

**Interview with Billy D. Hayes**  
**Advocate Manager for the Everyone Goes Home Program**

Billy D. Hayes – BDH

**Caption:** What do you mean when you say: “The culture is killing us,”?

**BDH:** You know, the fire service has a long tradition in history of being the bravest, America’s bravest, so to speak. Sometimes we take that to the...to the extent where we forget about some of the other responsibilities we have. And when we talk about culture and our “culture is killing us,” some of the actions that we take, actually that we don’t take, could contribute to firefighter in the line of duty deaths and injuries. Many things we do in the fire service are respond to emergencies. Well, could those emergencies have been prevented? Respond to fires. Could those fires have been prevented? Respond to medical calls to persons injured. Could some of those have been prevented? But we don’t take a lot of preventative action in the fire service to stop that. When we talk about what is your role and responsibility in the fire service and I ask this question a lot: “What is our mission?” And everybody generally says, “To protect lives and property.” But is that what we do? I think we go beyond that. We don’t necessarily protect lives and property, we respond to rescue lives and mitigate any damage because if we were truly protecting lives and property, most of our focus would be on preventing fires, preventing injuries, and when they do occur, that’s where we actually respond. But we’re more of a reactive mode. So by being in that reactive mode, most of the responses we respond to could be prevented and they’re predictable in what we’re going to do, so if they’re predictable, they’re preventable. But our culture is in a...in a method to where we actually wait for the emergency to occur and then we respond.

**Caption:** What’s the current state of public safety education?

**BDH:** When you poll an audience of the general fire service...now if you were in a room with public safety educators and you ask a question, they’d get it, but if you asked the general fire service audience, “How many public educators do you have in your organization?”, they’re going to start thinking about the Prevention Bureau, “Do we have one? Do we have two? Do we have none? Do we have a part-timer? Do we have a volunteer that comes in?” What they need to do is look in the mirror. And everybody who puts on the badge, everybody who’s a part of the organization is a public fire and life safety educator. Now, they might not carry the same certification, they might not necessarily be trained to deal exactly with that aspect of the business, but everybody has an opportunity. They all have an opportunity to be a public fire life and safety educator. So the correct answer is everybody that’s on payroll in the organization. But our culture, when we talk about “is our culture killing us,” our culture doesn’t say that. Our culture says that the individuals who are assigned to prevention who may carry the title of public educator, those are the ones we think of and say, “Well, we have one or two, maybe three,” and that’s not the case. And when I mean everybody has that

opportunity, I agree not every firefighter should be in front of kids, I've said this time and time forth. Some cases it may be outlawed, you never know. We have a unique language in the fire service so probably a little inappropriate for some kids to hear. But nevertheless, the firefighters have an opportunity with everybody, so every firefighter doesn't want to talk to a child because they don't necessarily know how to relate to them or they don't have kids. We understand that. But they can talk to an adult. Let's say a fire engine goes to a store to get their shift meal, to buy the groceries or whatever. They walk by a fire exit, see it blocked with buggies, maybe boxes stacked in front of it. Is that an educational opportunity? Absolutely. Absolutely. We don't want to just call the fire marshal and say, "Hey, we've got a door blocked" and go get our groceries and leave. We need to take the time to train the employee, train the store manager and say, "This is a fire code violation. What happens if you have a fire in this business and you can't get out? More so, what if you have a fire in this building and us firefighters respond in and we have an emergency, we have to get out and we can't get out? Not only are you jeopardizing the life of your customers, you're jeopardizing our lives." And that's where firefighters have to change the culture and start taking this personally. Saying, "This is about us as well." Okay, we're here to protect lives and property, but the lives we have to protect first are our own because if we can't protect ourselves, how do we protect anybody else? So everything's an educational opportunity. It's not...we've got to get out of this frame of mind that public fire safety and education is only dealing with kids and it's not.

