

THE HOOSIER RESPONDER

JULY 2024



BLOOD ON BOARD

New EMS Innovation Taking Hold Across the Country

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- College programs producing research to enhance public safety
- EMS audit to help make legislative changes across the state
- IDHS searching for volunteers for PFAS Testing Pilot Program
- “When the Smoke Clears”: the latest in the IDHS behavioral health video series
- Proposed OSHA rule changes could modernize firefighter safety standards
- An update on the Indiana ambulances donated to Ukraine



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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Another turbulent weather season is presenting challenges for maintaining a resilient Indiana.

June storms in Monroe, Vigo, Clay and Owen counties produced widespread damage. Storms in various parts of the state also came in strong in July, including at least one fatality in Lake County and a powerful tornado in Posey County. Some Hoosiers dealt with prolonged power outages, which at one point stood at more than 180,000 homes for the July 15 storm.

When Monroe County took a significant hit in late June, Hoosiers benefitted from statewide partners who jumped in to help the Monroe County Emergency Management Agency. Along with IDHS, an Incident Management Team of volunteers was set up the next day and went to work coordinating a response. In addition, massive utility crews from across the Midwest responded to the area, highlighting the collaborative work it takes to make a community whole again.

Local disasters were declared in four counties in June, and the same process is unfolding in additional counties from July storms. This sets in motion the process to determine what state and federal assistance could be available. The local communities stepped up immediately, although there will be a long road of recovery for some of these residents.

Leadership is a necessary skill when responding to these types of incidents, but it also is best put to the test when preparing for the unknown. Local leaders must anticipate gaps in resilience, and cybersecurity is a perfect example of something that is always lurking. A large portion of my time at IDHS is spent talking about cybersecurity, which should be a concern for all government entities, utilities and private businesses that serve the public good.

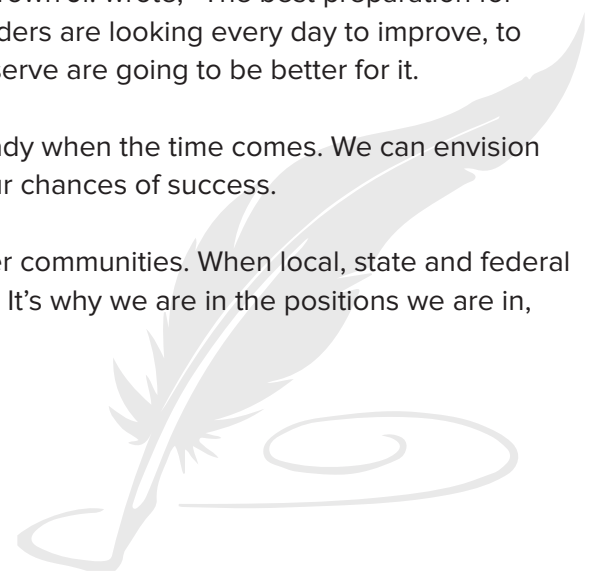
The key to resilience is preparation. Best-selling author H. Jackson Brown Jr. wrote, “The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today.” I like this concept, because if leaders are looking every day to improve, to build stronger teams and to anticipate needs, the communities they serve are going to be better for it.

We can't predict natural disasters, but we can predict if we will be ready when the time comes. We can envision our response and put pieces in place to make it easier to increase our chances of success.

At the end of the day, collaboration and communication build stronger communities. When local, state and federal partners are on the same page, we can be ready for almost anything. It's why we are in the positions we are in, and it is what our communities expect.



Joel Thacker
Executive Director





Part 1 of two-part series

HOME GROWN FIRST RESPONDER RESEARCH

All photos courtesy of RedLab.

COLLEGE PROGRAMS PRODUCE TECHNOLOGY, FINDINGS TO ENHANCE PUBLIC SAFETY

Two of Indiana’s largest universities boast programs dedicated to researching and developing solutions to challenges faced by first responders. The IU Crisis Technologies Innovation Lab in Bloomington focuses on creating technology for first response, while the Purdue Homeland Security Institute in West Lafayette tackles gaps in training and performs testing on the concepts underlying security policies and methods. Together, they bring Hoosiers to the cutting edge of the ever-changing world of public safety.

IU CRISIS TECHNOLOGIES INNOVATION LAB

The IU Crisis Lab, which is rebranding to [RedLab](#), brings together minds from IU’s Luddy School of Informatics, Computing and Engineering to work on new products. In recent years, they have created a disaster resilience and vulnerability information platform ([APRED](#)), digital resilience handbook and dashboards for firefighter situational awareness and location tracking.

In collaboration with the Bloomington Fire Department, the lab integrated a tool with their CAD system to give the

department quick information on current incidents in real time. When an emergency call would come in, televisions at multiple fire stations would display a map showing the incident location, traffic congestion levels, a predicted route, weather and basic details about the call like whether it was a structure fire or kitchen fire.

“It provides background open-source information that you can read in 10 seconds and can help with the response,” said Dr. David Wild, the lab’s founder and research director. “We use those technologies every day, but sometimes it is the simple

things that are hard to do in the actual moment until you have the technology to put them all together.”



