

# *The* **Bulletin**



*Publication of the Illinois Firefighter's Association, Inc.*

**Volume 75, Number 2**

**March - April 2021**

**FIRE LINE - DO NOT CROSS**

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## **NVFC MOURNS PASSING OF LONGTIME CEO HEATHER SCHAFER**

Heather Schafer, the National Volunteer Fire Council's (NVFC) chief executive officer, passed away suddenly on March 15. Heather had helmed the organization, which also marked its 45th anniversary on March 15, for 27 years and the NVFC saw dramatic growth and success under her leadership.

"It is with a deeply heavy heart that we announce the loss of Heather Schafer, who has been an integral part of the NVFC for more than half its existence," said NVFC chair Steve Hirsch. "She will be greatly missed by the NVFC staff, board, members, and the entire fire and emergency services community. She was a visionary, and we are grateful for all she has done to further the NVFC's mission. Her legacy won't be forgotten."

Heather joined the NVFC in 1993 and took on the role of CEO in 1994. She managed the NVFC's internal and external operations and played an integral role in developing and implementing the organization's strategic plan. During her tenure, the NVFC grew immensely – from hundreds of members and a staff of two, to over 25,000 members and a staff of 11.

With Heather's leadership, the NVFC secured federal grants that allowed the organization to offer groundbreaking programs and resources. She led the development of the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, Fire Corps, Share the Load program, Make Me A Firefighter program, and more. She also formed many partnerships and collaborations that benefited the volunteer emergency services community. In addition, she oversaw the NVFC's advocacy efforts, which resulted in many victories for the fire and emergency services over the years.

Heather's contributions to the organization cannot be overstated. Her guidance and vision will have a lasting impact on the NVFC and the volunteer fire and emergency services. Heather's commitment, innovation, and passion for the organization's mission has helped to shape the NVFC into what it has become.

In addition to her work with the NVFC, Heather volunteered at her local fire department and loved to kayak and spend time with family and friends. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her loved ones as they navigate this very difficult time.

## The Bulletin

March - April 2021

Volume 75 Number 2

The Bulletin is published digitally every other month and placed online at [www.illinoisfirefighters.org](http://www.illinoisfirefighters.org).

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## **Bulletin Deadlines:**

**January 15, March 15, May 15, July 15,  
September 15, and November 15**

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## Mission Statement

Dedicated to the advancement of the Fire Service by providing leadership. The Illinois Firefighters Association will proudly support the health and welfare of the community of firefighters in Illinois through education, training, benefits and information networking at the local, state and national levels.

## President's Message



Dear Fellow Firefighters

First, I would like to announce the passing of Heather Schafer, Chief Executive Officer of the National Volunteer Fire Council. She managed all internal and external operations with the NVFC. She will be sadly missed. We send our deepest sympathy to her family, friends and the NVFC community. For those of you that do not belong to the NVFC, please consider joining. The NVFC is our eyes and ears on the national scale. They help in providing the programs we all enjoy nationally. They are advocates in helping secure the AFG grant funding for all of us.

As I said in the past, COVID has dominated everyone in this past year. Now, it appears that the vaccine may shed some positive mitigation to this virus pandemic. With this, we have secured our Conference dates and Down & Dirty Training Weekend as November 12th and 13th. By this time, it is our hope things will be back to normal activities. At our last FAC meeting (Fire Advisory Commission), the Fire Marshal told us that his budget remained mostly flat, with some additions. This is all good, he mentioned that the free rooms for Fire College and the Down & Dirty Weekend is still going to be funded again. We want to thank him and his staff for all the support he has given the Fire Service over the years. After that meeting, the IFSA (Illinois Fire Service Association) meeting was also held. It appears all the other Fire Association members are also gearing up for a new productive year. One of the items on the list was this year's State Fair. We all go together supplying members to fill the needs of the Fire Marshal's tent. If you haven't ever attended the State Fair, this tent is one of the most frequently attended venues. It draws thousands of visitors each year. Our IFA Directors and members man fire prevention stations and the families that come into the tent enjoy the whole event. We are always looking for new fire department personnel to assist us during this time. If you wish to volunteer, please get a hold of me or one of our Directors.

