

Instructor's Dispatch

A Newsletter of the Commission on Fire Prevention & Control



Fire Service Instructor Development Seminar



David K. Walsh

The Connecticut Fire Academy was pleased to present the 2010 Fire Service Instructor Development Seminar March 6, 2010 entitled *Training Tricks of the Trade* delivered by David K. Walsh, Chair of the Fire Science Program Dutchess Community College NY and a former firefighter/fire officer with the Arlington Fire District Poughkeepsie NY.

Good instructors are a blend of educator, motivator, and entertainer; all are qualities that must be continually developed and improved. Mr. Walsh discussed how to make even the (perceived) most boring training topic interesting, effective and leaving the attendees wanting more. The seminar was intended for fire department training officers, company training officers, certified instructors, and anyone who lectures to groups of people.

Instructor Biography

Dave has been involved in the fire service since July 8, 1971. Within this time frame he enjoyed a great 27 year career as a career firefighter/fire officer with the Arlington Fire District in Poughkeepsie retiring in March, 2003. In July, 2004 Dave was hired as the program Chairperson/Instructor for the new Fire Science program at Dutchess Community College, a position he still currently holds.

Inside this issue:

Have a Great Conference! 2-9

2010 Grant Writing Workshop 4

2010 June School 4

Technical Rescue Incidents 5

2010 Connecticut Fire Officer's Weekend 6

Have a Great Conference!

Below you will find a very popular newsletter article (*12 Rules for Great Conferences*) which I wrote after designing and bringing to successful conclusion dozens of conferences while working in the emergency management field, and after speaking and training at maybe a hundred more conferences nationwide. As a "Preface" to that article, today I would also like to add a few more concepts, which will be added as Rules 13, 14 and 15 in later revised editions of the article. Enjoy!



"The hardest thing in the world to open is a closed mind".

Be a Time Keeper! To honor all presenters, and to keep in line, in tow, all those presenters who do not have enough self discipline and respect for the system to keep themselves on schedule, be that person that who politely and gracefully says, "You have five minutes left, Lefty." Announce at the beginning of the conference that you will be doing that, and maybe even have one of your cohorts do it to you at the beginning of the conference, to level that playing field. The caterers, the conference staff and all the attendees who have e-mails to check and calls to make will thank you.

Don't let "contractors" or "program managers" drone on! These people are not "speakers" or "trainers," they are middle-management or ex-middle-management drones and they will drone on. Hire speakers! Hire trainers! Hire professionals whose job it is to make a difference. No one wants to hear a fed talk about what's going on at Headquarters—or even worse, how they are going to reorganize. No one wants to look at a slide with the whole thousand words of the new regulation. Send those people to the office to help program people. Conferences are to inspire, embolden, motivate—not deaden the senses, glaze over the eyes, and make you wish you were back home.

Kill the handouts! Unless a handout is to be used in class, to be written on or used as a data sheet for class work, give out flash drives, CDs or have participants go to a website and download the handouts. I like conferences that use flash drives the best, because I can dupe the conference data to my hard drive and then I have a new flash drive! Any way you want to do it, try to get rid of costly, heavy and usually trashed-at-the-conference handouts.

Twelve Rules for Great Conferences

Great conferences, the ones people hear about and are sorry they missed, are the key to success for geographically dispersed groups. Any conference will fulfill some basic socialization needs and bring participants physically together, but only a great conference will recharge their batteries and send them home ready to work for another year. You can't afford to sponsor mediocre conferences, for they become Petri dishes for bitching sessions and revolutions. No, the only conference worth having is a great conference and great conferences are purposefully designed and managed to be great using precise rules.

Rule Number One: Know who the boss is! One person, no joint command. You can have a committee to help get you support and funding; you can have a policy making group to help get you administrative support; and you can have help. What you cannot have is rule by group, it turns into pooled ignorance and the Pope may have his College of Cardinals and all bishops might be equal in the eyes of the Catholic God, but remember, he is primus inter pares, first among equals, he is more-equal than the others. There is no real joint incident command, there is an incident commander where the buck stops and all the rest put in their two cents worth. You need someone to make quick, firm, good decisions, period!