Bloomington Fire Capt. Kenny Hinkle said the new product was useful, and now the department subscribes to a similar platform that shows even more information, like hydrant locations. He said students from the lab reach out to the department occasionally to get the department's opinions on projects, setting up meetings or calls with firefighter crews and management.

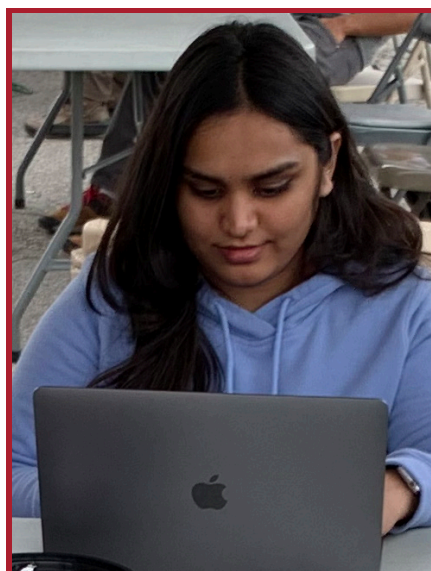
"They ask us how it should work or what they should look for. Recently we talked about firefighter locations within a building and having a heads-up display inside your mask that can tell you where other firefighters are," Hinkle said. "From a smoky environment perspective, that could help us stay oriented, improve our on-scene operations and aid in a rescue."

"They also asked us about a wearable device that could track a firefighter's vital signs. We told them it would have to be easily worn, and one of the students suggested a watch. On scene, if we got a notification of a firefighter working hard with a pulse rate that was too high or irregular, we could be alerted to pull them out for rehab to prevent a medical event."

The lab's biggest effort to date has been the [First Responder Smart Tracking Challenge](#). In partnership with the National Institute of Standards and Technology, it was an effort



over five years to address the "holy grail" problem of tracking first responders without grid technologies when they are inside structures. The lab managed a competition with about \$6 million in prize money. There were five phases, and live testing of products was done at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center with first responders from Task Force One, Ellettsville Police Department and others.



Columbus Fire Department firefighters helped with the final two phases by completing a series of scenarios mimicking fire ground operations within buildings of various sizes. Each firefighter used a prototype tracking device and moved through waypoints while competitors monitored firefighter movements and real-time location. This included climbing ladders, carrying simulated victims and crawling through tunnels and hallways to make the testing as realistic as possible.

"As an incident commander, maintaining accountability for our firefighters is a top priority. Accountability is particularly important when search operations are underway or in the event of a missing or downed firefighter that creates what we call a mayday situation. Being able to see precisely where our firefighters are located within a home or business is a great advantage," said Columbus Fire Chief Andy Lay.

The competition's goal was to come up with marketable resources that were also affordable to public safety agencies, and a couple were successful, including one that is already available for departments. The lab is now working with teams to integrate their tracking technology with the [TAK platform](#) and testing with the Indianapolis Fire Department.

Current lab work involves building an artificial intelligence engine to help with disaster management, developing software-defined radios and off-grid radios and



working on an Android-based system for joint situational awareness.

The lab's students, whether they come from policy, business or informatics backgrounds, are encouraged to explore the first response field, and Wild

said some have become first responders because they liked the experience, while many of them have gone into the emergency management technology industry. Some of these technologies are being commercialized through a spinout company called [KonnexAI](#).

Purdue University houses the Purdue Homeland Security Institute (PHSI), which was opened in 2003. Stay tuned for the September issue of the *Hoosier Responder* to learn about how PHSI is addressing gaps it sees in public safety and defense.

COME VISIT IDHS AT THE INDIANA STATE FAIR!

AUGUST 13-17 IN FRONT OF THE AG/HORT BUILDING



Decontamination Tent



NEW HAZMAT ALLIANCE WEBSITE

The Indiana Alliance of Hazardous Materials Responders (IAHMR) recently launched its new website (on.in.gov/iahmr) in its latest step to increase visibility.

Formed as a nonprofit in 2002, IAHMR seeks to strengthen ties among Indiana’s hazmat first responders and to provide them with training opportunities. Its new website not only covers the basics about IAHMR but also serves as its hub for posting hazmat training and annual conference information. This complements its active [Facebook group](#).

The 2024 Indiana Hazmat Conference will be held Oct. 21-23 at MADE@Plainfield in Hendricks County. Conference details, including links to register and to book a discounted hotel rate, will be on the [conference webpage](#).



OUT IN THE FIELD

HAZMAT TRANSPORTATION EXERCISE

The IDHS Exercise Section hosted the North Region Hazmat Tabletop Exercise in Plymouth in late June. The exercise scenario asked participants in fire, hazmat, EMS, local health, hospitals, public works, emergency management and more to discuss their response plans if a train carrying hazardous materials derailed.

The exercise was a success as 85 people joined the discussion to share plans and procedures and identify strengths and potential gaps in response. The IDHS Exercise Section is compiling notes from the evaluators and creating an After-Action Report/Improvement Plan.

The group will participate in a full-scale exercise next year on Aug. 27, 2025, to continue testing their plans in a similar scenario.





FIRST-EVER EMS AUDIT UNDERWAY ACROSS THE STATE

DEADLINE WAS JULY 15

A new Indiana law will help to better illustrate the level of EMS care in Indiana, which can vary greatly from county to county.