This year starts a new legislative season and Bills have been drafted and going through the hearing process. As in the past, the Fireworks Bills pop up every year. Our Association and the other Fire Service organizations have always opposed any sort of Bill that opens up Fireworks to the general public. This year, we are advocating the \$1000 tax credit for Volunteer Firefighters and supporting SB 121 allowing EMS professionals to perform the OSHA respiratory evaluation. Our lobbyist Margaret Vaughn has been an advocate in our behalf following these key legislative initiatives along.

The legislative component is just one of the many benefits of belonging to this organization. Our IFA Directors have been working hard on your behalf. Each Director has a part in providing a benefit back to you as a member. We reached our 130th year as an organization. We are the oldest and one of the largest Fire Service organization in Illinois. With this milestone, we updated our history book "The Badge of Courage". It will all be available to you soon.

Lastly, it has been announced Colonel Royal Mortenson, Director of IFSI will be stepping down in the near future. His leadership has been an asset to us all. Like his predecessor, our Fire Academy has been in the forefront nationally and internationally. Our Illinois Firefighters have benefited greatly from the programs and hands-on props that are available to us all. I have been all over this nation and am proud to say we have one of the best training facilities anywhere. So, I must say "Nothing Comes From Ever Will" people make the difference.

**Thank You Colonel Mortenson. We wish you and your family the best !**

*"Train Smart, Be Safe"*

*God Bless*

*John Swan President IFA*



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Margaret Vaughn, IFA Legislative Lobbyist

The State Capitol is only open on a limited basis for staff and legislators, so all the Committee hearings have continued to be run virtually for the past 2 months.

The deadline for House bills out of House Committees was March 26th but the deadline in the Senate got extended to April 16th.

## **EMS OSHA RESPIRATOR QUESTIONNAIRE BILL PASSES COMMITTEE**

SB 121 sponsored by Sen. Neil Anderson (R-Moline) on behalf of IFA, which will allow EMS professionals to complete OSHA respirator questionnaires for fire service personnel, passed the Senate Labor Committee 18-0 on March 17th. After being able to complete the questionnaires for decades, the Illinois Department of Public Health decided 18 months ago that only doctors could sign them, which would put not only a financial strain on fire departments but created a hardship in medically underserved areas in which doctors are in short supply. The Department of Public Health removed their opposition to the bill, which now clarifies under the Emergency Medical Services Act that EMT, EMT-I, A-EMT, Paramedic or PHRN are permitted by their EMS System Medical Director. The bill is on 2nd Reading in the Senate.

## **ALL HANDS ON DECK NEEDED AGAINST FIREWORKS BILLS**

IFA and the IL Fire Safety Alliance are leading the opposition against HB 2898 sponsored by Rep. Bob Rita and SB 2170 Sponsored by Sen. Neil Anderson, which are being pushed by the out-of-state TNT Fireworks, who are posing as the non-existent "US Fireworks Safety Commission", in order to fool legislators. Unfortunately, HB 2898, despite having 200 health and fire safety officials, the State Fire Marshal and burn survivors and their families register in opposition to the bill, passed the House Consumer Protection Committee on March 22nd. I do appreciate it Brookfield Chief Jim Adams, OSFM Liaison Katherine Nunes who joined me in testifying against it and Rep. Rita Mayfield (D-Waukegan) who voted no.

What can you do:

1. Call your local state representative and state senator's district office and request a Conference Call to explain your opposition to the fireworks bills - HB 2898 and SB 2170 and invite your neighboring fire officials to participate OR
2. At a minimum, leave a message that you would like the legislators to call you back to discuss it.
3. Contact IFA Lobbyist Margaret Vaughn at [vaughnmargaret47@gmail.com](mailto:vaughnmargaret47@gmail.com) or 217-280-0206 to report who you have contacted and your response.

Background on bills. Besides posing as a nonexistent "Firework Safety Commission" which is based out of the same PO Box in Cicero, Indiana as TNT Fireworks. These bills are designed to fool legislators with misleading language and terminology. They are using the made-up term "non-aerial ground based sparkers" which not a regulatory or industry term for any device but rather a catch phrase TNT made up to cover a bunch of their different 500 gram products and the bills would categorize these highly potent devices as "non-fireworks" and "novelty items" and allow their unrestricted sale to the general public just like a snake or glow worm. In reality 500 gram is the highest capacity of pyrotechnic component allowed before being considered a Commercial Grade Firework by the Federal Government. In comparison, a Roman Candle has 20 gram of pyrotechnic component and a regular fountain has 50 grams!

