



## Frequently Asked Questions about the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System

### **What is a near-miss event?**

A near-miss event is defined as an unintentional unsafe occurrence that could have resulted in an injury, fatality, or property damage. Only a fortunate break in the chain of events prevented an injury, fatality or damage. Situations that qualify as near misses are essentially in the eyes of the reporter. If you are involved in or witness an event you believe is a near miss, then you are encouraged to submit a report.

### **Why should I submit a near-miss report?**

Reporting your event to the national system can help prevent injuries and save the lives of other firefighters.

Firefighter fatalities and injuries have been occurring at a near steady rate for the last 15 years despite improvements in PPE, equipment, apparatus and a decrease in structure fires. Near-miss reporting systems in other industries, especially aviation, credit near-miss reporting with saving lives. Since near-miss reporting has worked so effectively in other industries, the natural conclusion is that it will have similar results for the fire service.

### **What is the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System?**

The National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System is a voluntary, confidential, non-punitive and secure reporting system with the goal of improving fire fighter safety. By collecting and analyzing information on near-miss events, improvements can be made in command, education, operations and training.

### **Who is funding/supporting the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System?**

The reporting system is funded by grants from the U.S. Fire Administration and Fireman's Fund Insurance Company. The following organizations endorse the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System:

International Association of Fire Chiefs  
International Association of Fire Fighters  
Volunteer and Combination Officers Section of the IAFC

The program is administered by the International Association of Fire Chiefs under the direction of the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System Task Force. The task force members include experts in the fields of fire fighter safety and near-miss reporting systems. The task force members are:

### **Fire Service Experts:**

- Garry Briese, Executive Director (IAFC)
- Chief Alan Brunacini, Phoenix Fire Dept (AZ)

- Chief I. David Daniels, Fulton County Fire Dept (GA)
- Deputy Chief William Goldfeder, Loveland-Symmes Fire Dept (OH)
- Chief Manuel Gomez, Hobbs Fire Dept (NM)
- Pat Morrison, Health and Safety Director, IAFF
- Dennis Smith, Chairman, First Responders Foundation

**Near-Miss Reporting Experts:**

- Linda Connell, Director, NASA ASRS System
- CDR Scott Ferguson, U.S. Coast Guard
- John Gould, Fire and Aviation Safety Specialist, SAFENET
- Gordon Graham, Graham Research Consultants
- Christopher Hart, Asst. Administrator for Safety, FAA
- Dr. Robert Helmreich, University of Texas-Austin
- Tom Phillips, Airline Pilots Association

**How can I contact the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System?**

Mailing Address:

National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System  
4025 Fair Ridge Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22033

E-mail: [nearmiss@iafc.org](mailto:nearmiss@iafc.org)

Phone: 703-273-9815 ext.364

Fax: 703-273-0920

**Who is collecting the information?**

The International Association of Fire Chiefs is collecting the information on behalf of the fire service community at large.

**What is going to be done with the information?**

Fire fighters can use submitted reports as educational tools. Analyzed data will be used to identify patterns which can assist in formulating strategies to reduce fire fighter injuries and fatalities. Depending on the urgency, information will be presented to the fire service community via program reports, press releases and e-mail alerts.

**What kinds of questions are on the report?**

Section 1: 7 questions about the reporter (title, years of fire service experience, department type, etc.)

Section 2: 8 questions about the event (type, cause, etc.)

Section 3: Event description: Describe the event in your own words.

Section 4: Lessons Learned: Describe the lessons learned, suggestions to prevent a similar event, etc.

Section 5: Contact Information (OPTIONAL and CONFIDENTIAL)

**Who can submit a report?**

Any member of the fire service community is encouraged to submit a report when he/she is involved in, witnesses, or is told of a near-miss event.

**How do I submit a report?**

Reports can be electronically submitted or the report form can be printed, completed by hand and mailed or faxed.

**How long will it take me to submit a report?**

On average, it takes about 3-5 minutes to enter the demographic and event questions. You decide how much time you want to spend on the event description and the lessons learned section. Depending on the extent of the near-miss event, it may take 5-15 minutes to complete the event description and the lessons learned sections.

**What types of events should be reported?**

Situations that qualify as near misses are essentially in your eyes. If you are involved in or witness an event you believe is a near miss, then submit a report. When in doubt, fill it out.

**Should I only submit current near-miss events?**

No. Regardless of when the near-miss event occurred, all reports contain valuable information.

**What happens to the report once it is submitted?**

Within 72 hours of report submission, reports are read and analyzed by a reviewer. A reviewer will remove or generalize any names, departments, dates, times and other related information, in order to protect the identity of the reporter. Reviewers are trained to identify any safety hazards requiring immediate action. Reviewers also code the reports into a database (once all identifiable information has been removed) in order to analyze patterns. Once the report is de-identified and reviewed for content, the report may be posted on the web site for other fire fighters to use as a learning tool.

