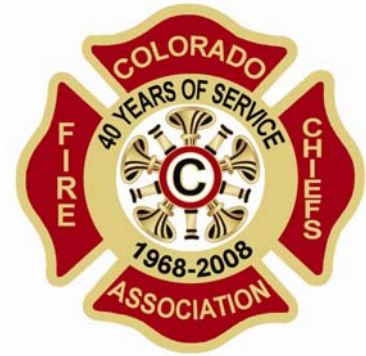




CHRISTOPHER P. RILEY
CSFCA PRESIDENT



COLORADO STATE FIRE
CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION

CSFCA President's Message - Winter 2009 "New Year, New Challenges and Opportunities"

As we stand at the beginning of 2009, I would like to wish our Colorado fire service family a happy and safe new year. The CSFCA is fully committed to serving you and your departments. This being said, we have much work ahead of us as we step into a time of many challenges and opportunities.

In terms of challenges, the U.S. economy plunged into a recession much worse than most expected. The current economic and financial situation has impacted us at all governmental levels; national, state, and local. As fire service leaders, we must continue to look for ways to maintain and improve our levels of service with limited financial resources. Fiscal prudence with limited funds and strategic financial planning will be mission critical to our success.

"Thriving and Striving during difficult times" was a theme we heard at the 2008 IAFC Leadership and Strategic Planning Forum in Washington, DC. Fire departments from across the nation share the same challenges we are facing in the Colorado Fire Service. One thing is certain—those of us in the Colorado fire service are not alone in terms of these far-reaching challenges.

Safety concerns, injuries, and line of duty deaths continue to plague the fire service. 2008 was a tragic year for the Colorado fire service with the loss of four firefighting personnel in the line-of-duty. The deaths of Captain Shane Stewart of Ault-Pierce, Chief Terry DeVore and Firefighter John Schwartz, Jr. of Olney Springs, and Air Tanker Pilot Gert Marais remind us that each and every day our firefighters are faced with a myriad of hazards and potentially deadly situations. We must be safety driven and focused at all times.

I can think of no better way to honor these fallen brothers than to have a renewed commitment to firefighter safety. The theme of our recent 2008 Leadership Challenge Conference was "Changing our Culture: Safe Guarding our most valuable asset—OUR FIREFIGHTERS."

During this conference, we had some of the best fire service speakers and instructors in the nation share safety and life-saving information. We heard J. Gordon Routley who led the investigative review team on the Super Sofa Charleston Tragedy, share lessons learned and tragic events that resulted in the deaths of nine Charleston firefighters. On this point, I challenge all of us as fire service leaders to take these lessons back to our departments and improve life safety for our communities and firefighters.

Changing our culture and improving firefighter safety does not happen automatically and is certainly not accomplished with passivity. We must be committed to strong leadership along with robust policies and procedures to raise the bar on safety and reducing firefighter injuries and deaths. Policies and training on pre-planning, fire inspections, wellness/fitness, air management, time limits for interior firefighting, mayday, firefighter survival, driver safety, ICS, and RIC are just some of the life safety measures we heard at the conference that need our commitment and focus.

Another speaker at the conference was fire service icon, Chief Ronny J. Coleman (ret). Chief Coleman did an outstanding job speaking to us on management during turbulent times. He spoke on many commonly shared leadership and management topics that included mentoring, succession planning, and accountability. His nearly 50 years of fire service experience left us with information keys to unlock many doors of opportunity that can improve our departments.

This year's legislation session will soon begin. Last year we saw an unprecedented number of fire service legislative bills brought to the State Capital. The CSFCA will remain committed to improving safety in our communities and departments through the State legislative process. Your support and active participation in the legislative process is greatly appreciated and critical in terms of success.

Speaking of challenges during turbulent times, now more than ever we must further develop and strengthen our vital partnerships that include CSFCA/IAFC, career/volunteer firefighters, management/labor, mutual aid, and various state fire service groups. Collaboration and synergizing our resources will only strengthen and improve the Colorado fire service.

Networking has been mentioned and encouraged much in recent times. Bottom line on this-we need each other! There have been countless stories told this past year about a simple phone call being made from one CSFCA member to another and finding an answer to the problem they were facing. I encourage all of us to either offer your expertise or tap into the expertise throughout the CSFCA. This in essence is what our CSFCA "Members Helping Members Directory" is all about.

Let's face these challenges with determined optimism to leverage and capitalize on the many opportunities we have to improve ourselves and the communities we serve. We owe those we serve nothing less than our best efforts.

The CSFCA Board of Directors truly appreciates your commitment and support. We wish you and your families a safe and prosperous New Year in 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

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About the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association

The mission of the Colorado State Fire Chiefs' Association is to provide leadership, education, and support to the Chief Officers of Colorado fire departments, in order to reduce the loss of life and property and to protect Colorado's citizens and institutions from all types of emergencies.