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PREVENTION * LAW ENFORCEMENT * RESEARCH

Maine Fire Marshal News

Maine State Fire Marshal's Office • Fire Research Maine Department of Public Safety Mainefiremarshal.com October 2007

Fall 2007 Vol. 1, Issue No.7

WELCOME!

Welcome to another edition of the Maine Fire Marshal News. As always we appreciate your taking time to read the newsletter and forwarding it on to others. With each edition we receive e-mails from individuals requesting that they be included on the list. Surprisingly, many of these new readers are not from the fire service at all! Some are teachers, physicians, builders, and "regular" citizens interested in the fire service in Maine. Again, we encourage all readers to contribute an article in a future edition.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

The Maine State Fire Marshal's Office, National Association of State Fire Marshals joins the National Fire Protection Association and other state and national organizations to draw attention to the 2007 Fire Prevention Week theme: "Practice Your Escape Plan." During this year's campaign, extra emphasis should be given to not only preparing an escape plan for your home, but also putting it into practice. In less than three minutes, your home could be totally engulfed in flames. Every second counts

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and members of your family should know how to react quickly and calmly. "This only happens when everyone knows what to do if a fire does occur and practices their plan routinely," says John C. Dean, Maine State Fire Marshal

According to the latest NFPA research, 3,030 people died in 2005 from home fires and only 23% of households have planned and practiced a home fire escape plan.

As State Fire Marshal I encourage all Maine families to take advantage of this time to call a "family meeting" to discuss what to do if a fire occurs in their home. Draw a floor plan of vour home and identify at least two ways out of each room; especially bedrooms, and talk about the ways out with each family member. If your home has two floors, escape ladders can be placed in or near windows to provide an additional escape route. Keep in mind, that young children and older citizens may require special assistance to escape and may need someone else's help. Identify a meeting place outside the home and once out, NEVER go back inside. Call the fire department from outside the home as quickly as possible.

Since the majority of fatal fires occur when people are sleeping, working smoke alarms are essential. Smoke alarms serve as an early warning device, warning you of fire. Smoke alarms should be installed on every level; and inside and outside of each sleeping area. In today's times of modern technology, many people are also looking towards taking advantage of residential sprinkler systems. Fire Marshal 's Message cont'd from page 1

These systems are designed to put the fire out before it can become a problem and is a relatively inexpensive way to provide and even greater safety environment for your family.

We hope you and your family enjoy this great fall season and the colors so unique to all of New England. And remember, the best things in life are free as well as safe.

Sincerely, John C. Dean Fire Marshal

The State of Maine's Fire Service

It has been my good fortune to speak with a number of fire chiefs' throughout Maine. I've found their perspective on the fire service particularly interesting so I decided to add a section to the newsletter in which we allow a fire chief to talk about Maine's fire service. Chief Guimond of South Portland was both kind and enthusiastic in agreeing to be the first to write on this topic.

Take a moment to read what the Chief has to say and don't hesitate to contact me if you'd like to provide your own perspective. Does it represent your own perspective? Or are you seeing the fire service in a different light?

Chief Guimond responded to the following question and also provided the pictures you see to demonstrate his point. Here is the question I asked him:

In terms of suppression, public education, public awareness, intervention, and code enforcement activities, where do you think the fire service should be now and where do you think it should be in the future?

Here's how Chief Guimond responded.



The fire service today has taken on several roles not covered in the question above. There are few departments that still only focus on the suppression side of the business. Today if that's all a department is geared towards the taxpayer and or customer is being short changed. Fires on a national basis are down. The reason they have been reduced can be linked to every other part of the question presented above. Public Education, awareness, intervention and code enforcement activities all have produced the results we were looking for. We have reduced the number of fires and injuries. Deaths also have been reduced over the past twenty years. One alarming fact is firefighter deaths nationally remain steady around one hundred annually.

The business has shifted, with only a small percentage of our requests for service resulting in actual fires. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) has now taken the lead as our bread and butter. This doesn't mean we should abandon the suppression side of the house, but today's firefighters need to be prepared to do more. They need to be trained to wear many hats. As a Chief it is too easy not to take on more responsibility, but at all levels in the fire service we need to work and produce the service the public needs and demands. How many of us knew what Anthrax was prior to September 11, 2001? Today we all have been forced to look at events differently. Departments need to take precautions to respond accordingly. Calls for suspicious packages or powders have now become routine to us.