**Caption:** Why does this culture exist?

**BDH:** You know, we're going to go down a couple different paths. The first: When we talk about the Es of prevention, everybody knows what they call the three Es and that's engineering, education, and enforcement. And I threw in a fourth one called the environmental modification, which means behaviors and environments are modified. If you go down that path and look at...we've engineered smoke alarms for decades now, we've educated individuals that having a working smoke alarm in your home doubles your chance of survival, and then we get to the aspect of enforcement. There's very little enforcement and there's codes that says dwellings should have a working smoke alarm. But there's no enforcement of that code. So what happens? We still respond to...to residential structures where firefighters and civilians are dying, where 80 percent don't have a working smoke alarm. Now, if we go to a commercial setting, if you look at what happens in a commercial setting, those numbers drastically go down because you have the engineering of sprinklers and exit signs and fire extinguishers and then you have the education of what they're for, but that third component is enforcement, so people know that when the fire marshal and fire inspector come through, they better get everything in working order. So we've had environmental modification to where we don't lose as many people in commercial settings as we do in residential settings.

**BDH:** Well, let's take that over to seatbelt usage because the fire service responds to more than just fire. We do a lot more, as everybody knows. So when you talk about seatbelt usage and you apply the same principle, we've engineered seatbelts for decades. We've educated people that wearing your seatbelt will double your chance of surviving a car crash, but still seatbelt usage in the U.S. was down around 60 percent

until states started driving in the third leg of it called “enforcement”. Seatbelt usage has gone through the ceiling. Now, there is an environmental modification where most people wear their seatbelts not thinking about if they’re going to get pulled over and get a ticket. In fact, most law enforcement only says, “Well, we pull people over when they do this ‘Click It Or Ticket’ safety campaign,” but most people get in the car and wear their seatbelts simply because they’ve been modified to get into the car and put their seatbelt on. So, seatbelt numbers have driven up to the point where we’ve actually made that modification and we’re protecting lives and property through people who are wearing their seatbelts. So that is a culture change of the way we’ve done things, but until we see that change in fire codes, especially in the residential settings, where we’re requiring sprinklers and make those requirements. But we have people fighting this. I mean, how can you have the builders of homes and even some insurance industry and even some fire service people say, “Sprinklers don’t need to be installed,” and putting in laws that prohibit local jurisdictions from putting in residential sprinklers? Well, okay, you don’t want to put them in because the costs are up, but think about the people you’re saving. How many people could we save – civilians – but think about how many firefighters we could save, you know. And when you hear firefighters say, “Oh, gosh, they’re going to put us out of business...” You know, I’ve been in this business 21 years and I heard that my first day on the job when I first started fire safety education. I’m still employed 21 years later.

**Caption:** How did the fire service culture get this way?

**BDH:** We’ve gotten this way not over night. It’s taken years. And it’s not only a fire service culture, it’s an American culture. And I was thinking about this and how did we get this way? We’re a great and compassionate country. We have troops all over the world trying to bring freedom and liberty to what we hold near and dear in the United States, we’re trying to give that to countries all around the world so people who have never experienced – there have been hundreds of years without it – trying to share that with them. We’re compassionate. We’re sending our military troops to do that. But when we look here at home, and specifically with the fire problem, we’re still compassionate, but are we compassionate to an extent where it’s creating a problem for us meaning if you have a fire that could be negligent, careless smoking, unattended cooking, you may be intoxicated and cooking or pass out with a cigarette in your hand, and you’re able to escape. You create property damage to the building, if it’s an apartment, let’s say others live in the building, it also creates property damage. But what do you traditionally do? We call the American Red Cross up, we give them food, we give them vouchers, we give them a place to stay, we put clothes on their back, and most cases, if you have insurance, insurance replaces it. And I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve been on the fire ground and people say, “Oh, well. I’ve got insurance.” They don’t take it too personally – “Oh, I’ve got insurance.” So we’ve created this compassion piece where there’s no accountability. So, if you look at what happened on 9/11, the most tragic day in U.S. history, almost 3,000 people were lost, but every single year in the United States, we lose between three and four thousand people as a result of fire. In most cases, that’s an epidemic. But it’s still prevention is the least funded area in the fire service and the United States Fire Administration continues to struggle to get funding to put out prevention programs, fire departments have to rely on grants from private

donors to buy smoke alarms to give out to the public because we don't put them in budgets or they're not readily available because there's not accountability, there's not enforcement. So, not only has the American society become systemic in this culture, but that transcends into the fire service because the firefighters see some of that irresponsible behaviors and the unaccountability of the public and you just figure, "Why are we doing this?"