Problems in Other like NJ and New York that believed TNT and passed their legislation are now regretting it and admitting they were wrong. Complaints were up 2400 % in New Jersey last year and it was so bad in New York that Albany County Officials held a press conference last summer admitting they were wrong when they voted to legalize them and said they had been misled into thinking they were sparklers when in reality mortar shooting fireworks were going off in their streets and they passed a measure that went into effect in January which now bans fireworks.



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IFA has partnered with SAVVIK Buying Group to provide our members with access to equipment, supplies, apparel and even vehicles at group buying prices. We have sent SAVVIK a list of our members and their contact information and once SAVVIK has set up the list, our members will be receiving a notification like below. You will not be able to register your account until you receive this notice. The notice is being sent to the main contact the we have on file for our member departments.

If you do not receive your notification or if you are having problems creating your account, contact Secretary Treasurer Federer at 618-830-3961 and he will assist you in setting up your SAVVIK account.

Once you are signed up with SAVVIK, there is another benefit for your members at SAVVIK Perks. SAVVIK Perks provides discounts for your members on entertainment, food, travel and many other personal discounts.

### **Illinois Firefighters Association- IFA Member**

#### **Welcome to the Savvik Buying Group!**

#### **Savvik Member # 28828**

(Please note, the above Savvik member # 28828 is exclusive to the Association record only. Each member will have their own unique number. This is how we track vendor sales for revenue share back to the Association.)

#### **Savvik Membership:**

Your agency is a new member of the Savvik Buying Group through the IFA. This membership is FREE as a benefit from your association.

Savvik is a Public Safety GPO with over 13,000 agency members who have access to volume discount pricing on various products and services. Our vendor programs are competitively bid and publicly awarded. As a Savvik member you now have access to over 80+ vendor programs.

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#### **Member Login Instructions:**

Go to <https://savvik.com>

Click on LOGIN, follow the instructions to set up your personal username and password.

## About SAVVIK Buying Group

### Our Beginnings

The Savvik Buying Group, formally known as the North Central EMS Corporation, is a non-profit organization owned by its members and formed to reduce the financial impact of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 within the EMS industry. Our mission is to provide members with a mechanism to achieve cost reductions, which has evolved into a group-purchasing program. Savvik values quality supplies and equipment for the members, at the industry's best prices.

The phrase "at the industry's best prices" plays an even more important role today than in previous years as the Medicare Fee Schedule took effect on April 1, 2002. Ambulance services across the country have seen a drastic reduction in their Medicare reimbursements which accounts for up to 75% of their revenue. This drastic reduction in revenue decreases their capital budgets and curbs their purchases if not determine their entire existence.

### Where We're Going

Membership is comprised of ambulance services, fire departments, first responder groups, police/sheriff departments, industrial emergency response teams, and other organizations related to the EMS industry. Savvik is proud to focus on membership nationwide. Our intent is to offer the Electronic Patient Care Reporting and Data Collection contract to all Savvik members regardless of their physical location.

An amazing result of our success was the formation of The Savvik Foundation in 2000. Savvik invests back into the industry! A portion of our excess revenues are returned to regional, state and national EMS associations as well as being donated to The Savvik Foundation so that it can complete its mission of leading industry efforts in such areas as safety, efficient operations, education, research and national consensus building.

We're dedicated to improving the general wellbeing of the public safety industry as a whole. Our effectiveness increases with commitments from our vendor partners to provide Savvik members with quality products and services at the industry's best prices.

Savvik has enjoyed significant growth over the last few years by developing partnerships (including revenue sharing relationships) with regional, state and national EMS associations. Savvik has fifty-one group affiliates that include membership to the Savvik Buying Group as part of their group dues structure. The associations that participate in our group membership program receive quarterly reports and payments from our office. Payments reflect a portion of the contract management fee of the total sales their members purchased from our vendors.