Chief Guimond cont'd from page 2

The missing part of the question above, and looking forward to the future, is EMS. By providing EMS services for a community you have the opportunity to put your firefighters into homes on a daily basis. I still have friends in the fire service who look down on the task of providing EMS to the public. I feel the EMS component helps you work towards improving the public awareness and public education component of your department. If your department is not actively involved in EMS you are at a disadvantage. In my opinion it is also healthy for your firefighters. Every time we get an opportunity to work with our citizens and help them live safely we need to take it. Society has become too fast paced, if the only time we interact with them is in a crisis it makes our task more difficult.

I have experienced change both as a full time paramedic / firefighter and as a call company firefighter in Cape Elizabeth where I began my fire service experience at age seventeen. Now serving as Chief for the past four years in the City of South Portland I think I have seen this progression from all sides. I like to think I have the ability to guide my department down the path of change and progression; however there are several aspects that are out of our control. Change has been both positive and negative to our profession, and as Chief I often spend considerable time examining how to slow down, or at least alter this process to our benefit. In my career, I have seen rapid change often cause more harm than good.

Over the past twenty years the fire service has done an excellent job with the Learn Not to Burn curriculum, promoting smoke detectors and taking an active role in code enforcement. All fire departments now should be up to speed on NIMS training, actively involved in code enforcement, and at a minimum working with the schools during fire prevention week. Recently many of us have moved to the Risk Watch program in the schools that gears kids towards making good choices. It is an all hazards approach to child safety. The two key words are "choices" and "all hazards". This is also how we should be recruiting, hiring and training our new firefighters. That is how the current generation of firefighters was brought up and educated. The NFPA through Risk Watch realized we needed to alter our approach to educating kids. Fire Chiefs need to realize we face the same issues when training and preparing our firefighters.

Many people involved with a fire department, when thinking change, would focus on the community they serve, it's growth and how this has forced a department to hire it's first full time chief or an EMT. The population of a community is only a small piece of the puzzle that has produced change in the fire service and where we are headed in the future. The fire service has been forced to take on many roles it did not seek or expect. On a daily basis we are called into people's homes to help with everything from medical issues, to water in a basement, and now white powder on an envelope. We still respond to structure fires, however we have done a remarkable job in our fire prevention side of the house. The advance of proactive building codes has also pushed the population into safer buildings that we now work and live in. We still see fatal fires in Maine every year often caused by smoking materials, woodstove issues, electrical problems and human element fires. In the past few years on a regional basis we have also spent some time working on a Juvenile Fire Setter program with the State Fire Marshal's office. This is one area we still need to advance. We will never eliminate fires. In our city we actually have had a dozen fires over the past 45 days, several of them serious. Our firefighters still need to be at the top of their game.

The challenge today is to keep your veteran firefighters sharp and finding enough live fire training to feel comfortable sending young new firefighters into burning structures confident they can make good safe decisions. This is a dilemma, because fires have been reduced but training needs to return to the basics due to a often lack of real life experience.

Chief Guimond cont'd from page 3

On the public side the general population seems to be less prepared to handle issues in their homes these days. The only place they have to turn for help is the local fire department. We all used to laugh at the cat in the tree calls. Today we don't do cats, but we do respond for odor investigations, cars leaking gas, white powder and strange noises. The technical or hands on skills in the population has been lost over the past twenty years. This lack of knowledge has also shown up in our firefighters that we are now hiring. The jack-of-all trades type of individual is often hard to come by. In the past many firefighters came from farms or families that had been plumbers or carpenters, today that is not the norm. This newer generation is great with computers but can't deal with simple electrical or plumbing issues.

The EMS side of the house has been driven by a couple of factors: the population is aging, and people are being forced out of hospitals sooner. We also have become the primary health care provider for a segment of our population that does not have access to medical care. In South Portland the call volume I have illustrated below clearly shows the shift from a fire suppression department to an "All Hazards" department. This year we will top 4600 calls annually with over 2/3 being EMS. The city also takes in approximately \$800,000 in revenue from the delivery of services (Hazmat, EMS) produced by the fire department.