**Caption:** Which of the sixteen life safety initiatives support public education?

**BDH:** Initiative Fourteen is the one that discusses fire public educator – public fire and life safety education – should be championed and when we look at this Initiative Fourteen of 16 and it goes back to the books that we talked about is toward the end. And I know a lot of people that are at the summit in 2004 and the initiatives were derived from a meeting in 2004 in Tampa, Florida where fire service professionals from across the nation met to look at how we reduce line of duty deaths and injuries to firefighters. And they came up...the after action of that was 16 life safety initiatives and the first being culture, which we've talked a lot about. But number 14 all the way at the opposite end, we're talking about public education. And 15 is sprinklers. And the very last one is apparatus, you know, talking about the safety designs of apparatus. And every time I bring this up, and I've done it in audiences where there's been members that were part of authoring that that say, "Thanks, Billy. Way to beat me up." And I'm not beating them up because I think maybe that's just part of the underlying piece that people don't even recognize they're doing is that prevention is sometimes an afterthought or comes towards the end. If you look at the books that we've already talked about, with all the handbooks for the Fire Chiefs, they're at the back, the lack of a standard from NFPA to require staffing standard for prevention, it's not there, there's no point values for ISO. A big thing that we're also missing is...is our NIOSH reports which says when we lose a firefighter in a line of duty death, NIOSH comes out and does a complete investigation. And I've asked them, "Why don't we talk about prevention because you could go back to whether it's Charleston, whether it's some of the other events that we've looked at: Vina Drennan, with the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, her husband was lost, he's an FDNY firefighter, spent 40 days in a burn center from a fire that could have been prevented. But if you look at any NIOSH report, there's nothing in there that says prevention efforts should be championed because this was truly a preventable fire. Kathy Hendrick with the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, her son Kenny was lost in a careless smoking, unattended smoking event. That could have been prevented, but none of those recommendations are in the NIOSH report. So that's another reference that a Fire Chief has when they go to say, "We need more staffing because we've got to have these programs to make a difference in the community to prevent them from happening anyway." And it's not there. And because they only look at what happens when the firefighters are dispatched and arrive at the scene, not at what happens before to cause the event to occur anyway. So there's another piece of the puzzle that's missing so if you put all these together – it is a big puzzle – and each one's a piece. You've got to connect these pieces so we can make a difference.

**Caption:** How do you break free of the way things have always been?

**BDH:** I'm just like anybody in the American public. I was security. I want my house protected. I don't want people breaking into my home. I don't want people trespassing through my house. I don't want any type of criminal activity against me or my family. So we expect to be protected by the law. So therefore law enforcement has a greater support, a greater awareness of how to protect yourselves. But for whatever reason, when it comes to fire, the American public says, "Well, it's not going to happen to me," because most people have never had to call 911 in case of an emergency for fire or injury. Now, they may have called the police because they see suspicious activity, but why don't the same people call the fire service when they see a fire code violation? They don't think about it. So...so it's kind of always been this way. Now, with the American public not seeing that aspect of what we do and what they could prevent, and the hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage that could be prevented every year and how that could drive down the insurance rates and costs, we don't think about that because that information is not provided. And the fire service has to take some ownership to that, we have to take some ownership to that. I had somebody tell me just recently that they visited a fire station over in the United Kingdom and they stopped by for a tour. And as they walked in to the front door, they were greeted by the fire service person that was there and they said, "Well, welcome to our station." They said, "Hi, I'm from the United States. I'd like to take a tour." And they said, "Sure. Would you like to begin with our administration office?" And they said, "Yeah, great, absolutely." So they go through and they show them the Fire Chief's office, the fire prevention office right next to it, and they go through. And they said, "Now, let's go over to the apparatus bay." And they open the door and they say, "This is what the public sees when we fail." Huge difference in culture in European countries and to ours. I was teaching at a conference one time and we talk about firefighter safety. I had a firefighter from Germany approach me after the presentation and say, "I just don't understand the problem you have with firefighter safety here." And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "We just don't have that problem. We don't accept firefighter line of duty deaths. We do everything under our power to prevent it. First we try to prevent the emergency from occurring, and then we take all steps to prevent a firefighter line of duty death or injury and we don't have them." So.... And he's telling me what a culture shock it is for him to come over and visit the Fire and Rescue International at the International Association of Fire Chiefs Conference and hear all of these problems that we're presenting to the American fire service, the attendees, and say, "We don't have this issue."