Continued on page 3

Have a Great Conference!

Continued from page 2

Rule Number Two: The boss has a vision! There are no thrown-together great conferences, but I have been to innumerable thrown-together conferences. But once in a great while I will go to a well conceived conference, one with a definite flow, one with a definite wholeness. When that happens I hunt down the conference manager and congratulate her/him. It is so great to have someone come up to me and say "This is the best conference of any kind that I have been to!" But it is even greater when they say "I know what it takes to design a great conference and I want to congratulate you!" A vision is a driving force with sequencing and time-management overtones, that allows the manager to do what physicists call a thought experiment and see if a participant will walk away excited, motivated and thrilled to have attended. There are no non-visionary managers of great conferences. Or putting it another way, most bureaucrats make poor conference managers.

Rule Number Three: Think years ahead! Thinking years ahead are the norm for long range planners, and that is what a conference manager is, a long range planner with a specific plan. Planning two or three years out (provided rule one is in effect and you have power in your hands and it does not reside one echelon above reality, i.e., with your boss; and rule two is in effect, you have a vision that encompasses two or three conferences), allows several things to happen simultaneously. First, it allows you to book conference centers, hotel rooms and keynote speakers far in advance, guaranteeing access to the best of all these worlds. Second, it cuts your frustration level to its lowest possible point. Last minute glitches are rarely problems when you've been in management mode for a year. Third, it allows you ample time for repeat visits to the facilities, during which you befriend the staffs and they become familiar with you and your conference. Fourth and finally, all learning takes place in the space between the activities, so you will have plenty of down time when your non-conscious brain can sift through the web of possibilities and allow you to have creative insights that push your conference to the great level.

Rule Number Four: Have a good, dedicated staff on board from day one! During the conference itself, the manager has no specific duties, everything is handled by staffs, yours and the facilities'. In order for the staff to be the best, the key players (whoever is handling the registration desk and whoever is taking care of the rooms, audio/visuals and the speakers) have to be on board from the beginning and must have the vision in their heads. This familiarity allows them to make decisions on their own, decisions that will guarantee that the vision becomes reality. Many conferences, even mine, have faltered because bosses have pulled my dedicated staff and have thrown whomever is left in the office at me for conference staff at the last minute (that is why I now insist on rule number one). There are too many participant (and even speaker) substitutions and no-shows; too many sleeping and training room problems; too many audio/visual failures; and far too many whiners and complainers and prima donnas at any conference to rely on temps or uncaring staff. Lieutenants (coming from the French for place-takers) should be able to take your place should you die en route to the conference that defines good staff.

Rule Number Five: Storyboard the conference! One time I worked with an award-winning cinematographer (one who used only real film, not videotape), who insisted on "storyboarding" every scene. I thought he was nuts, until I started using the concept for

Continued on page 7



"Don't ever trust smoke— it can hide what's really going on, spread the fire, burn, blow up, go the wrong direction, and really ruin (even end) your life, sometimes all at once".

By Alan V. Brunacini



2010 Grant Writing Workshops

The Connecticut Fire Academy in Cooperation with the Fire Grants Office of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) presented six separate Grant Writing Workshops throughout the state from Monday March 29th - Thursday April 1st, 2010. The Wednesday March 31, 2010 Workshop in New Haven was sponsored by Congresswoman Rosa L. DeLauro's Office. These workshops are designed to assist local fire departments and unaffiliated EMS organizations to apply for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. The seven workshops are identical so attendance at any one workshop was sufficient.

The primary goal of the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical services organizations. Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and other first responders to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards. The Grant Programs Directorate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency administers the grants in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration.



"Be careful of doing dumb fireground stuff that amounts to "fire-assisted suicide."