HISTORICAL CALL VOLUME

Year	Fire	EMS	Total
1970	982	716	1698
1975	1041	931	1972
1980	1104	1289	2021
1985	1144	1665	2809
1990	1121	1956	3077
1995	1151	2138	3289
2000	1236	2615	4072



Where are we headed in the future?

The dedication and tradition of the next generation of firefighter I would argue has shifted. I'm not trying to be critical but just making an observation. The employees we are bringing in now both full time and part time have a different set of values and expectations. We no longer see the third and forth generation of firefighters like we have seen in the past. Call it generation X, Y or the MTV club, but our recruits have changed. I grew up in the eighties so I guess I am more prepared, or at least saw it coming. The largest change is dedication to one employer. If you look at the entire workforce loyalty to a job is on average 5-7 years. The fire service is struggling with this. We use to get over a hundred applications and now we are lucky to see fifty. In the past a new firefighter brought his lunch to work, they now walk through the back door with a college education and a lap top computer. That is the future! As leaders we need to figure out how to tap this knowledge and skill to make the fire service better. Many of my friends have all had several positions, while I have had the same employer since 1987.

Leaders in the fire service need to look forward. Chief Phil McGouldrick did this in South Portland in the early 1980's when he jumped into EMS when most other departments tried to avoid it. I have already taken this step in South Portland with a focus on an all hazards approach to the delivery of emergency services. Our firefighters take pride in helping people. By taking an active role in every aspect of our business you provide more opportunities for you people to get involved. I tell my firefighters to find at least one area of interest and jump in. This could be becoming a paramedic, getting involved in the public education program or traveling to Alabama or Nevada for advanced Haz Mat training. Keeping to troops busy makes everyone happier.

In the past we have referred to firefighters as duel role if the provided EMS services as well as fire suppression. Today we want "All Hazards" trained firefighters. We have worked regionally through the State to build Regional Response Teams and with the implementation of the National Incident Management System this process has already started. The cooperation I have seen in our state in the past few years really has me excited for the future. The challenge is for those of us in positions of leadership to embrace the future and demand more not less from our firefighters. Scene management results in safe operations weather it is a Hurricane response, a fire or an auto accident.

In conclusion, I would argue that it's the fundamental job of each fire chief, whether from large city fire departments or volunteer departments, to continually re-evaluate their fundamental missions and ensure they have people dedicated and trained to accomplish each mission. We must still train our people for fire suppression, as that has always been our number one mission. But we also must take care of the needs of our communities, by providing EMS services, public education services, hazmat response services, and other services our taxpayers demand. There is a role for all generations in the fire service, including roles for the newer generation of computer savvy firefighters and roles for the career firefighters who love the suppression end of the business. We must keep matching our departments' capabilities with the ever-changing needs of our communities and at the same time keep our firefighters/EMTs motivated.

No one ever said it was going to be easy.

Kevin Guimond Chief South Portland Fire Department

Chimney Fires in Maine

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Between 2004 and 2006 Maine Fire Departments reported 1600 chimney fires. We thought the time would be right to discuss this type of fire as it occurs in Maine for a number of reasons.

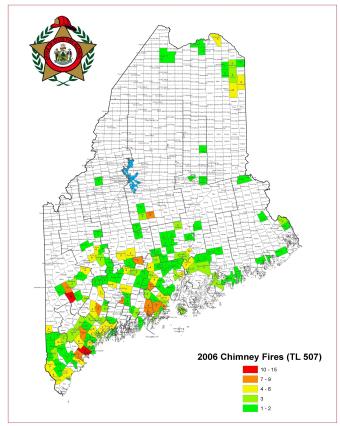
First, chimney fires can range in heat from 1800° to 2500°F. They can cause damage to the traditional masonry chimney system and in particular, the flue liner itself. With a roar like a freight train, these fires can crack open the flue liner, masonry and, in a worse case scenario, spread into the structure. When such fires do move beyond the chimney and into the structure, the results can be catastrophic in terms of property loss, injuries, and even fatalities.

Second, do we really know how often these fires occur and what the distribution is geographically? In Figure 1, next page, you can see a map showing the distribution of these fires in Maine for the year 2006. The figure, as expected reflects both the population distribution and concentration of reporting agencies in Maine. With regard to reporting again, the question is always raised as to whether or not we are capturing all these fires through MEFIRS. Though I doubt we're capturing all of them, the fact that we did receive 507 reports for 2006 raises concern anyway. When do these fires occur?