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**If you have not received your registration email from SAVVIK, contact Secretary/Treasurer Kerry Federer at 618-830-3961 or by email at [editor@illinoisfirefighters.org](mailto:editor@illinoisfirefighters.org).**



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## Office of the State Fire Marshal



## **Valet Trash Raising Concerns Among the Fire Service Community**

Door-side waste and recycling collection from apartments, also known as valet trash, has been offered to many residents in numerous different multifamily builds for years. Valet trash collection services allow residents of multifamily buildings to place trash cans in hallways where they are eventually collected and emptied by the trash collection service. There is no set frequency for collection. The practice eliminates the need for residents to carry trash bags or cans outside or to a garbage collection room. The concern with valet trash is unknown combustible and possibly highly dangerous and hazardous materials are now being stored in corridors or hallways.

The OSFM has voiced concerns over the lack of control over what is placed in these garbage containers, because most municipalities or fire protection districts have no control over what is being stored or used within the privacy of dwelling units that will use this service. The OSFM participates on the Technical Committees that prepare NFPA 1, Fire Code (adopted by many local authorities in Illinois) and NFPA 101, Life Safety Code (OSFM adopts the 2015 edition of this code) and is active on the ICC's Fire Code Action Committee (FCAC) that is developing the International Fire Code (IFC). OSFM has been working closely with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) and the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) to keep language permitting this service out of NFPA 1, NFPA 101, and the IFC. Multiple organizations were successful in keeping language permitting to this service out of NFPA 1 and NFPA 101 and are currently working to keep it out of the IFC. The national IAFF as well as NASFM have submitted a letter to the FCAC opposing valet trash stating:

All organizations stand strongly against all fire code language which would allow this practice. The proposed text for valet trash services is in direct conflict with proven fire safety principles which have been in place for decades. The prohibition of combustible materials within the means of egress is a sacred, tried and true fire safety method to protect building occupants and firefighters alike. Allowing trash and refuse to be stored in exit access routes, exit corridors and/or hallways creates unnecessary fire safety risk, as well as additional firefighting hazards.

When opposing the action during NFPA votes, Catherine Stashak of the Illinois State Fire Marshal's Office stated: "Protecting the means of egress from obstructions and hazards is paramount to the mission of life safety principles, "adding "NFPA 1 and 101 specifically prohibit the introduction of high hazards into, or travel through, an area with high hazards."

During the online 2020 NFPA Technical Meeting, members voted against the codes allowing valet trash collection services into NFPA 1 and NFPA 101. Voting for the IFC is still forthcoming.



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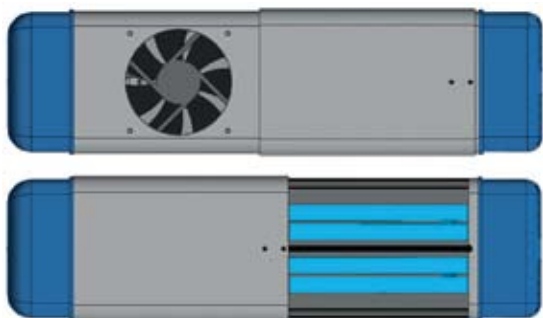
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Patent No. US 10,893,990

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**"Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate SARS-CoV-2, especially if options for increasing room ventilation are limited."**



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(CORONAVIRUS DISEASE)





## MOBILE AIR AND SURFACE UV SANITIZING

# DuoGuard

### How Does It Work?



The **DuoGuard** employs short-wavelength UV-C light to kill or inactivate pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and molds in the air by disrupting their DNA and destroying their cellular function, causing the death of the microorganism and/or rendering it helpless.

#### AIR CLEANING

Drawn into the device by an integrated fan, air then passes through the **DuoGuard's** disinfecting UV-C light. Each trip through the device continues to reduce the number and impact of pathogens in the mobile unit. The air sanitizing function can be engaged while the vehicle is occupied and in transport as the UV is fully contained within the device.

#### SURFACE CLEANING

The usual method of cleaning and wiping down surfaces and tools with disinfectants is an important first step, but because mobile units have hard to reach, uneven surfaces it's easy to miss areas. The **DuoGuard** surface cleaning function exposes UV light to touch all exposed areas within the vehicle for your choice of 5, 10, 15, or 30 minutes and, in combination with normal cleaning procedure, is the optimal solution for surface disinfection.