By Alan V. Brunacini



Monday, March 29, 2010 1pm Connecticut Fire Academy

Monday, March 29, 2010 7pm Bantam Fire Company

Tuesday, March 30, 2010 1pm Wilton Library

Wednesday, March 31, 2010 9:30am New Haven Regional Fire School
(sponsored by Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's Office)

Wednesday, March 31, 2010 7pm Cromwell Fire Department

Thursday, April 1, 2010 1pm Mashantucket Pequot Fire Department

Thursday, April 1, 2010 7pm Putnam Fire Department

2010 June School

The staff of the Connecticut Fire Academy is pleased to offer the 2010 June Fire School to be held June 7th thru June 12th, 2010. The June Fire School is a chance for students to learn something new and for the students to compare their fire department with those of their peers. The June Fire School brochure is now available online at www.ct.gov/cfpc. Printed copies are in the process of being printed and mailed. Get your application in soon for any classes you wish to attend as classes do fill up quickly.



Technical Rescue Incidents



Chief Fred LaFemina

“Be very careful of being in a tactical position where if any one thing goes wrong...you’re abruptly dead (deep sea diving, interior firefighting in high-hazard areas, sky diving, space shuttle reentry, etc.)

By Alan V. Brunacini

For 2010 the very popular Connecticut Fire Academy Seminar Series continues to bring nationally known fire service speakers to Connecticut. Again this year the scheduled presenters will engage and inform their audiences with relevant and thought provoking deliveries.

The next scheduled Seminar Series is titled *Technical Rescue Incidents* scheduled for April 9, 2010. The seminar is presented by Chief Fred LaFemina. Chief LaFemina will discuss technical rescue incidents such as Structural Collapse, Confined Space Rescue and Rescuing Trapped Firefighters.

The presentation will involve the facts and concepts needed to perform these rescue as well as the law and guidelines that govern them. The presentation will incorporate actual incidents in NYC that involved technical rescue. The firefighter rescue portion will involve all levels of firefighting from the Command level to the actual members performing the rescue. There will be critiques of actual incidents that involved trapped firefighters.

Instructor Biography

Chief Fred LaFemina is a 25 year veteran of the FDNY. He is presently assigned as the Chief of Rescue Operations for the FDNY. He has been in Special Operations for more than 20 years. He was a firefighter in E-318, L-166 and Squad-1 in Brooklyn, a Lieutenant in E-248 in Brooklyn and Rescue Company 4 in Queens, the Captain of Squad-270 in Queens and prior to his promotion to Chief he was Captain of Rescue Company 1 in Manhattan.





2010 Connecticut Fire Officer's Weekend



The Connecticut Fire Academy Fire Officer's Weekend was held at the National Fire Academy on the grounds of the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg Maryland March 26th, through March 28th, 2010. There were 147 students that had applied for one of the six National Fire Academy classes.

The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial was the location of the first function of the weekend, the annual memorial service to honor Connecticut Firefighters who have died in the line of duty since 1981 when the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial was dedicated. The memorial service consisted of reading the individual names of each of the fallen firefighters while a red rose was placed at the memorial in memory of each. Special thanks go out to bag piper Mike Noga from Windsor Fire Department and The Honor Guard from the Thomaston Fire Department. The NFA adjunct instructors performed an impressive job of delivering classes in Fire Prevention for First Responders and Small Departments; Incident Safety Officer (Revised); Strategy and Tactics for Initial Company Operations; Methods of Enhancing Safety Education; Training Operations in Small Departments; Decision-Making For Initial Company Operations.



Throughout the weekend there was plenty of food from the food service. Sunday classes began on a quiet morning and were completed in the early afternoon for all to pilot their vehicles for the trip back to Connecticut, all with just a little more knowledge to better serve the residents of Connecticut when emergencies occur. We hope that all those and more will return for weekends in the future.

The Connecticut Fire Officer's Weekend for 2011 is scheduled for April 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 2011.

Have a Great Conference!