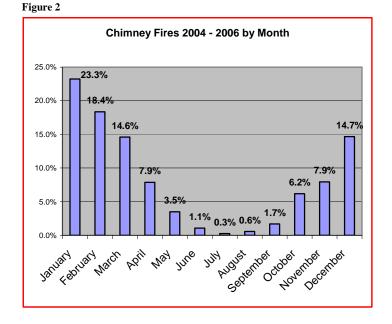


Chimney Fires cont'd from page 5





The distribution of these fires by month for the 2004 – 2006 time frame, figure 2 above right, will not surprise firefighters. December, January, and February are the leading months with March seeing a virtually even distribution as December. But you'll also note that in October we see chimney fire activity begin to pick up. Needless to say, now is the time to clean chimneys or have them inspected. Inspection is particularly essential if you'd experienced a chimney fire already. The traditional clay lined masonry systems have not fared well following test chimney fires. Given the age of Maine's housing stock, I would assume many chimneys in Maine are likely the traditional masonry systems or have a factory built insert placed in them. Play it safe and get your system inspected. This is particularly critical if you've already experienced a chimney fire or added an appliance to an existing system. You'll feel safer and when you go to sell the home you won't be passing on a potential disaster to the buyer.



Let's look at chimney fires as a percentage of all fires. The table below shows the count of chimney fires for the years 2004 – 2006. Temperatures, fuel costs and other variables all of which could be used to explain variations in use from one year to the next can drive the level of chimney use. Overall however, because chimney fires are so seasonal the frequency of such events as a percentage of all fires is relatively low.

	Chimney Fires	All Fire	es %	6 Chimney Fires
2004	5	04	5186	9.7%
2005	5	90	4062	14.5%
2006	5	07	4344	11.7%

A note on tests done on chimneys and the damage that can result from chimney fires. I examined a study conducted by U.S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards Center for Fire Research working with the CPSC and DOE (see *NBSIR 83-2771*). This study, referred to me by a colleague at NIST, revealed that factory built chimney systems fared well in contrast to the more common masonry system with clay liners. You can access the NBSIR study at:

http://fire.nist.gov/bfrlpubs/fire83/PDF/f83003.pdf

SMOKE DETECTORS AND FIRE SAFETY

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

In an article appearing recently in the <u>Kennebec Journal</u> titled 'A fighting chance to live' Smoke Detectors, quick-thinking averted tragedy in Randolph' a mother of three stated the alarm "had been beeping for almost 20 minutes when she realized her apartment was on fire." Though I'm curious as to why it took nearly 20 minutes for the alarm to awaken residents, at least they were able to escape.

The use of fire alarms appears to have increased considerably over the past two decades though everyone still is not placing as many as they need in their homes or placing them where needed. Still, the continued rise in smoke alarm usage nationally has likely contributed to many lives being saved. Why the increased use? The following article provides some answers.

It should also be noted that absent the alert, escape planning is not likely to have the desired impact.

Where there's education, there are smoke detectors: State says efforts boost use of devices (Article provided courtesy of Donovan Slack and the Boston Globe, October 2, 2007)

Amid myriad challenges that Boston residents face, from rising property taxes to proliferating potholes and towed cars, there is one glowing bit of good news: The odds of smoke detectors working properly and alerting residents to fire are higher in Boston than elsewhere in the state, on average.

Statistics show that detectors worked in 80 percent of residential fires last year in Boston, compared with the average statewide in recent years of roughly 50 percent of building fires. The success rate for smoke detectors in Boston was more than double the rate reported by other Suffolk County communities in 2006, according



to data from a state fire report set to be released next month and obtained by the Globe this week.

Boston fire officials attributed the greater success of detectors in the city in part to expanded public awareness about the benefits of smoke detectors and a city program that paid for the installation of some 1,800 detectors last year.

"I believe that the combination of our community-education program and our robust smoke detector installation program for elderly and disabled residents is key to keeping the number of fire deaths in the city low," Fire Commissioner Roderick Fraser said.

Though smoke detectors may be saving lives in Boston, they are not preventing fires, the data show. The number of building fires in the city rose last year to the highest level in at least a decade. There were 2,432 building fires last year, up from 1,593 in 2002 and the highest number since at least 1997, when there were 2,158.