County commissioners from all 92 Indiana counties were required to complete a survey regarding EMS services to comply with Public Law 67-2024 by July 15. As of July 17, 77 counties had submitted the required information.

Once complete, the IDHS EMS Division and the Indiana EMS Commission hope to identify gaps in EMS care across the state, specifically where basic lifesaving and advanced lifesaving services are required, mutual aid agreements, access to trauma care and response times. A third-party vendor is collecting responses from each county utilizing data provided by EMS provider organizations.

“The county EMS survey will be a useful tool for the state,” said Kraig Kinney, director of Indiana EMS. “We have a rough idea of some of the information in the survey; however, we are missing the solid data that supports how EMS is functioning at the county level.

“The survey will specifically be utilized by the Indiana EMS staff to review grant priorities and other funding sources to see where we can meet local needs to strengthen the county EMS systems.”

Indiana EMS Medical Director Dr. Eric Yazel said, “This will give us concrete data to draw from as we advocate for EMS legislatively, address gaps with grants and other initiatives, develop novel programs to advance care for Hoosiers, along with countless other applications.”

Historically, counties provide a variety of EMS services utilizing a variety of funding sources, including privately owned providers contracted with the county. The new law requires IDHS to submit a detailed report to legislators by Aug. 15.

Questions regarding your county’s status on meeting this requirement should be directed to IDHS Legislative Director Alyssa Schroeder at aschroeder1@dhs.in.gov. A current reporting snapshot can be found [here](#).

OUT IN THE FIELD: PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SAFETY DAY

The fourth annual Plainfield Public Safety Day was hosted at the Al and Jan Barker Sports Complex in early June. This event, organized by the Plainfield Police Department, aimed to strengthen community bonds and enhance public awareness about safety measures.

Attendees had the opportunity to interact with various public safety agencies, including the Plainfield Fire Territory, IDHS and the Indiana Army National Guard. The event featured multiple

activities, including a medical helicopter display, a bike rodeo and the Plainfield Fire Territory's children's smokehouse.

The community got a close-up look at the skills of K-9 handlers from IDHS and the Honey Creek Fire Department, along with their highly trained dogs Misty, Pi and Dopper. They conducted demonstrations highlighting their capabilities in search and rescue, detection of hazardous materials and disaster response.



MITIGATION UPDATE

The [2024 State Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) identifies the state's greatest risks for disasters and creates strategies to decrease these risks.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires IDHS to update this plan every five years. The data and priorities were compiled from

county multi-hazard mitigation plans. They will be used to create state mitigation strategies. Completing this plan makes Indiana eligible to apply for, and receive, FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance funding.

View the [State Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) on the IDHS website.

IDHS ANNOUNCES IMAT LEADERSHIP TEAM

The team leads for the IDHS Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) have been named. Congratulations to Eric Funkhouser of the Bargersville Community Fire Department, Pascal Arnes of the Decatur Township Fire Department, Jason Meek of the Angola Fire Department/DeKalb County EMA and Lori Postma of Franciscan Health. The team leads and IDHS are wrapping up interviews for the rest of the IMAT positions. Approved IMAT teammates will be contacted via email to confirm selection.

Once the teams are set, IDHS will schedule an orientation meeting in August or September. Members who need additional training will receive instructions on those requirements from IDHS this year. The final goal is to become a certified FEMA Supplemental Response Team within a year.





IDHS REQUESTING VOLUNTEERS TO PARTICIPATE IN PFAS TESTING PILOT PROGRAM

IDHS seeks volunteers to participate in the [PFAS Testing Pilot Program](#). In 2023, the Indiana General Assembly instructed the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) to establish a pilot program to determine if firefighters in Indiana have per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in their blood.

PFAS substances got the name “forever chemicals” because they do not break down easily and they stay in the body and environment for long periods of time. Most Americans have these suspected carcinogens in their body, but researchers have shown that firefighters likely have higher levels of PFAS due to exposure from protective gear, products of combustion and some firefighter foams.

PFAS Testing Pilot Program

IDHS is launching a voluntary program where firefighters in Indiana can apply to have their

blood tested for PFAS **free of charge**. The results will be shared with the individual firefighter. The de-identified data collected from the pilot program will be analyzed by IDHS and other state agencies to determine how to better protect Indiana’s firefighters from PFAS exposure.

How To Participate

Indiana firefighters interested in participating in the pilot program should submit their name, email address and PSID via the [interest form](#).

A follow-up application will be emailed from the pfas@delineateconsulting.com email address to those who fill out the interest form. The follow-up application must be

completed in full to move forward in the process. A limited number of participants will be selected. Completing the application does not guarantee you will be selected for the program.

If selected for the program, participants will be mailed an at-home testing kit, which needs to be returned within 14 days. Participants are not guaranteed results if the test is not returned within 14 days.

After returning the test, participants will receive the results of their test and IDHS will receive de-identified results to use in a report for legislative purposes. Participants’ personal information will be protected. No identifiable information will be shared with IDHS or in the public report.

The deadline to apply is Aug. 9.





WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS

An IDHS Video Series on First Responder Mental Health

IDHS Executive Director Joel Thacker and State Fire Marshal Steve Jones are deep into their discussion about **first responder behavioral health** with Pike Township Lt. Troy Clements, psychotherapist and former firefighter Dr. Robert Smith and Professional Firefighters Union of Indiana President Tony Murray.

The group is talking openly about the reality of mental health in the firehouse and the struggle to fight the stigma about asking for help. Two episodes of the four-part series are available to view now.

Jones encourages fire department leadership to use these videos as a way to open up the discussion in your fire department.

“Firefighters are always willing to support their brother or sister. Talking about mental health is another avenue of support. The ultimate goal is to make sure everyone is healthy enough to do their job and to live a good life,” said Jones.

The first two episodes can be viewed below and on the [IDHS first responder behavioral health webpage](#).

The final two episodes of this series will cover existing programs that can help and the first warning signs of someone dealing with a mental health crisis. Learn more about behavioral health and how to get help on the [IDHS website](#).





WHOLE BLOOD IN THE FIELD

EMS Units Now Equipping Themselves with Whole Blood

What is the next best EMS initiative? That is the question EMS provider organizations ask themselves when considering new ways to serve their community. One fairly new idea that is quickly spreading across the country is carrying whole blood on EMS vehicles.

“In the past for traumatic injuries, for medical patients in hemorrhagic shock, in order to help stabilize them and get them to definitive care, it’s always been giving them normal saline or lactated ringers,” said Dr. Steven Joyce, EMS medical director for Memorial Hospital in South Bend.

“Traditionally we’ve always treated with saline, which is salt water essentially. It is the same content that is what’s in your blood. The idea is that it would not decrease your salt content but

get more volume in, so it’s a good thing, right? At least that’s what we thought,” said State EMS Director Kraig Kinney.

State EMS Medical Director Dr. Eric Yazel describes providing saline to trauma patients as a stopgap that is not really helping.

“We would give fluids to artificially get their blood pressure up. It looks good, it gets the blood pressure up, but you’re actually not really fixing anything,” said Yazel.

Some studies are beginning to show that giving saline to trauma patients not only does not fix things in the moment, but also can affect the patient’s recovery down the road, even after EMS crews have transferred the patient to the hospital.

That is why EMS experts started looking at better intervention options. Whole blood emerged as the answer.

“If they’re bleeding whole blood, we need to replenish the blood and not give just fluid,” explained Joyce, who teamed up with partners in South Bend to bring this new intervention method to his EMS crews. His partners include his local trauma team, the fire department, the local blood bank and more.

“They’ve all been huge proponents of getting blood in the field because there is a lot of literature that says it saves lives,” said Joyce.



“So far it has been a really great segue to the ongoing care the patient receives in the emergency department and ultimately in the operating room.”

Dr. Steven Joyce

South Bend EMS crews now carry whole blood on their vehicles and, when certain parameters are met by the patient, the paramedics can give a transfusion at the scene or in an ambulance to help stabilize a patient for transport.

“We’ve only had the blood in the field for about two months now. We’ve given it four times in those two months. The medics are using it. So far it has been a really great segue to the ongoing care the patient receives in the emergency department and ultimately in the operating room,” said Joyce.

Joyce explained that his teams deal with both urban and rural responses and that giving saline during long transports from rural areas could worsen the patient’s outcome or require the use of more blood product later, “whereas if we are able to get the blood in the patient sooner, statistically that will improve their chances of survival, offer improved outcomes and ultimately lead to less blood use down the road.”

CHALLENGES

The blood type needed to carry on ambulances plays a factor in the response strategy as people can react poorly if given the wrong blood type. To get around that, provider organizations generally carry type O blood.

“O negative would be preferable because it has no antigens, so you can essentially give it to everyone. There has been a shortage of O negative blood for a while, so we also use O positive blood,” explained Dr. Stephanie Gardner, EMS medical director for Ascension St. Vincent. Ascension has teamed up with Crawfordsville Fire to put whole blood on ambulances.

There is the risk of people with O negative blood types receiving O positive blood in the field, but Gardner says that is solved by communicating with the receiving facility: “If we’re giving whole blood in



fine, you would not give whole blood in that situation. If someone is shot in an area where the bleeding cannot be stopped and blood pressure is low, that may be a situation needing a blood transfusion,” explained Yazel.

Aside from setting up criteria patients must meet, EMS organizations must also set up procedures to ensure that blood is not wasted. Blood has a shelf life, which means organizations need to trade in units of blood before it reaches its expiration.

“If you don’t use it on a daily basis, you have to have a system to rotate it out,” Kinney said.

In South Bend, Joyce’s team has access to Memorial Hospital’s blood bank, so they rotate the units of blood daily. Crawfordsville Fire has a different system in place with Ascension. The fire department keeps the blood for 14 days. If it does not use the blood, the department takes it to Ascension. Ascension has seven more days to use that blood, so it makes those units of blood a priority when the need arises.

the field, we’re trying to prevent you from dying, so the small possible risk of complication in the future of developing antibodies is not going to keep us from giving you blood that is going to save your life.”

Yazel echoed Gardner’s thought and added that receiving hospitals can give medicine to counteract that potential negative reaction. The ongoing blood supply shortage is something that Yazel highlighted as a challenge to work around.