### Safety Features

A sliding panel keeps the UV-C light fully contained while the air cleaning function is engaged and the vehicle occupied. For surface cleaning, there is a 60-second delay after the function is activated, as well as these power interruption safeguards, to shut the device down while the UV-C lights are exposed: door switch, motion sensor, and emergency switch.

#### PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

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Illinois Fire Safety Alliance



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Go to [portal.nvfc.org](https://portal.nvfc.org) to:

- Advertise your department's volunteer opportunities
- Create customizable, ready-to-use recruitment materials
- Access training and resources specifically for recruiting new members
- Plan recruitment events and create personalized invitations
- Track and keep in touch with prospective volunteers

**Remember to add your department's volunteer opportunities to the national Make Me A Firefighter database so that potential recruits can find you!**

**FIND THE  
FIGHTER IN YOU**





## The first time I saw how a fire sprinkler worked, I was a little upset ...

My name is Jordan Rodriguez. As a burn survivor, I never want anyone to go through what my family has gone through. My twin brother and I were burned in a house fire when we were 4 years old. While the rest of the family escaped without physical harm, my brother received burns on 43% of his body; 80% of my body was burned. We had many surgeries and spent months in the hospital. There was a mental toll to the fire as well. While growing up, I was bullied and often felt left out. Our mother was devastated and our older brother still deals with post-traumatic stress disorder.

When I was a young man, I saw a demonstration that compared a fire in a sprinklered room versus a fire in an unsprinklered room. ***I was upset because I realized that life would have been different for my family if our home had fire sprinklers.*** I was upset because I know how many homes and apartments do not have fire sprinklers. Now I am committed to being the biggest advocate I can be.

---

*You can directly impact your community's efforts to reduce fire risks by adopting and enforcing the latest codes that require fire sprinklers in all buildings. A fire can become deadly in less than two minutes. Fire sprinklers are the only technology that can actively prevent a fire from becoming deadly, protecting occupants and firefighters.*



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## Seven Tips to Reduce Auto Insurance

People across the nation are getting a shock when they open up their annual auto insurance renewal letters; rates are going up. Some are modest increases while others are seeing a jump from eight to ten percent. Premiums are going up even if you haven't had an accident or moving violation.

So, what's up (besides rates)?

Experts say lower gas prices and a better economy mean we're driving a lot more miles, resulting in more crashes.

New technology has also escalated the cost of repairs, even in minor accidents. It used to take a few hundred dollars to fix a bumper or a back hatch after a rear-end collision, now, thanks to cameras and driving sensors, the same repair can cost thousands of dollars. Add to that the increase of materials, legal, and medical costs, and many insurers have been forced to raise their rates to make up for the losses.

Here are seven things you can do that may lower your premiums:

- 1. Clean up your credit.** Many insurance companies look at your credit score and how well you do in paying your bills (except in California, Hawaii and Massachusetts). The better your credit score, the better rate you are likely to receive. Clean credit also helps when you want to buy a new car, rent or buy a home, etc.
- 2. Increase your deductibles.** Sure, the amount you will pay will be a little more if something happens to your vehicle, but the amount you'll save each month could be substantial, especially if you are incident free for a number of years. Just make sure you have an emergency fund to cover that higher deductible.
- 3. Check for good driver/good student discounts.** If you've been accident free, most insurance companies will give you a good driver discount, but make sure you tell them. The same goes for students with good grades.
- 4. Check insurance costs when buying a new vehicle.** If you are planning on purchasing a new car or truck, research what it could do to your insurance. Depending on numerous criteria, including the power of the engine, the model's safety rating and the loss history of that particular vehicle, your rates could change. A good place to check is the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Loss Data Institute's [vehicle safety ratings](#). It's also a good idea to contact your insurance company and ask them what buying that dream car, SUV, or truck will cost you in future insurance premiums.
- 5. Cut your driving.** Ride a bike, take mass transit or move closer to where you work. How many miles you drive each year can affect your auto insurance rates; the less you drive, the greater the possible discount.
- 6. Get a policy review.** Has your commute changed? Did you install a security device? Did you get married? Did a traffic ticket come off your record? All of these can lower the rate you pay for insurance. Talking with your insurance advisor at least once a year is the best way to make sure you get the discounts you're entitled to.
- 7. Compare your current insurance to California Casualty.** We are a 107-year-old policyholder owned company. We offer auto and homeowner/renters insurance with competitive rates, award winning service, and policies that reflect your professional lifestyle with benefits not available to the general public:

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- Rates guaranteed for a full year (not six months)
- Free identity theft protection with each policy

## The Bulletin

- Multiple payment options including EZ Pay and holiday or summer skips
- Excellent Trust Pilot rating with 4.6 out of 5 stars; <https://www.trustpilot.com/review/calcas.com>

Effective March 15, 2021 - California Casualty is rolling back auto insurance rates for drivers in Illinois; all IFA Members are eligible! You might be surprised at the savings and all the benefits that you qualify for. Contact a California Casualty advisor today at 1.800.800.9410 or [www.calcas.com](http://www.calcas.com).

Sources for this article:

<http://www.iii.org/article/nine-ways-to-lower-your-auto-insurance-costs>



California Casualty is pleased to introduce the newest member to the marketing team in Illinois, Lorelei lives in South Bend, Indiana. She has been serving firefighters, police officers and teachers in Northern Indiana since early 2015. Recently Lorelei took over part of the Chicagoland area. She has enjoyed the last nearly 6 years working for California Casualty and serving all of the dedicated men and women in her territory.

If you would like to have Lorelei visit your department to introduce California Casualty, please contact her at (765) 202-4268 or [lseip@calcas.com](mailto:lseip@calcas.com).



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- Tom Lia

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## Blackhawk Firefighter's Association Fire School

May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

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**Instructor: Lead Instructor: John Schott, Carlinville Fire Department**

**This class delivers Hands on Live Fire Training in several different scenarios based on the student's experience level. Rotations will include basic SCBA, Hose Handling & Advancement, Ground Ladders and Search & Rescue. Fire Behavior and Flashover. Instructors from several departments will bring different ideas and solutions for each evolution so the firefighter can sharpen and/or learn new skills. This will be an Intensive Hands-on class.**

***Full PPE and SCBA with spare bottle needed***

### **Auto X Extrication Training-Hands-On**

**Instructor: Captain Mike Huffman – Harlem-Roscoe Fire**

### **Large Vehicle Extrication- Hands-On**

***Including School Bus***

**Instructor: Bill Puckett - Auto X**

### **Strategic Planning for Creating Future Excellence and Juggling Hats- Lecture**

**Instructor: Chief Craig Haigh, Hanover Park Fire**

The job of managing a volunteer, combination or small career department is not easy. Customer expectations and call volumes continue to increase while leaders are faced with more and more unfunded mandates, flat or declining revenues, greater training and certification demands, staff availability, recruitment and retention concerns, vision casting and organizational succession planning. Chiefs and command officers tackle all of these issues while often trying to juggle a “real job” and family demands. This course will address the multiple management demands in an attempt to better equip the chief or command officer with tools to help address some of these concerns.

The class will be taught using a combination of lecture and facilitated group dialog. The students will also be provided handouts that can be used as development templates for many of the items discussed

### **EMS Topics for the next generation- Lecture and Hands on**

**Instructor: Retired Chief of EMS Operations, New Orleans Ken Bouvier** Responding to Motor Vehicle Collisions, Basic Incident Command, Managing School Bus Incidents, School Bus Drill

### **Taking Care of Ourselves - Lecture Only**

**Instructor Sara Gura, Selfcare Path**

***Anxiety, and Panic Attacks, healthy grieving***

**How to Enroll:** email: [jbryant9962@gmail.com](mailto:jbryant9962@gmail.com) (email department name, attendee names and class choice)

## Trying Times for First Responders Can Lead to Increased Alcohol Use

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, and it has been as over a full year in which we have been living in a pandemic state, during which time a more silent pandemic has risen with increased alcohol and substance use. With people suffering a profound sense of instability due to COVID, alcohol sales in Illinois have spiked 150% in the last 12 months.

While firefighters are working to help rescue people and save lives in horrific situations, it is often difficult to detach themselves after they return home, and their own wellbeing and mental health are many times overlooked. The stress of their jobs can also impact family members.

With a greater number of individuals now struggling with an alcohol use disorder or other addictive behaviors, the demand for help is higher than ever and Gateway Foundation offers a complete solution.