Fire officials say they don't know what is causing the increase, but they said that in response they plan to increase efforts to educate the public about fire prevention. Those plans include a new fire-safety campaign aimed at new city residents.

The city reported two fire-related fatalities in 2006, the fewest since 1999, when there were also two deaths. On June 10, 2006, Kayleena Pridgett, 13, was killed when a power strip short-circuited and ignited a fire in a threeunit apartment building on Wildwood Street in Dorchester. On Nov. 3, 2006, Jack Baxter, 74, was killed after he fell asleep while smoking in his Hyde Park garage. Smoke Detectors & Education cont'd from page 7

In the Wildwood Street fire, a smoke detector alerted residents but Pridgett was trapped by fire and could not escape. There was no detector in Baxter's garage.

Overall, the number of fire-related deaths in Boston has fallen over the past decade, from nine deaths in 1997 and 10 in 1998, to three in 2004 and five in 2005, the report shows.

The Globe obtained a copy of Suffolk County fire statistics for 2006 compiled by state fire officials.

The State Fire Marshal's Office is expected to release a report in November.

"We do have to wait for the statewide data to have a true snapshot, but it is clear from the limited data available solely within the Suffolk County communities that detector activation in Boston-proper fires is very encouraging," Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said in an interview yesterday. "I would hope to see this as a continued upward trend."

The Suffolk County data indicate that smoke detectors worked properly and alerted residents in 43 percent of residential fires in Revere, 31 percent in Chelsea, and 16 percent in Winthrop.

Chelsea Deputy Fire Chief John Quatieri, Winthrop Fire Chief Larry Powers, Winthrop Fire Chief, and Revere Fire Chief Gene Doherty said their communities have a high number of rental units, and that tenants, more often than owners, fail to properly maintain smoke detectors.

"They may either have disconnected them or taken the batteries out," Doherty said.

Quatieri and Powers also said they believe that success rates for smoke detectors were higher than reported and that clerical errors may be to blame for the lower percentages. Neither Powers nor Quatieri said he knew the accurate percentages.

Chelsea installs free smoke detectors for elderly and disabled residents, but does not provide follow-up maintenance to replace or check batteries.

Revere officials scrapped its free smoke detector program in recent years because too few people took advantage of it, Doherty said. In Winthrop, there is no free detector installation.

"It's certainly a program I'd like to look into and get off the ground," Powers said.



SMCC AWARDED FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY GRANT

By Pamela Tourgenau, Interim Program Director

The Maine Juvenile Fire Safety Program kicks off its 2007 DHS/FEMA grant award with an NFPA "Risk Watch" training on October 18th, 2007 at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland. This training is the first of a number of program activities that will be offered throughout the next year in a statewide effort to prevent injuries and loss of life from fires involving children and juveniles.

Program objectives focus on developing and institutionalizing effective juvenile fire safety programs statewide by educating the public regarding the dangers of children and fire; percentage increasing the of reporting departments, strengthening existing juvenile fire safety collaborative and creating new collaboratives in areas of Maine where they do exist This includes developing and not supporting effective intervention programs; and

SMCC Grant cont'd from page 8

institutionalizing and sustaining responsive services statewide. The collaboratives are guided by the State of Maine Juvenile Fire Safety & Intervention Protocol, published by the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office, which incorporates recommendations from the DHS/FEMA/USFA Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Handbook (FA 210) as well as best practices from numerous federal, state, regional and local programs nationwide.

The Collaborative brings together concerned members of fire departments, county and state fire organizations, the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office, Southern Maine Community College, local and county juvenile fire safety groups, social and child protective services, justice, school counseling iuvenile and administration, and allied private and public sector organizations across the state of Maine who are continually in contact with juveniles and their families to reduce fire-related tragedies among children under the age of 18.

The grant funds will support program activities such as:

- Increasing coordination and communication among public, private and volunteer organizations involved in making Maine children and families safer from fire;
- Providing risk reduction education and training to hundreds of family members, caregivers, and support agency personnel;
- Expanding data collection, management and analysis capabilities of the State Fire Marshal's Office;
- Development and strengthening of local/county juvenile fire safety collaboratives in Maine's counties;
- Providing prevention, response and intervention services targeted for those at greatest risk statewide.