**Caption:** How does the culture of officers and chiefs affect the fire service?

**BDH:** I'm going to jump back and talk about organizational culture for just a moment and how it kind of derives. Organizational culture is like a closed circuit system; situational norms of what happens inside an organization that's normal, without any type of direction, that's just normal. Well, that situational normal gives rise to values and beliefs. So people see what's going on, they put in their...they inject their beliefs and their values of exactly what they think should be going on. And without any type of modification or correction of action with that type of setting and those norms, it gives validation. "Well, if it's working, then it must be right, so why change it?" And that becomes organizational culture and that's more of a definitive, educational type of response to what organizational culture is.

**BDH:** And I tell a story about a thing called “Apes in a Cage” because I think it also relates to that aspect of organizational culture. But if we really look at what happens in the fire service, and every time I tell it people start to laugh because they say, “My God, that happened in my fire house!”, but a group of scientists got together and they put five apes in the cage. In the middle of the cage, they put a step ladder, and just above the top of the ladder, they put a bunch of bananas hanging from the top. So what happens is obviously the apes want to go up the ladder and get the bananas. Well, when they did that, the scientists sprayed them with freezing, ice cold water to prevent them from going to the top of the ladder and getting the bananas. And every time they would make an attempt, they were sprayed down with freezing ice water to the point where they knew that if they went to the later they were going to get froze or sprayed with freezing cold water. Well, they decided to take one ape out of the cage and put in another new ape. Well, here comes the rookie. The rookie’s full of energy and the rookie’s going to do what? He’s going to go for the ladder and go for the bananas. As soon as he goes for the ladder, the other apes know what’s going to happen, so they start beating the mess out of this new ape to the point where he doesn’t go for the ladder, never sprayed with freezing cold water but doesn’t go for the ladder because he’s beat up. Well, they take out another old ape, put in another new ape. The same thing happens. This new rookie ape is going to go for the ladder to go for the bananas. Well, this time the three old original apes plus the first new ape joins in and start beating the mess out of the new ape, has no reason why he’s beating up this new ape, but it happened to him so obviously that’s what he’s supposed to do. Never sprayed with freezing cold water, but that continues. Well, until the point when they take out all five original apes and there’s nothing but brand new apes in the cage that’s never been sprayed with freezing cold water, and they never go for the ladder, they never go for the bananas because why? Because it’s always been done this way. Without asking the question “Could it happen again?” We don’t know. But that’s just a closed circuit of an organizational culture development. So that’s just a neat way of explaining. I tell that story and people say, “Yeah, that makes sense in the fire house and that’s kind of what happens.” So that’s organizational.

**BDH:** Now, how does that transcend into what the fire service has done as far as accepting public and life safety fire education? New firefighters come on the job expecting that they’re going to fight fire every day. In fact, if you even look at the term of what their job description is, firefighter. Not fire prevention officer. Or not fire prevention specialist. It’s firefighter. Well, you...most people conceive that firefighter means after the fire occurs. So they come on the job thinking that they’re going to be fighting fire every day. They get taught that they’re going to make heroic grabs and rescues every day. Geez, that’s what we see on TV all the time, it’s what we see in the movies. How glorious is it to run through fire with our coat open? And they find out real quick that’s not what exactly the way this business is. You see a lot of bad stuff. You see a lot of bad stuff. But as they’re going through recruit school, they spend very little, if any, time on public fire and life safety education. In fact, they spend very little time on the history of this business. And on detour for just a moment, I had an employee one time come aboard that transferred to administration that had been in the business 23 years and purchased an additional set of fire codes because they weren’t going to head up equipment maintenance and training for the department. And they said, “Well, why are

