only opportunity to provide advanced training is through the USFA outreach grant (to pay for instructor cost and any training materials). The funding of that grant is limited and the NFIRS classes must compete with other course offerings. In Washington, we have implemented an NFIRS Support Group. One of our goals is develop curriculum and a pool of instructors to provide training on how to analyze and use NFIRS data at the local level. Brad indicated that no funding is currently available through USFA for this type of activity.