As a historical presence in the field, Gateway Foundation [www.gatewayfoundation.org](http://www.gatewayfoundation.org) strives towards the most innovative and effective treatment of substance use, co-occurring and other addiction disorders for adolescents and adults. Celebrating 53 years this year, Gateway Foundation offers 15 locations throughout our state including not just the Chicago area but central and southern Illinois, to help those suffering from substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health get well. Utilizing 9 proven evidenced - based practices, including Medicated assisted treatment and addressing co-occurring mental health.

Gateway Foundation also offers specialty programs for those needing substance use treatment.

- Triumph: a program in Springfield for professional career- minded individuals who need a program with more freedom than a traditional treatment setting. Clients can bring their laptops, work during treatment, and connect more with the outside world when needed.
- Gateway Connect: a virtual outpatient product offering treatment services from the comfort of your home.
- Her Story: a female trauma program in Carbondale offers cutting -edge treatment to help women overcome traumatic situations in their lives and move forward in a healthier place of recovery.
- Recovery Advantage: a program in Aurora for alcohol use disorder only.
- Out in Recovery: a program in Lake Villa dedicated to the LGBTQ + community.
- Gambling Disorder Treatment: paid for by a DHS grant, Gateway offers virtual standalone gambling disorder treatment for those who need it.

Gateway Foundation appreciates your dedication to helping others. If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me **directly by phone (217) 685-4197** or call our **24-Hour Helpline 877-505-HOPE (4673)** to have a free confidential phone screening for you, a colleague or loved one to access care. I can assure you that I will answer my phone and help in any way that I can. You can also reach me at [mjmelton@gatewayfoundation.com](mailto:mjmelton@gatewayfoundation.com)



**Mindy J Melton**  
**Business Development Coordinator**  
Gateway Foundation

## Is Your Board Handling Remote Meetings Correctly?

by John E. Motylinski  
Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.

COVID-19 has changed many things, including how local governments meet. Now, many trustees are enjoying the flexibility of remote meetings via telephone, Zoom, or other platforms. But is your board handling these remote meetings correctly? This article offers a breakdown of the two types of remote meetings available to trustees in the time of COVID and how to comply with the Open Meetings Act's requirements.

### Section 7(a) Meetings

Even before the pandemic, trustees had—and still have—the ability to attend meetings remotely under Section 7(a) of the Open Meetings Act—at least, in a narrow set of circumstances. First, there must be a physical quorum of trustees at the meeting site. If a quorum cannot gather in person, then there could be no meeting in the first instance. Second, a trustee seeking to attend remotely could only do so if they had a qualifying reason. These include: (1) personal illness or disability; (2) employment purposes; (3) the business of the local government; or (3) family or other emergency. Trustees meeting these requirements can use remote means to fully participate in an otherwise properly held open meeting. Finally, the board must have adopted a policy in accordance with Section 7(a) to allow for electronic participation at board meetings.

### Section 7(e) Meetings

With COVID-19 spreading widely, it became unsafe to hold meetings due to the statutory in-person quorum requirements. Regrettably, Section 7(a) was not helpful in accommodating a safe meeting. So, after a short period of temporary remote meeting provisions in the Governor's Executive Orders at the beginning of the pandemic, the Illinois General Assembly enacted Section 7(e) of the Open Meetings Act to allow governments the flexibility to meet safely. However, compliance with Section 7(e) is not easy. In fact, there are *nine* commandments that must be followed to ensure the Section is satisfied:

- *Thou shalt only have a Section 7(e) meeting if the Governor or the Illinois Department of Health has issued a disaster proclamation.*

This requirement makes clear that there must be an official disaster proclamation affecting the government to enable Section 7(e) remote meetings. Furthermore, the proclamation must relate to public health concerns, and the disaster is occurring within the government's boundaries. Thus, a Section 7(e) meeting could not be held if, for example, there were a forest fire three counties away.

- *Thou shalt have the board president determine that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent because of the disaster.*

Under the Open Meetings Act, the board president must make a formal declaration that holding an ordinary open meeting is unsafe to hold an ordinary in-person meeting. Practically, this can be accomplished by adding verbiage on the meeting agenda, or by making such a recitation at the start of the remote meeting.