you buying me this? Doesn't this go in the fire marshal's office?" And I said, "No. This is the National Fire Codes." And they said, "Shouldn't that go in the fire marshal's office?" I said, "Have you ever heard of these?" They said, "No." I said, "Well, these books, every standard for everything we wear, from uniforms to turnout gear, to the tools we use, to the apparatus we drive, to the lab fire burns that we do, our health and wellness, everything about our business has a standard number and is in the National Fire Codes." "Oh, well I thought it was just something the fire marshal had." So we spent little time educating our own business, especially about public fire and life safety education.

**BDH:** So now you've got firefighters who have entered this business, who are operationally minded, which is great because that protects their lives and properties, we know that, but we don't give them that other tool in their toolbox about educating the public and how important fire prevention really is. So now we've got the new waves, as we call them, coming into the business. Well, these new waves eventually are going to become company officers. Well, most of our company officers don't require certifications – fire inspector, or public fire and life safety educator – to achieve company officer certification – a promotion – whether it means Lieutenant or Captain. So it's not important to them. If you have a school tour come into the fire house, who's going to get it? Most of the time, they're going to send out the recruit, or the new guy, or the proby, whatever you want to call them, to handle the school tour; the company officer's not expected to go out and handle this issue. So now the new firefighters feel, "Gee, I wasn't even taught this and now it's being thrown on me and I have to handle it." So, again, it's building resistance. So that culture begins to develop. There's no.... From a firefighter to a company officer, no promotion requirements, it's not as important to them, there's other things they have to do, so now you've got company officers who aren't sold on it.

**BDH:** When you get to the Fire Chief level, here's where you can look nationally and this presentation connecting the pieces, "Fire Safety: Is Our Culture Killing Us?", this is where you can start putting some of the pieces together. When you look at the books that most Fire Chiefs have in their office, and I had... I had these three books in my office, among many others, but these were three that I went to on a regular basis as referenced went I went to my mayoral council and city manager about things that we need to do for the organization. When you look at *The Fire Chief's Handbook*, there's over 1100 pages in this book, 12 are for fire safety education or public fire and life safety education, and they're pages 1106 and on. 12 pages. The very back of the book. Well, if fire safety education is about prevention, shouldn't that be towards the front of what we're doing in our business? It's at the back. When you look at *Managing Fire and Rescue Resources* put out by the International City Managers Association, same thing, it's toward the back of the book. That's 30 pages, but it's over all prevention aspects. When you look at *The Fire Chief's Desk Reference* put out by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, same thing; small number of pages at the back of the book. So now it comes out and the Fire Chief says, "Well, prevention and public fire safety education is at the back of the book every time, so obviously it's not that important."

**BDH:** When you look at standards, you know, Fire Chief gets ready to add staffing to their organization, say, "Well, we have NFPA 1710," and if you're an accommodation department you have NFPA 1720, which is the staffing and deployment for personnel for emergency responses. There's no staffing requirement for prevention office. It doesn't tell you how many inspectors you should have, doesn't tell me how many educators you should have, or fire investigators or whatever the case may be. Now, they're saying that there's going to be a standard review and they're looking at putting out one of these committees or put in a committee together to address that, but that's going to be years down the road, but the point is that that's never existed. But the Fire Chiefs are again having...they're falling into this culture, this closed circuit, that there's not anything there. And when you go to a mayoral council and say, "Well, we want to add people in our Prevention Bureau," and they said, "Well, where are the standards to do this? Where are the references that tell you to do this?" the only thing the Fire Chief can say is, "Well, it's the right thing to do."