If contact information was provided and the reviewer needs additional information, you may be contacted. Remember: Contact information is optional and reports can be submitted anonymously without contact information.

**If I elect to give my contact information, how will it be used?**

If you elect to provide your contact information, a reviewer will contact you one time to have any questions answered. Your contact information will be deleted from the system. Your contact information will NOT be made available to a third party.

**Do I have to give my name when I submit a report?**

No. There is an OPTIONAL contact information section if you want to include your name, phone number and/or e-mail address so a reviewer can contact you if further information is required. The contact information collected will not be used for any other reason. Reports can be submitted anonymously without this optional contact information.

**Who will have access to read my report?**

Two reviewers and two administrators will have access to reports. Reviewers and administrators have signed confidentiality agreements. The reviewers are active duty fire service professionals with at least 20 years experience in urban, suburban and rural service areas, both as career and volunteer fire fighters. The administrators perform system maintenance and data collection. Once all identifiable terms are removed from the event description and the lessons learned sections, the report may be posted on the web site. Your contact information will NOT be posted on the web site.

**How is my identity protected when I submit a report?**

Your report has all terms or other indicators that could tie the report to you or your department removed by a reviewer. A second reviewer ensures that all identifiers are removed. Generic terms have been developed so the report retains its content, but does not reveal personal names, unit numbers, departments or other identifiers. The original submission is then destroyed.

**Can I read sample reports?**

Yes. To view previously submitted reports, click on “Search Reports” in the tool bar. Then select a “type of event” and at least one other field. Then click “Search Reports”. Click on one of the report numbers to view a report.

**Does this system replace any other reporting systems?**

The National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System does not take the place of any reporting system required by a department, local, state or federal government.

**SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS**

The seven questions in this section are designed to provide the reviewers and project administrators with a basic understanding of the reporter. This information is not designed to identify any specific reporter or department.

**Department type**

Reporters select the type that best describes their department. If the department doesn't fit any of the descriptions, “Other” can be selected and a description can be entered.

**Job/Rank**

Reporters select their current job or rank. If they had a different job or rank when the near miss occurred, that information can be included in the event description. If the job or rank does not appear, “Other” can be selected and a description can be entered.

**State**

Reporters select the two letter abbreviation of their current residence. The FEMA region will automatically fill in to the Region field. The state will not be included on the report when it is posted. Only the FEMA region will be posted on the site.

**Service Area**

This is a self-declared field and reports should select the service area that best describes the area their fire department serves.

**Department Shift**

Reporters select the work shift in their department. It applies to career departments (hours on/hours off, days/nights, straight days) and volunteer departments (stand-by, duty night, respond from home). If the work shift does not appear, "Other" can be selected and a description can be entered.

**Your Age**

Reporters select their current age range.

**Your Fire Service Experience**

Reporters select their current fire service experience.

**SECTION 2: EVENT INFORMATION**

The eight questions in this section ask general questions about the near-miss event.

**Event Type**

There are six categories in this field: fire emergency event, non-fire emergency event, on-duty activities, training activities, vehicle event and other. The first five categories mirror the five main categories where firefighters suffer injuries and fatalities.

**Event Date**

Reporters enter the date of the near miss. The date may be approximated if the reporter doesn't remember the exact date.

**Event Time**

Reporters enter the time of the near miss. The time may be approximated if the reporter doesn't remember the exact time.

**Event Participation**

There are three choices in this field: involved in the event, witnessed event but not directly involved in the event and told of the event, but neither involved nor witnessed event.

**Hours into the shift**

Reporters select the appropriate range. If responding from home, reporters can select 0-4.

**Do you think this will happen again?**

Consideration should be given if an individual or if the department responded to the near miss by doing something to prevent re-occurrence.

**Contributing Factors**

Reporters can select up to five of 20 contributing factors.

**Loss potential**

Reporters can select up to five of seven critical loss items.

**SECTION 3: EVENT DESCRIPTION**

This section contains a free text field that asks the reporter to provide a narrative about the near miss. There are topics on the bottom of the page to provide the reporter with suggestions of items to address in the narrative.

**SECTION 4: LESSONS LEARNED**

The key to any near miss report is the lesson learned. Reporters are asked to describe what they learned from the experience that can help prevent the same thing from happening to another firefighter.

**SECTION 5: OPTIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION**

This field OPTIONAL. If the reporter provides contact information, it is kept confidential. It will only be used for a reviewer to contact the reporter if the event description needs clarification. The reporter may also be contacted by program administrators to request feedback on the reporting system. The contact information is then destroyed.