

Work of fire services after 9 11



Even though 9/11 occurred almost two decades ago, the tragedy that occurred on that day still affects American citizens today. One particular way that lives have changed since 9/11, is through the changes that occurred in the fire service since that fateful day. As some of the first responders who were on the scene that day, it makes sense that these lives experienced some of the most traumatic effects.

Many of them lost their lives trying to save others, and those who did not die now suffer serious health consequences as a result. As such, it only makes sense that the fire service would have experienced a great deal of change since September 11, 2001. This paper will explain many of the changes that have occurred, including Federal guidelines, as well as preparation and strategies, tools and equipment, and overall building construction.

As soon as 9/11 occurred, the United States of America realized that it needed to make some drastic changes in order to prevent such a large-scale catastrophe from occurring ever again. In doing so, the Department of Homeland Security came up with two relevant Presidential Directives, numbers 5 and 8. Presidential Directive 5 created a comprehensive system for managing national incidents, specifically disasters such as terrorist attacks or natural disasters (Department of Homeland Security, Directive 5 1). By establishing this comprehensive system, all facets of the government are now able to work together in times of crisis in order to better serve people and save lives. This directive also discusses how state and federal governments should work together during these situations (Department of Homeland Security, Directive 5 2), as previously, miscommunications would occur and leave people scrambling to find a solution that works for everyone.

To add to this, in 2011, the Department of Homeland Security released the Presidential Policy Directive 8. While it has the same goals as Directive 5, it also incited change in various groups associated with disaster preparedness by having these groups create goals and strategies for these catastrophic events so the country as a whole could be more prepared in these events (Department of Homeland Security, Presidential Policy Directive par. 1). Furthermore, these Presidential Directives spurred additional changes that the fire service adopted from the National Incident Management System (NIMS; Christen). NIMS, as a result, allowed various groups of fire service agencies and other federal agencies to come together in times of crises, including large wildfires (Neamy par. 5). The Presidential Directives also helped to create the Fire Command, which allows multiple groups of firefighters to come together for daily, smaller-scale incidents (Brunacini par. 8).

While governmental regulations helped incite change within the fire service, it is also important to note some of the changes that were made on smaller levels, including basic preparedness and strategies that firefighters use in time of crisis. Overall, the strategies that resulted from 9/11 adhere to the Five Ps - Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance, which means Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance (Freeman par. 2). By sticking to this strategy, firefighters are better able to tackle large-scale fires and other disasters, which they do by going through a mental checklist of items that need to be addressed during a crisis, as well as by using textbook materials to better understand all of the conditions present during a fire (Freeman par. 5). Furthermore, post-9/11, fire service workers began to consider

intelligence as a strategy to combat large-scale events, by considering experts in the field and the suggestions they had for making improvements in the future (Weeks 15). By having a more comprehensive understanding fire safety, fire service workers were better able to account for various circumstances and therefore, less likely to be surprised during crises (Weeks 18). Another strategy that the fire service has enacted since 9/11 is the way they consider civilians. For instance, first responders tend to use their radio frequencies less often now, because someone might be listening and take advantage of the large influx of first responders on the scene to create more damage, at that location or another one (Mantell par. 11). Additionally, they have learned to read individuals as an attempt to discover whether suspicious-looking people are just odd or if they truly pose a threat to others (Mantell par. 12). Finally, fire service workers have employed drills and other types of practice to ensure that they will be fully prepared in the event that a crisis does occur, and in some instances, civilians are even encouraged to participate in these drills to ensure that they, too, are adequately prepared for large-scale disasters in the future (Rohmer 81).

Another drastic change that has occurred since 9/11 in regards to the fire service stems from the innovations they have made to the tools and equipment that they use on the job, as well overall staffing. Because FDNY suffered such great losses during 9/11, they depended on various donations from members of the country and beyond to help them rebuild their fleet to assist in future disasters (Vaccaro par. 3). However, these changes spread beyond New York, as other fire services made changes to their equipment as well. These changes were a result from the Department of Homeland

Security increasing funding to fire services, which stemmed from their Presidential Directives to better assist the country in preparing for future disasters (Vaccaro par. 9). Additional funding was secured from FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), which allows for fire services all across the United States to purchase the gear they need to succeed during crisis situations (FEMA, Assistance par. 1). Since 9/11, AFG has assisted various firefighting groups to buy equipment, gear, vehicles, as well as pay for additional necessary training that allows them to better do their jobs (FEMA, Assistance par. 1). Another program that provided necessary resources for fire service workers was the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants (SAFER), which provides financial assistance for fire departments to hire and train firefighters within their communities (FEMA, Staffing par. 1). This allows for these departments to have the numbers they need to better serve their communities and save more lives in the process (FEMA, Staffing par. 1). Finally, great improvements have been made in terms of the radio and wireless communications that fire service workers employ while on the job (Vaccaro par. 11). Even though this does not allow for all fire departments to communicate with one another, the technology of these devices alone have improved a great deal since 9/11, and fire service workers hope that additional improvements will be made in the future to better solve their communication needs (Vaccaro par. 11).

Finally, it is important to consider the changes that have been made in terms of building codes and construction since 9/11. Before 9/11 occurred, building codes were meant to reduce property damage and save lives during natural disasters, including floods, tornados and hurricanes, as well as fires and

floods (Building Safety Codes par. 2). However, because 9/11 was a drastically different type of disaster, the building codes were not prepared to have the positive impacts that they were intended for, and as a result, many lives were lost as a result of these unforeseen circumstances (Building Safety Codes par. 2). After 9/11, the International Code Council met and created a list of necessary characteristics that buildings must possess in the future, in order to prevent such large-scale disasters that occurred during 9/11. Some of these changes include having elevators in buildings that are taller than 120 feet, which allows for firefighters to get to higher levels without having to carry their heavy equipment up flights of stairs (Building Safety Codes par. 6). Also, multiple stairways are required for buildings taller than 420 feet, or instead of that, the building can have an elevator that allows for people to evacuate during emergencies without waiting for first responders (Building Safety Codes par. 6). Furthermore, buildings need to be more fire-resistant in order to prevent impacts or explosions as a result of the fire, and elevators and stairways must be impact-resistant as well (Building Safety Codes par. 6). Additionally, stairways must be self-lighting in the case of primary and secondary lighting failures, and exits need to be adequately marked in these situations (Building Safety Codes par. 6). Finally, there must be radio systems in place within buildings, in order for first responders to be able to communicate with people inside the building (Building Safety Codes par. 6).

In conclusion, the fire service has experienced a great deal of change since 9/11 occurred. These changes include various federal regulations, including two Presidential Directives from the Department of Homeland Security, which then impacted fire services in terms of NIMS and Fire Command to

better assist with disaster preparedness. Additional changes include strategies and preparations that fire services utilize, such as implementing drills and other forms of practice to prepare for disasters, as well as having a better understanding of the roles that civilians play in these situations. Furthermore, the fire service has implemented changes have improved their technology and staffing needs since 9/11, most of which have been funded by federal grants. Finally, building construction and codes have changed post-9/11, which has allowed for greater instances of fire prevention and safety. Overall, because of 9/11, many changes were made to better improve the lives of fire service workers and the communities they serve, so as to prevent another terrible event such as 9/11 from happening again.