

2012 International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week
June 17-23
Suggested Activity Schedule

The following schedule is offered as a template for fire/EMS departments to use as they plan their Safety and Health Week activities. Please understand the goal of Safety and Health Week is for everyone to actively participate in this training program to highlight best safety practices.

Theme for 2012 Safety and Health Week

Rules to Live By, to include applying the SHS Section's Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Survival to fireground operations to reduce firefighter injuries and fatalities.

Preparation for Safety and Health Week

The fire/EMS department should consider printing posters of the Rules of Engagement to be distributed to fire stations and staff offices. They can be downloaded from the [Safety and Health Week website](#) from the Event Planning page.

The fire chief should send a department-wide notification about Safety and Health Week prior to the event. For career fire departments, it may be wise to send a joint labor-management notice signed by both the fire chief and the union president. Additionally, members should be aware that the IAFC participated with the IAFF in the development of the IAFF's Fire Ground Survival Program. The IAFF's program closely aligns with the Rules of Engagement. Fire/EMS departments may want to consider integrating the [Fire Ground Survival program](#) in the week's discussions.

For volunteer fire departments, the fire chief, organization president or commissioners should make the announcement and schedule special training sessions during Safety and Health Week. The fire chief should send out a reminder notice a week prior to the event with any materials necessary to conduct training.

Safety and Health Week Goal

To provide training and orientation on how to apply the Rules of Engagement on the fireground and to encourage fire departments to adopt the Rules of Engagement as part of the departments standard operating procedures/guidelines.

Resources and Lesson Plans

The entire Rules of Engagement package, including comprehensive lesson plans for each Rule, is on the Safety and Health Week website, under [Event Planning](#).

There are two sets of Rules of Engagement – one titled Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Survival and the other is The Incident Commanders Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Safety. There are six common crossover rules in each set. These rules are explained differently in the lesson plans based on the different responsibilities (firefighter vs. the incident commander).

The fire chief may want to consider separate training sessions for firefighters and chief officer staff on the two sets of Rules of Engagement.

During Safety and Health Week

Schedule the time and place for training if other than the fire station. Begin the day with a department-wide announcement from the fire chief to all stations at shift change to announce the day's activities. Repeat the announcement for all shifts until training is completed.

Suggested message: "The [department name] is participating in the 2012 International Fire/EMS Safety and Health Week to help promote safety in the fire service. This year's theme is Rules You Can Live By – Rules of Engagement:

"As we begin Safety and Health Week please join me in a moment of silence to recognize our brothers and sisters who have lost their lives in the line of duty... (Following a moment of silence) ... All activities for the remainder of the day are to be directed to the training program issued by the fire chief with the support of the [IAFF local president/volunteer leadership/volunteer chief, etc.]."

Delivering the Training

The company officer or trainer should use the more comprehensive lesson plans available from the Safety and Health Week website to deliver the training/discussion. It should be noted that the lesson plans also contain summaries of NIOSH fatality reports related to each rule along with associated near-miss reports obtained from the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System.

Background

The law enforcement and military communities long ago developed Rules of Engagement regarding the use of deadly force. These rules are described in short, specific terms which are easily taught and remembered. The rules define critical rapid assessments necessary to justify the use of deadly force. The rules have proven to be highly successful for both of these disciplines. The IAFC SHS Section believes a similar concept in designing rules of engagement for the fire service would prevent firefighter injuries and fatalities.

The Safety, Health and Survival Section of the IAFC was created in 2004, an expansion from the long existing smaller IAFC Safety Committee. Presently, the Section has more than 1,000 members, and growing. The members include chief officers and company officers from all types of fire departments, many of them safety officers, who are committed to reducing firefighter injuries and fatalities and improving all areas of firefighter safety. Many have experienced a firefighter fatality in their organization which brought a personal passion for preventing a future fatality to the Rules of Engagement project. This large number of section members also brings a broad depth of expertise to assist in improving firefighter safety and survival.

In February, 2008, following a year of discussion, the section moved to formally revise and update a set of Rules of Engagement for Structural Firefighting, which was originally released by the IAFC's Health and Safety Committee in 2001. A project team was created consisting of section members and representatives from several other nationally recognized fire service organizations. These included the Fire Department Safety Officers Association (FDSOA), the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and other organizations. Early in the revision process of the Rules of Engagement, it was recognized that two separate rules were needed – one set for the firefighter, who is exposed to the greatest risk, and another set for the incident commander who is responsible for keeping all members on the fireground safe. Thus, the two sets of Rules of Engagement described in this document. Each set has several commonly shared rules and objectives, but the explanations are described somewhat differently based on the level of responsibility (firefighter vs. incident commander).

In August 2010, the IAFC board of directors formally approved the two sets of Rules of Engagement as a “best safety practice model procedure” to be made available to fire departments to adopt as standard operating procedures/guidelines. Since the formal endorsement by the IAFC, numerous other major fire service organizations, along with individual fire departments, have adopted the Rules of Engagement.