Continued from page 3

conferences and training sessions. Storyboards are cartoonish diagrams of the scene, with players, dialogue, etc. If the vision concretizes the strategy, it is the storyboards or the three-by-five cards that bring the tactics to the reality level. When you can verbally, visually and emotionally become one with every aspect of your conference, then you not only anticipate and eliminate problems, but you are so comfortable with the real thing that real-time management at the conference is simple, because you've done it all before dozens of times in your head. This also allows you to brief, with visuals, both extra staff and bosses. For those of us in emergency management, this rule encompasses tabletop and functional exercises, allowing for ease of management of actual events.

Rule Number Six: Have a data sheet for speakers! As a speaker at hundreds of conferences, what I appreciate most is a sheet that meets both my needs and the needs of the conference organizer. That sheet should have all the pertinent data for the speaker and conference personnel: name and date of conference; name of speaker, conference point of contact (POC) and hotel; 24-hour phone numbers for speaker, hotel and POC; location of conference if not at hotel; name of speaker's session/s and its time and place; audio/visual (and other) equipment needs of the speaker; handouts (including, number, who is printing, when camera-ready copy is due to get to conference personnel, etc.); dates of sleeping room reservations; day of arrival; transport to and from airport; any disability-based or dietary considerations; anything else that either the speaker or the conference folks might need to know. These items need to be double-checked a week or two before the conference. Both as conference manager and speaker, I have found that agenda changes, flight cancellations, family problems and any variety of things have forced specifics to change and there has been a lack of communication that has almost torpedoed a great conference. With e-mail this only take a minute and you will be surprised at the "thanks" you will get because speakers forgot something important.

Rule Number Seven: Feed them well! Nothing can ruin a conference quicker than bad food and bad service. Ask the hotel what their most popular items are, then get them. Find a sponsor for the dinner, find grants and find the money somewhere. If necessary charge them. My rule was "no one leaves the conference from eight to five." Not that I cared or I counted, but getting hundreds of people out of the conference hall for lunch and back into the conference rooms to start afternoon sessions on time never, ever worked, not even once. So I always provided lunch, a good lunch. If time is a real problem, use the sit-down-approach, otherwise I always used the buffet-approach. It allowed for greater food variety, while providing another opportunity for networking. For breaks, keeps coffee coming all day, at least till three in the afternoon, there are die-hard coffee drinkers out there. Have decaf, hot water for regular and herbal teas, even some juices. Have dietary options. In fact, in your pre-registration, registration and opening remarks, find out if anyone has personal audio/visual, dietary or other disability-related needs that you can help with. An array of juices and sodas in the afternoon, with cookies too, makes for a great afternoon break, as long as there is still coffee!

Rule Number Eight: Charge them! Nothing keeps the whole registration process manageable more than a fee. I used to have a lot of no-shows until I started charging non-refundable fees. They could always send a replacement, but the non-refundability clause sure kept things

Continued on page 8



"Don't ever think a really bad thing can't happen to you twice"

By Alan V. Brunacini





“Any position other than right side up is an abnormal posture for a fire truck”.

By Alan V. Brunacini



Have a Great Conference!

Continued from page 7

simple and easy. It requires having a legal process to take and store money (I did not have one when I started and often used a local affiliated organization's bank account and then reimbursed them for time and effort). No credit cards, just checks and purchase orders that would produce checks in due time, no direct deposit. The second advantage of charging a fee (beyond that of stabilizing pre-registration) is having a pool of money from which to buy coffee and snacks, giveaways, prizes, etc. Federal grants will not allow any of that, so registration fees are a necessity. It is possible to find local funding from interested companies or organizations to cover amenities and complementary food, but that still doesn't cover the "earnest money" aspect of the registration fee. If it's worth coming to, it's worth paying for. You can always use "scholarships" to cover the registration fees of those who cannot afford the registration fee.