“A really important aspect of this is we have to be good stewards of our blood supply. If we’re giving blood out indiscriminately, that could take it away from another situation where it is desperately needed,” said Yazel.

In setting up protocols for carrying whole blood, Yazel said there must be key parameters a patient meets before receiving blood in the field.

“For example, if someone is shot in the arm and a tourniquet can be applied and blood pressure is



“There are ways to set this up where you absolutely don’t waste a single unit,” said Yazel.

Out of more than 100 EMS provider organizations in Indiana, Yazel says four have been early adopters of the whole blood initiative, but that is just the beginning.

“I think this is only going to grow,” said Yazel. “We are going to have a hundred different services try to do this. Why should each single one of them reinvent the wheel each time?”

Organizations interested in learning more about this whole-blood initiative can reach out to Yazel or Indiana EMS to get guidance on the procedures and protocols that should be in place. Yazel is collecting protocols across the state so organizations can see all the different ways these programs are being set up and decide which solution will work for them.

Dr. Eric Yazel
State EMS Medical Director
eyazel@dhs.in.gov
(317) 232-3983



The cost involved in purchasing the needed equipment could be a concern for organizations, but Yazel says the potential for improved outcomes should be considered.

“The impact you can have is crazy. It can be the difference between life and death. So that investment in the community makes a lot of sense for services,” said Yazel.





HUB-AND-SPOKE ROLLS THROUGH PHASE II

Five additional communities learned recently they will receive fire training facilities from the state as part of the IDHS Hub-and-Spoke initiative.

With the newly announced communities, nine physical training locations will be built in areas across the state where “training deserts” exist, making it easier for firefighters to access quality training. The new sites aim to make a training site available within 30 miles of all fire departments.

“Every Hoosier community relies on and deserves a strong public safety presence,” Gov. Eric J. Holcomb said at the recent dedication event in Wabash. “For years, gaps have challenged and stretched Indiana’s fire service across the state. With this program, we have the opportunity to properly support all those firefighters who sacrifice so much for each and every one of us every day.”

The first four, mostly completed sites for Phase I were Wabash, Corydon, Linton and Rensselaer. Phase II

sites include Washington Township (Daviss County), Chrisney, Hartford City, Rushville and Paoli. More sites could be selected, depending on available funding.

“What we’re doing in this state for the fire service has never been done before,” said State Fire Marshal Steve Jones. “The changes we’ve already made, and continue to make, will impact this state for many years to come.”

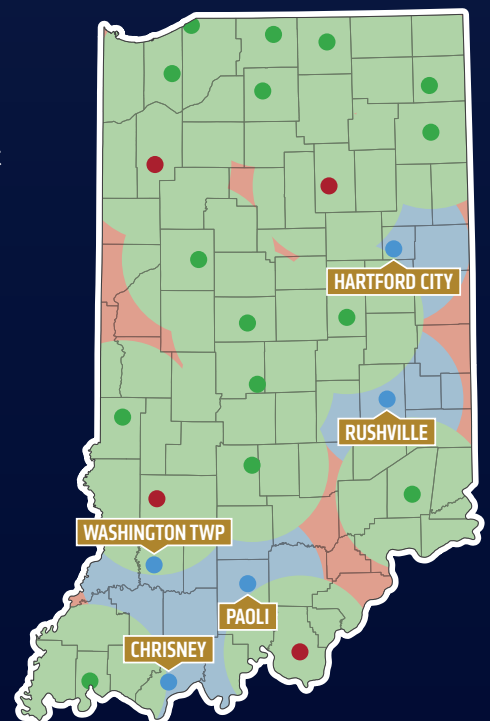
The training sites are selected geographically by determining which areas do not have fire training within 30 minutes of a facility. The new training sites will eliminate the need for small departments to take apparatus out of commission during training.

“We are very excited to be chosen for the training center,” said David Gray, chief of the Washington Township Fire Department. “Our training team hosts yearly training for surrounding firefighters, and this will be used extensively by all fire departments.”

The Indiana General Assembly in 2023 allocated \$17.7 million

to firefighter training and safety, the first direct allocation for fire training in the history of the state. Of that, \$10 million is going toward replacing PPE and breathing gear for more than 940 volunteer firefighters. The \$7.7 million left for construction may allow a few more locations to be built, depending on costs associated with ongoing projects.

Applications are closed for both the PPE distribution and the fire training sites.



SHARE THE GOOD

SHARING YOUR FIRST RESPONDER STORIES

Morgan County paramedic Austin Fullerton is being praised for his response to a stroke victim this year. Fullerton responded to the scene and immediately provided care to the victim and spoke with this victim's wife to comfort her and answer questions during a nerve-wracking time.

"I cannot express enough gratitude for the outstanding care and compassion provided by paramedic Austin Fullerton during my husband's stroke. Austin's quick response and treatment were exemplary, ensuring that my husband received the care he needed promptly.

"What truly stood out was Austin's remarkable dedication and above-and-beyond approach. Not only did he prioritize my husband's well-being, but he also took the time to personally connect with me in the waiting room after taking my husband in. His willingness to address my concerns, answer my questions and provide explanations brought immense comfort during a stressful time.