**BDH:** And that doesn't go very far with the elected officials and when you're talking about dollars because it does come down to dollars. When you look at ISO point values because not every state recognizes the Insurance Office in their rating scale, which affects your fire insurance rating, because that's about the money. So most ISO review schedules do not give you point value for prevention efforts; they look at staffing, they look at responses, they look at water supply, they look at communications, they look at equipment. They go over all this other stuff that's mostly operationally-minded. You can have a 200 member Fire Prevention Bureau, you can be in every single school, every single classroom, you can give out a smoke alarm, two smoke alarms, three smoke alarms to every resident in the city, and you don't get any point value for it. So that's hard for a Fire Chief to stand before a mayoral council or a county administrator or whatever the case may be and say, "We need to add people to our staffing or increase our budget in fire prevention." They just don't have the support. So maybe that reason is why, within the organization, they don't put a lot of emphasis on organization, they don't put a lot of emphasis on prevention or promotion to company officer. And for the Fire Chief coming in, they have very little in their arsenal to go and try to increase their budget for that. And it's less than one percent for most fire departments and their budgets is prevention.

**Caption:** Does a fire department's budget affect public education programs?

**BDH:** It will. I mean, the economy is affecting so much of our business. In most cases, when you talk about furloughs and layoffs in fire departments across the country, the first place they look is the Prevention Bureau. Even in the Washington, D.C. area, many public educator positions were cut completely out, people losing their jobs, and those are the positions you really absolutely ought to have there. And yes, we have to have the emergency responders, but if we could change this culture, not only in our society but within the fire service itself is saying, "We can survive with one person who coordinates fire safety education because we've got everybody on the fire apparatus who also does this." So we're multi-talented, we're multi-jurisdictional within our organization that...that we can handle this. So it's not going to be that huge of an impact. But we also have to change that society. That if the American society

recognizes that prevention is the key to their survival and to how they're going to live every day, then that's going to transcend into the supporting of the fire service, it's going to transcend into the supporting of the Prevention Bureau and the money that's going to be needed to allot to fund that.

**Caption:** When did you realize the importance of public education?

**BDH:** You know, when I started in the fire service I was 19 years old. After my first run through college and playing baseball and when I was injured, you know, I couldn't play baseball anymore. College wasn't for me at that time, so I left, and I was very fortunate to become a career firefighter at the age of 19 years old. And I can remember when I was about 22 and I was on shift and being one of the new guys still three years on the job, I didn't have a lot of seniority, so I worked most of the holidays. And we were working Christmas Eve and we were set to get off on Christmas morning and I'd planned on going home and going with my wife to her family and spending Christmas Day. And before we could do that, we received an alarm for a potential house fire. And in those days, the dispatch system we had was manually dispatched the buzzer in the fire station so when you had an exciting call come in, our dispatcher would just lay on the buzzer in the fire station. I mean just buzz completely out of the bed, literally. So we respond to this house fire and it was on Carla Drive in Morrow, Georgia where I worked at the time and it was the community I grew up in and my grandparents actually lived on Carla Drive, so it actually was very close to home to me. And we responded to that location and we had heavy fire showing out of the alpha side through the garage with an extension into the house. It was a single family, single story. So I was riding tailboard with another firefighter and we drug a line off, went in and knocked down the garage area, knocked the bulk of the fire down, I made entry through the front door, we went in and we put a great stop on the fire, I won't lie. It was fun. You know, the adrenaline of hitting that home run or running the bases or throwing somebody out, the adrenaline I had at baseball, this carried me into the fire business. This was great. This was a high. We had made entry into the attic through the scuttle hole and checked through extensions crawling through, just being reckless, you know, just being reckless. We actually fell through the ceiling and into a bedroom and it was, again, it wasn't a far fall, we landed on the bed and we laughed. And it was just the best thing and looking back to what I teach now, how stupid was I. Because I'm not going to be a hypocrite said I did everything perfect. I made a lot of mistakes in my career and I'm very fortunate to be here to tell them today. The biggest mistake that we made, and I say this is a mistake because it wasn't right for the people who saw it, but it made a change in me which I'm kind of glad I had it, epiphany, a moment to say, "You know what? You got to get your act together."