Rule Number Nine: Always have a backup plan! If possible, never use a backup speaker, but always have one. And that backup speaker needs to be high quality, high energy and with a message that fits the vision. Always the braggart and showman, that backup person at my conferences was always me. In the beginning, I trained at my own conferences. Then I learned, my job as conference manager was to have no assigned duties on conference days (see Rule Number Four) and leave the work to the staff. That, fortunately, allowed me to be the backup speaker and I always had a talk ready, since I am a professional speaker and was managing conferences in my areas of expertise. Before that, however, I always contacted one or two of the conference attendees whom I knew to be great presenters and asked if they would consent to be backup if someone didn't show. With two people I usually had a variety of talks to fill in. I just had them bring their CDs or laptops, just in case. Out of fifty conferences, we only had to revert to backups once. But the interesting thing is, I always tell conference managers who hire me that I would be more than willing to be their backup if someone doesn't show (for no extra charge, of course), and my offer has been taken up quite a few times, even if just to fill time till a speaker arrives from the airport after a flight delay.

Rule Number Ten: If possible, have a "by invitation only" conference! This rule got me in more trouble in ten years than anything else I ever did concerning conferences. But let's face it, you know when you run a conference that a bunch of slackers will come. They want to get out of the office or get out of town or something equally offensive to workaholics who run conferences. Find a nice reasonably-sized conference hall (I shoot for 120 maximum, fire marshal capacity). That alone will cap your conference size. Your vision will define your target audiences. You know you need a good mix. My groups were fire, law, EMS, public health, public works and emergency management at the tribal, city, county, state and federal levels. That meant that I had a potential audience base of many thousands even in Montana. In order to justify "by-invitation-only" I merely had to refine my targeting, by including rural/urban, east/west, north/south, paid/volunteer, etc./etc. That meant that participation would have to be "controlled" or "managed" in order to have a optimum, appropriate, representative participation, thus giving me "reasonable cause" or justification to invite only people who would add something to the mix. The slackers and whiners always complained, but I guarantee you, no one at the conferences ever complained.

Continued on page 9

Have a Great Conference!

Rule Number Eleven: Pay your speakers well and quickly! As a professional speaker, this may look like it's purely mercenary, well it's not. Sure, it's mercenary, but not purely! The most speakers' complaints and requests I received as a conference manager were about prompt payment. I am as guilty as every other conference manager for not following up on the paperwork to make sure that the finance personnel process the checks for the speakers as quickly as possible. Private organizations always pay at the conference, governmental entities don't have that option. Federal contractors and some conferences don't even start processing the paper for thirty days. Honesty, upfront honesty, is the best rule here. If you know, tell the truth; if you have to guess, guess longer than you expect, add a week or two. Cash flow management is the hardest part of being an independent contractor and professional speaker. Help us out here. Also, the conferences at which I and all of my speaker friends work at can be evaluated almost exactly by pay scale, good managers find the money to pay good speakers. When we find someone trying to fudge with the pay scale, then we know that excellence is not the main conference criterion and this will be a less than excellent experience. Unfortunately, the participants pick up the same vibes. Misers are no fun!

Rule Number Twelve: If you are going to give a gift, make it memorable! Cups are cool, clocks are cool, but a good friend of mine got a \$50.00 gift for a pro-bono talk, that was memorable to him (as he told me). I got a great soft cooler full of Cajun foods and a coffee thermos to drink coffee from as I ate the food, that truly was memorable. Golf shirts and collared dress-type shirts are memorable. Don't give something they won't remember you by, it is counterproductive.

There are probably twelve more rules and maybe I'll write another essay later, but for now, these eleven will help anyone interested design and manage a great conference.

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"Fire does not make buildings stronger".

By Alan V. Brunacini



We're on the web
at: www.ct.gov/cfpc

State of Connecticut



Agency Mission

To prevent or mitigate the effects of fire and disasters, either natural or manmade, on the citizens of the State of Connecticut. This objective shall be accomplished through the development and delivery of state-of-the-art educational programs designed to meet nationally recognized standards, certification of individuals to such standards and maintenance of up-to-date resources for use by fire service personnel, public educators and other first responders.

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