"Austin Fullerton's exceptional qualities as a healthcare professional are praiseworthy. His kindness, expertise and genuine care make him an invaluable asset not just to his field but also to the individuals he treats. The world truly needs more professionals like Austin who go above and beyond to ensure the well-being of their patients and their families," she said.



EMS UPDATE

The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians launched new certification exams for paramedics and advanced emergency medical technicians (AEMTs). This new test includes advancements in clinical practice, science, research and technology.

Now, candidates can take a single comprehensive examination on one date, reducing logistical challenges while preserving the standards in other health-based professions.

Additional information about the exams can be found [online](#).





FACING THE CHALLENGE

HOW OSHA'S PROPOSED CHANGES AIM TO MODERNIZE FIREFIGHTER SAFETY STANDARDS

In the ever-evolving landscape of emergency response, robust and updated standards are critical for the health and safety of first responders. The Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is proposing significant changes to the OSHA Fire Brigade Standard (1910.156). If approved, these changes will not only substantially change daily operations for volunteer, combination and career fire departments, but also improve the safety and well-being of emergency response workers.

The [proposed rule](#) would replace the existing Fire Brigades standard, 29 CFR 1910.156, established in the 1980s. Indiana State Fire Marshal Steve Jones views these changes as not just necessary, but long overdue.

“OSHA has not updated our standards or the requirements of what we should be doing for 40 years. So this process has been in the works for a long time,” said Jones.

The new emergency response rule seeks basic workplace protections for all workers who respond

to emergencies, expanding its scope to include those providing emergency medical services and technical search and rescue.

Emergency response workers face significant occupational health and safety hazards in dynamic and unpredictable environments. Current OSHA standards do not fully address the range of hazards these workers encounter, lag behind changes in protective equipment and industry practices, and conflict with industry consensus standards. The proposed changes are to align the standards with many current guidelines provided by other federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Jones highlighted the potential challenges these new standards could present, especially for volunteers and smaller departments.

“Many firefighters did not know this was happening in the background, so this change feels like a surprise,” Jones said. “Many people in the fire service across the country have been working for years to update this.”

One significant change proposed would require company officer certifications for certain positions, which is not currently mandatory. Jones emphasized the need for Indiana to get ahead of these changes.

“It’s interesting because there are certain states that adopt federal OSHA guidelines and then there are states that have their own. Indiana is an Indiana/ OSHA-regulated state. We need to at least meet the federal OSHA standard, but we get the opportunity to figure out how to implement these standards.”

Jones stressed the importance of planning and preparation.

“If the standard becomes law, I want to be ahead of the curve. I don’t want to be sitting here like, ‘Oh, we need to do something.’ We need to start thinking about how to accommodate this now,” said Jones. “We need to start really looking at that document and what tools need to be in place in the next two years so we can meet that standard.”

Justin Butts, health and safety officer from the Brownsburg Fire Territory, echoed Jones’ sentiments.

“Our current standard operating guidelines and response practices fall within or exceed NFPA and OSHA recommendations,” he said. “Many of the OSHA recommendations include requirements for medical evaluation, wellness/fitness programs and PPE guidelines. We currently have each employee undergo an annual physical, maintain a peer fitness trainer program and ensure regular training,” said Butts.

Butts acknowledged that while the new standards might bring some improvements, the cost and

manpower requirements could be a burden for smaller departments.

“There is a lot of controversy regarding the Rapid Intervention Team recommendations. Safety is best achieved through competence and educated decision-making. While we will not have an issue maintaining the RIT standard due to our resources, more isolated career or volunteer departments may struggle,” he said.

The proposed rule also emphasizes mental health, heart attacks and medical emergencies among firefighters. Jones pointed out the real risks these issues pose.



“I have gone to several line-of-duty funerals because of a member who had a medical emergency and died after a brush fire. The risks are real. We need to address those,” Jones explained.

Jones urged departments to provide constructive feedback as the proposal is open to public comment.

“Departments can go to the website to submit public comments, but it is crucial to provide background

information. If your volunteer fire department's budget is only \$25,000 a year, and they want you to do XYZ, it's vital to explain why you can't meet that component of the new draft," he said.

Jones also highlighted the potential long-term benefits of the new standards.

"If everybody met this, studies show that injury and death rates would decrease. While it might be an initial cost, it saves money in the long run. Reducing injuries, illnesses and deaths is a positive thing. We need our firefighters to engage in those conversations and proactively plan for these changes," he said.

The comment period for OSHA's proposal ends July 22. OSHA will then review any comments and publish the final text of the standard in the [Federal Register](#).



#PROTECT2024



The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) launched [#Protect2024](#) to help election officials and election infrastructure stakeholders protect against cyber, physical and operational security risks during the 2024 election cycle.

The website houses information like simple steps election officials

can still take in 2024 to enhance their organization's security baseline. It breaks down steps to protect emails, websites, election systems, the office and staff.

CISA also developed a comprehensive [Physical Security Checklist for Polling Locations](#). This checklist serves as a vital tool for election workers, offering

a series of questions to assess existing security measures and identify areas for improvement.

Visit the [#Protect2024](#) website for more information.