**BDH:** As we exited the house, we're walking down to the engine and after the fire was knocked down our backup crews were in as we were leaving and as we walked out, me and my partner high-fived each other. And as I looked over and I'm thinking, "This is Christmas morning. I'm getting ready to go home. How great was it that I got a working job, I'm getting ready to go home Christmas Day, that was our present." And I look over and I see a family standing by the mailbox and I remember the ceiling that we had gone through into the bedroom was actually a little girl's room. And there stood the little girl

with her family and she's crying. And I'm.... You know, they had just experienced the worst tragedy they could probably ever imagine. Their Christmas has been taken from them and here we are celebrating because the adrenaline of having a working job on Christmas morning and we're high-fiving each other. And at that moment, I realized that...that I had to change. That was...that was the slap in the face and maybe God said, "You know what, kid? Wake up." And that goes on across this country every day. That didn't happen just in 1992. That still goes on in 2010. And we've got to change that behavior.

**BDH:** We've got to change that attitude that going to these structure fires and somebody losing something is something for us to celebrate. And from that point forward, I really became engaged not only in fire safety education, but in injury prevention as well because I can remember responding while a paramedic – I progressed to the rank of a paramedic – to a child at the bottom of a pool, which is part of injury prevention. And people say, you know, "When does it stop?" Well, if you respond to it, you have a role in it. "Well, that's EMS." No, if you respond to it, you have a role in it. You know, give yourself a reality check. If you respond to a senior elderly lady fall down because she's injured, you have a responsibility for it. If you have a pedestrian that's struck by a car, you have a responsibility for it at some point. And that's where the fire service.... Quite honestly, your question earlier about how do we survive because of the economy and the budgeting. Well, you survive by building coalition because there's other interested parties. And the fire service has a tendency to try to bear the entire load that everything is our problem. Well, you have a role and a responsibility, but it doesn't mean you're the only one.

**BDH:** So building coalitions. You know, there's other people that have resources, you know. So let's say you lose your public life and fire safety educator position. Well, who else in this community does it affect? Well, it affects insurance agents, law enforcement, Health Department, home builders. Try to get the type of people that have some type of buy in or some type of a role in this and get them to build a coalition because there's resources each one of them bring to the table. So the fire service has got to learn it's not all our responsibility. We can't bear the entire load. But with that particular moment was my awakening and I...I went to the coalition aspect because really became involved in Safe Kids as a coalition leader for our county Safe Kids and we were able to reduce injuries with car seats, installed the car seats, do the car seat checks, poison prevention. We had individuals who...who had...who were huffing, which was a big thing, and whether it still is, I'm not exactly sure. But we partnered with Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and there were a group of kids that wasn't in my community but they were huffing the vapors of gasoline to get high, and one of them lit a cigarette, and they all four...they called them the "Propane Quads". So we all had a role in that responsibility, but it was at that moment I was 22 years old and realized I had to change. But that same attitude still exists but we've got to get on the other end of the spectrum and realize that, you know, the fire service has to embrace prevention. Not only do we have to embrace prevention, we have to figure out a way to measure it because that's another problem we have; if it doesn't happen, we don't know about it. We celebrate great rescues, we celebrate the great job we do after an emergency occurs, but we don't do anything with the prevention piece of it. How many fires have

we prevented or how many lives have we protected because we installed a working smoke alarm, somebody walked away from cooking, the grease caught on fire, the smoke alarm went off, the people came rushing right back because we taught them what to do in case of a grease fire by turning off the heat, remove it from the heat source, or using the fire extinguisher, they put the fire out, and the fire department's never called. So does that protect not only the people who live in the house but also the firefighters? Yeah, because they don't respond to it. Or if that person runs out of the house where the building's completely engulfed with flames now and firefighters go in to make a rescue because they don't know if there's a life safety issue, we lose firefighters because of a collapse. We have to measure that.