- *Thou shalt "verify" the identity of all participating board members.*

The drafters of Section 7(e) were visibly concerned about government business being hijacked or frustrated by identity thieves and internet trolls. Thus, at a remote meeting, the participating board members must "verify" their identities. The Open Meetings Act unhelpfully does not specify what type of "verification" must occur. However, so long as there is sufficient assurances that a trustee is who they say they are, this requirement is met. Thus, "verification" can often be done by recognizing the board member's face or voice.

- *Thou shalt ensure that, at the meeting, all board members can hear one another, all discussion, and all testimony.*

Those who routinely participate in remote meetings know that there will inevitably be technical difficulties. Yet, Section 7(e) requires that board members need to be able to participate in all aspects of the meeting. This includes the ability to speak *and* to be heard. Accordingly, it is best to ensure all remote meeting technology is working before the meeting is to proceed.

- *Thou shalt have at least one board official at the normal meeting site.*

Section 7(e) contemplates a situation where a member of the public goes to the government's normal meeting site only to discover no one's there. Accordingly, the legislature required that at least one board "official" be present where the meeting would ordinarily happen—ostensibly, to advise the public that the meeting is proceeding remotely. Notably, the term "board official" does not necessarily include a trustee. Instead, it may be a high ranking official (like a fire chief) or the board's lawyer. But, this requirement does not apply if it is unsafe or not feasible to comply, as has proven to often be the case during the pandemic.



## The Bulletin

- *Thou shalt allow the public to participate in the remote meeting at the normal meeting site.*

If a member of the public does show up to the normal meeting site, the legislature did not intend for them to be turned away. To the contrary, the public needs to be allowed to participate in the meeting from there. As before, this requirement does not apply if it is unsafe to comply.

- *Thou shalt conduct all votes by roll call.*

Voice voting on a remote meeting quickly becomes a cacophonous mess. It also might result in a “nay” vote going unnoticed because there are louder “yea” votes. So, the legislature determined that each trustee should vote one at a time. Therefore, even insignificant matters must be voted on via roll call, like adjournment.

- *Thou shalt give 48 hours’ notice of the remote meeting.*

It is not enough to simply post an agenda with remote meeting information. Section 7(e) requires an additional notice to (1) all board members; (2) the public via the government’s website; and (3) any news media that has previously requested such notice at least 48 hours in advance. Public bodies should ensure such notice is being given.

- *Thou shalt take a verbatim recording of the remote meeting.*

At an in-person meeting, only closed session must be recorded. However, every meeting held under Section 7(e) must be recorded in full. We recommend keeping these recordings safe and logging them separately from the government’s ordinary list of closed session meeting recordings. According to the Illinois General Assembly’s interpretation of Section 7(e), these open session remote meeting recordings must be retained for 18 months, after which the board can take action to destroy them.

## Conclusion

Trustees have options in attending meetings remotely during the pandemic. If an in-person gathering is unsafe, a public body may hold an entirely electronic meeting. But there are multiple requirements that must be observed. Additionally, at least two bills that might be considered by the General Assembly this spring would make permanent changes to allow remote meetings. If you have questions about your board’s remote meeting processes, we recommend you partner with your attorney to ensure full compliance.

**John E. Motylinski** is an associate with the law firm of Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. Naperville. John graduated from the University of Illinois College of Law in May 2015 and holds an undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He focuses in the areas of local government, municipal, public pension, and public labor and employment law. He has also presented at the Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts and has written many articles for fire service publications.

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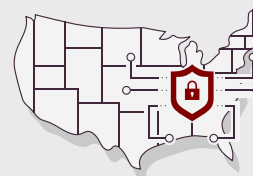
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*presented by*

The National Fire Academy, Alsip Fire Department, Illinois Fire Service Institute &  
Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Initiative

### DATE:

**JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup> - 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2021**

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11900 S. Laramie Avenue, Alsip, Illinois  
(right next to the Alsip Fire Department)

### SCHEDULE FOR BOTH DAYS:

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<b>8:00AM</b>	<b>CLASS</b>
<b>11:30AM</b>	<b>LUNCH PROVIDED</b>
<b>12:30PM</b>	<b>CLASS</b>
<b>4:30PM</b>	<b>WRAP UP</b>



Tom Lia,  
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