United States
Consumer Product Safety Commission

Fireworks Injuries & Deaths

2023 REPORT

#CelebrateSafely

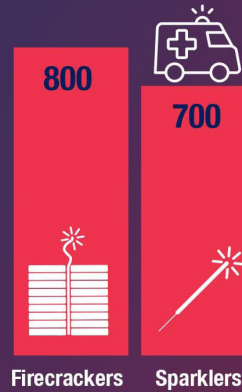
Safety Tips

- ★ Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks, including sparklers.
- ★ Make sure fireworks are legal in your area before buying or using them.
- ★ Keep a bucket of water or a garden hose handy in case of fire or other mishap.
- ★ Light fireworks one at a time, then move back quickly.
- ★ Never try to re-light or pick up fireworks that have not ignited fully.
- ★ Never use fireworks while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- ★ More Fireworks Safety Tips: [cpsc.gov/fireworks](https://www.cpsc.gov/fireworks)

How & When Injuries Occurred

2023 Injuries

by Firework Type



66%

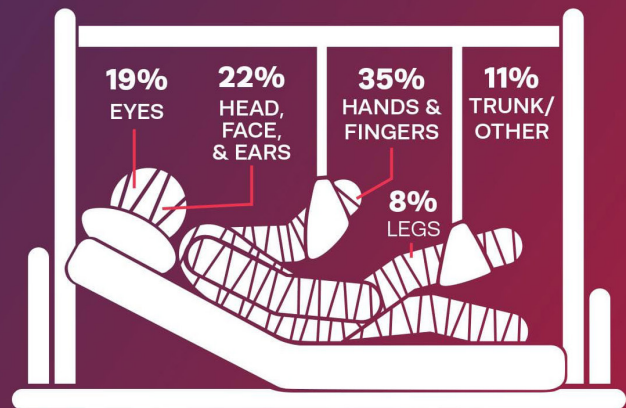
of injuries occurred in the weeks before & after the July 4th holiday



Most Injured Body Parts



42% of the injuries were **burns**



Injuries & Deaths



9,700

people were **treated in ERs** for fireworks injuries in 2023

8 Deaths from Fireworks in 2023



Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission 2023 Fireworks Annual Report



CPSC.gov
USCPSC



All photos courtesy of US Ambulances for Ukraine.

AN ENDURING LEGACY

UPDATE ON INDIANA AMBULANCES DONATED TO UKRAINE

When two first responder organizations in Indiana organized a massive effort to donate ambulances to Ukraine, they knew it would make a difference by helping first responders with reliable equipment. But now, the stories are being shared about the lives saved by this donation, giving new meaning to their endeavor.

Valparaiso’s inHealth Ambulance Service and the MAAC Foundation received stories from US Ambulances for Ukraine highlighting the impact of their donation. Since April, the donated ambulances have been used to transport victims of Russian missile and drone strikes, as well as more routine medical calls. Two stories stand out: a firefighter who suffered a stroke and needed immediate transport from his own team and an 8-month-old needing transport from Moldova to Kyiv, Ukraine, to receive a lifesaving heart surgery.

“I was both surprised and deeply moved by the stories coming out of Ukraine. Hearing about the immediate use of these ambulances to transport

the injured and save lives under such challenging conditions is inspiring,” said inHealth’s CEO and co-owner Ron Donahue.



After receiving an ambulance from inHealth, the Odesa Volunteer Fire Department found itself using an ambulance to serve one of its own. A firefighter suffered a stroke while at home. When the call for

help came, the only ambulance available was the inHealth ambulance. The vehicle responded, and the crew stabilized the firefighter and transported them to a hospital for care. Because of that quick response, doctors are hopeful that a full recovery is possible.

First responders also learned of an 8-month-old infant in need when its parents traveled to the eastern European country Moldova, trying to flee the ongoing invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The child had a heart condition and needed heart surgery that only could be done in Kyiv, Ukraine. The Odesa Volunteer Fire Department's ambulance was the only ambulance that could take the child on the eight-hour trip. The fire department quickly organized a team to drive all night to transport the child to the hospital for surgery. Without the inHealth ambulance, the child would not have made it to Kyiv.

"It is incredibly fulfilling and humbling to know that the ambulances we donated are making such a significant impact in Ukraine. These vehicles had served their time here in Indiana, and it's a testament to the resilience and utility of these ambulances that they can continue to save lives in such a dire situation," said Donahue.

IDHS EMS Education and Training Coordinator Kari Lanham helped pack supplies for the donated ambulances and even signed the ambulances with good wishes before they were sent overseas.



"Emergency care knows no boundaries and goes beyond just direct patient contact. We can affect outcomes of patients clear across the globe when we work together. Simple acts of kindness can make a big difference in people's lives that we don't even know. I am proud to be a part of this EMS community," said Lanham.

"I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who played a role in making this donation a reality. From our dedicated team at inHealth and the MAAC Foundation to the countless volunteers and partner organizations like US Ambulances for Ukraine and the UA Resistance Foundation, this effort has truly been a collaborative one. Each person involved, from those who prepared the ambulances and gathered supplies to those who helped with the logistics and wrote messages of support, has contributed to a lifesaving mission," said Donahue.



MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

Firefighting is a strenuous job, and it is even more challenging in the heat of an Indiana summer.

A primary goal and focus for me as state fire marshal is to ensure the health and well-being of all Indiana firefighters. That includes keeping them well-trained and in tune with their physical, mental and family health.

Physical health is built on the foundation of hydration. In fact, it is a matter of life and death for firefighters. Dehydration can severely hamper performance, mental acuity and perception of effort, and it can even increase the risk of death or injury. Just a two-percent drop in body water can significantly impair the ability to carry out high-intensity tasks.

Well-hydrated and physically fit firefighters are better equipped to handle heat stress. Focusing on hydration in this job is both a personal and collective responsibility.

Here are a few tips to remain properly hydrated on the job:

- Consume at least 64 ounces of water daily.
- Limit coffee and soda.
- Increase water intake as work becomes strenuous.
- Increased fitness improves heat regulation, raises blood volume and allows the body to better adjust to stress.

Mental Health

I also have committed myself to being part of a new generation of leaders for fire/EMS personnel by talking regularly about mental health. The job we do is hard. The things we see are not normally seen by the public. The stress and trauma to our bodies and minds have a real impact on personnel — and the families that stick by us through it all.

I am extremely proud of the ongoing video series from IDHS called “When the Smoke Clears.” We have three episodes out now, with another coming soon. You can find all the videos on the [IDHS First Responder Behavioral Health webpage](#).

This panel discussion of current leaders marks the first time this group has openly talked about challenges and solutions regarding mental health in the firehouse. The time has come to knock down the walls and discard the stigma that talking about mental health is a sign of weakness. It is not! It is a sign of strength and commitment to yourself and the purpose you were born to serve.

As I said, you must be strong in every way to do this job. And to do this job well, you must be a dependable teammate, brother/sister and confidante. Check in on someone after a tough run. Be deliberate by making sure you and others in the firehouse are OK.

Remember, safety is a team effort. Always look out for one another out there, in every way. Your vigilance could save a life.



Stephen Jones
Indiana State Fire Marshal



UPCOMING TRAININGS

JULY

JULY 29-AUG 2 All Hazards Incident Management Team (O-305)

FORT WAYNE

AUGUST

AUG 1 Understanding Targeted Cyber Attacks (AWR-376)

PLAINFIELD

AUG 6-7 EOC Operations & Planning for All Hazards (MGT-346)

PLAINFIELD

AUG 14 Mass Fatalities Planning and Response for Rural Communities (AWR-232)

COLUMBIA CITY

AUG 19-23 All Hazards Logistics Section Chief (L-967)

PLAINFIELD

AUG 20-21 PRND Team Leader (CTOS)

INDIANAPOLIS

AUG 24 Basic Land Cadaver Search Techniques for K-9s

BRAZIL

AUG 30 Understanding and Planning for School Bombing Incidents (AWR-132)

CORYDON

SEPTEMBER

SEPT 10-11 Community Preparedness for Cyber Incidents (MGT-384)

PLAINFIELD

UPCOMING EVENTS



INDIANA STATE FAIR AUGUST 2-18

The Indiana State Fair showcases the state's agricultural heritage and boosts the local economy through tourism and community engagement. IDHS will have a booth at the fair by the Agriculture Horticulture Building during Aug. 13-17. Please visit the booth to say hello!

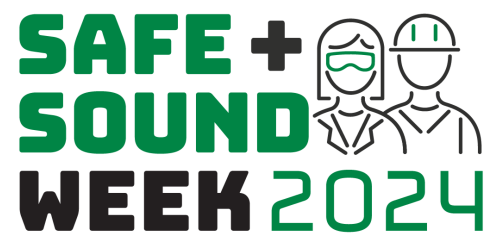
NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AUGUST 6

This event strengthens community-police partnerships, fosters safer neighborhoods and encourages community solidarity against crime.



STOP ON RED WEEK AUGUST 7-10

Stop on Red Week aims to reduce traffic accidents and enhance road safety across Indiana by highlighting the importance of stopping at red lights.



AUGUST 12-18, 2024

SAFE+SOUND WEEK AUGUST 12-18

This annual week, led by OSHA, promotes the success of workplace health and safety programs and offers information and ideas on how to keep America's workers safe.

NATIONAL DOG DAY AUGUST 26

Whether mixed or purebred, embrace the opportunity for all dogs to live a happy, safe and abuse-free life. Make sure that all members of the family, including pets, are safe and ready in case of emergencies.



NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH SEPTEMBER

National Preparedness Month emphasizes the importance of being prepared for emergencies. The month reminds Hoosiers to do what they can to protect themselves and their families during disasters. GetPrepared.in.gov is a great resource for Hoosiers to learn how to prepare for any kind of emergency.

SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH SEPTEMBER

Awareness and resources for suicide prevention are vital to addressing mental health issues and saving lives in Indiana. State Fire Marshal Steve Jones is making firefighter behavioral health a priority in the new video series "[When the Smoke Clears.](#)"



*The Indiana Department of Homeland Security works 24/7
to protect the people, property and prosperity of Indiana.*



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The Hoosier Responder is a publication of The Indiana Department of Homeland Security.
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