**Caption:** Any final thoughts?

**BDH:** When we talk about the roles of a firefighter, let's talk about strategy and tactics because that gets everybody when you talk about commands and tactics and strategies of what you're going to do. You respond to a structure fire and you arrive at the front of the – let's say it's a residential property – and you arrive to the front. There's nobody around except everybody that's standing there gawking because you've got a fire. There's nobody there to tell you that you have life safety accountability. The life safety officer's first thing they're going to check off is life safety, so they know they're going to make an entry into this building. Hopefully they have a risk-benefit analysis where they're looking and saying, you know, "Can we risk a lot, within a structured plan, to try to rescue a savable life?" And the risk a lot to save a lot is just a quick way of saying that you have to have a strategic plan of what you're going to do to risk a lot to save a savable life. So they look and say, "Okay, we're going to make an interior attack," and they go in, they're doing search and rescue, they're knocking down what fire they can, but they're doing search and rescue – crawling through an unknown structure, trying to search for individuals who may or may not be in that structure. So that's...that's putting the firefighter at risk. What happens if that same fire those individuals were actually at their neighbor's house and they never approach the fire service and say, "Hey, we're all out," ? They're searching a house that's unoccupied for no reason. What if we take that same event where the company officer or the apparatus pulls up and they have individuals standing at their meeting place, but let's say it's the mailbox, because they had a working smoke alarm and it had activated, they had practiced their escape plan, they were able to get out, they went to their meeting place, somebody went and called 911, and they greeted the firefighters when they arrived on scene and say, "Everybody's out of the house. We're all accounted for. We're all here." Does that change the strategy and tactics of that company officer on that first arriving apparatus? Absolutely. Life safety is checked off. Now they can go for the suppression. They're still going to fight fire. They're still going to get that adrenaline rush. But in their minds they know that everybody's out so let's don't risk more than we have to to save a savable property now. And that's risk a little to save a little.

**BDH:** But in that risk-benefit analysis, we also have to accept in the fire service, there's going to be a loss. There's going to be a loss. And risking nothing to save nothing is okay. And they said, "Well, the public expects us to do something." Well, I don't think there's an individual in this country that wakes up every morning and says, "You know

what? I think I want to see a firefighter die today. They don't do it. Because it affects them. It affects the community. If you look at funerals for not only law enforcement but also for the fire service. Any.... I feel just as bad when you see a law enforcement brother or sister lost in the line of duty as a firefighter because we're there to protect the public. I don't think any member of the public, except maybe the criminals, want to see a firefighter or a law enforcement officer lost. So you have to understand that whatever the perception that they may think, "Well, we've got to do something. They expect us to do something." There's a lot of stuff you can do and still be safe. You know, I know departments that have actually gone to that point where they have policies in place that if they had that same scenario, everybody's outside, they're all accounted for, they have full life safety accountability, that they make an exterior operation. Now, if it's a small fire, a grease fire on the stove, obviously they can go in and handle it. But they look at their resources and say, "If we have a well-consuming building and there's no life safety accountability, we're going to put the hose streams through the windows. We can put a lot of water into that building. We don't have to make an interior attack." People say, "Are you kidding?"

**BDH:** I've had firefighters tell me, say, "I get paid to die for property just as I do for lives." And I've had other firefighters in that same...that same setting say, "I've never seen a building worth my life." And we have to understand that mentality that "get in and get it" doesn't always apply. And...and to prevent those type of events from occurring to begin with, can save firefighters lives. And it doesn't even have to be fire. What if we actually had people that wore their seatbelts? What if they restrained their children in car seats and they had a medium motor vehicle crash? Not a critical, not a severe, but a medium and they got out and said, "Now, we're all fine,"? Whereas people that don't wear their seatbelts, their airbag deploys, they get a busted tooth, busted jaw, broken arm and we have to respond out lights and sirens. Then we take the risk of people on the streets, firefighters in the apparatus. There's so many things that we can do on the front end to prevent firefighter line of duty deaths and injuries. And not just line of duty deaths and I say injuries because for every 100 firefighters you lose each year as a line of duty death, there's 80 to 100 thousand that are injured. There's a lot of near misses out there. So it's more than people say, "Oh, well. You know, last year we lost 93 firefighters so our numbers are improving." No. One is too many.