"This grant gives Maine child-safety leaders the opportunity to not only develop the most effective programs to make Maine children and their families safer from fire, but also to institutionalize the programs to ensure that future generations benefit," according to Steve Willis, Director of Public Safety Education and Leadership Initiatives at SMCC.

FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

Captain Mark Gay of the York Beach Fire Department has received the "Firefighter of the Year" award from the Maine State Federation of Firefighters.

Captain Gay has been a member of the York Beach Fire Department for thirty-five years. He began as a volunteer and has served the ranks as trustee, lieutenant, and captain. In addition to firefighting, Captain Grey has served Maine's fire service in general as an organizer of events for the Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters and the Pine Tree Burn Foundation. He was also active in organizing the Firefighter Memorial in Augusta.

According to Federation President Richard Cyr, Captain Gay has always been there when someone needs help. President Cyr stated he doesn't think Captain Gay "knows what the word no is."

Congratulations to Captain Mark Gay and the York Beach Fire Department.

The total cost of fire in the United States for the year 2004 is estimated at \$231 – 278 billion, or roughly 2.5% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

NFPA, The Total Cost of Fire in the United States Abstract

"The public, the media, and local governments generally are unaware of the magnitude and seriousness of the fire problem to individuals and their families, to communities, and to the Nation."

> USFA, *Fire in the Untied States* 1995 – 2004 Executive Summary

Maine Fire Marshal News

UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



19th Annual Pine Tree Burn Foundation Fire and Life Safety Conference "Safe At Home – 2007" October 18 – 20, 2007 Atlantic Oaks Resort Bar Harbor, Maine For more information contact: Tom Malcolm, (207) 723-4193 or by e-mail at 301tm@verizon.net



Southern Maine Community College Maine Fire Training and Education Fire Science Program

This fall MFTE will offer the 45-hour FT-218 *Fire* and Life Safety Educator course (description below) on Thursday afternoons from 1:30PM – 3:45PM @ SMCC main campus. Steve Willis Instructing. For registration info, log on to www.smccme.edu

This course is designed to meet the requirements of the NFPA 1035, the professional qualification standards for Public Fire and Safety Educator I and II. The course combines student activities, instructor presentations and community-based projects to develop skills and knowledge in the field. The course will provide students with the knowledge to design a public fire and life safety program, to organize a budget to meet the needs of the program, and to present a fire safety or life safety education presentation.



NFPA Risk Watch Injury Prevention Curriculum * Train-the-Trainer

When? Thursday, October 18, 2007, noon to 4:30 PM

Where? Southern Maine Community College, Jewett Auditorium

What? Lunch at noon, Workshop begins promptly at 1:00 PM

Audience? Fire & Life Safety Educators, Public Safety Personnel

Presenter? Mary Marchone, NFPA Risk Watch Field Advisor

Registration? Pre-registration is required. Deadline: October 4, 2007

Cost? FREE! But make sure you pre-register

Mary Marchone, Workshop Presenter

Mary Marchone has over 30 years experience in the field of fire and life safety as a practitioner and advocate. She spent 30 years with the Montgomery County, Md., Department of Fire/Rescue Services and developed and managed various community risk initiatives. She has served on the NFPA 1035 Standard for Fire and Life Safety Educators and numerous development teams for the National Fire Academy. She has been an NFA instructor for 22 years. She is currently a NFPA Risk Watch Field Advisor, and is a longtime friend of the Maine fire service.

2 Fort Road, South Portland, ME • 207-741-5808 • www.smccME.edu

IED Awareness for First Responders (Improvised Explosive Device)

Presented by the Maine Institute for Public Safety Innovation Sponsored by the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute

DATE – Monday - December 10, 2007
TIME – 8 A.M. TO 5 P.M.
PLACE – Maine Department of Public Safety, Florian Hall, 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND PRE-REGISTRATION MATERIALS – Please contact Roxane Genovese at 207-621-3418.



The *Maine Fire Marshal News* is an electronic publication of the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office.

Editors: Richard E. Taylor & Lori L. Gunn

To submit articles for publication contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (207) 626-3870 and ask to speak with the editors. You may also e-mail an article or comment to <u>Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov</u>

All articles are subject to an editorial staff review prior to inclusion. For a copy of submission requirements contact the editorial staff.

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