

A Dad's Perspective on Standing Down

By Doug McGlynn

I am honored to have a son who chose to follow in his father's footsteps and join a fire department here in S. Florida. Witnessing the fire service through the fresh eyes of an 18-year-old, learning every day at his career department, offers a unique blend of appreciation for me as it relates to my view on public service. The innocence accompanying a Gen Z probie inside the firehouse must be eye-opening and, at times, entertaining. As a firefighter dad, part of my role has been to mentor him into understanding the 'why' he chose this profession and that safety is always paramount. As a probie, I shared that achieving a level of mastery in the very basics of firefighting is one of the best ways for him to accomplish this. This, of course, starts with his PPE.

After being on the job for a few months, my son and his buddies attended a RIT; Saving Our Own HOT class at a local fire academy (The Palm Beach State Fire College Invitational). He came home buzzing with questions, particularly about an exercise involving multiple firefighters coordinating around a hole to rescue a downed firefighter who fell through. He was taught how to use ropes and charged hose lines to lift out a fallen firefighter. He couldn't understand why so many firefighters would be on a roof, and it didn't sound safe to him especially if it was compromised with a hole already. I asked him why he thought it was a roof hole. I asked, "By any chance, was the training called the Nance Drill?" to which he enthusiastically replied, "Yes,!"

Of course, he wondered how I knew that, but instead of gloating (for at least a few minutes), I reminded him that part of a firefighter's oath of office is to honor those who have come before him. "Do you know why they call it the Nance Drill?" I asked. He admitted that he did not know. I began to tell him that the exercise was named after John Nance, a Columbus firefighter who tragically fell through the floor into the basement of a 3rd-alarm commercial



John Nance

structure fire. I stressed that this tragic event led to the development of the rescue techniques that he and his buddies learned nearly three decades after the event. I reminded him that the fire service had analyzed this tragedy and had fine-tuned the strategies and methods of victim removal,

having been passed down from generation to generation of firefighters just like he and his buddies in today's class.

The importance of this drill and the story of John Nance was missed in the class as the students focused solely on the rescue techniques. My son and his peers assumed the hole was in a roof, not understanding that the training exercise represented a hole in a floor. Adding to this was the fact that basements are uncommon in our area, South Florida, and none of the attendees at the training had even been inside a basement in their lives. This misunderstanding underscored the critical need to teach the 'why'—not just the 'how'—of firefighting techniques to our next generation of firefighters. That night, I sent my son and his friends a link to a tribute to John Nance from Billy G's archive at FirefighterClosecalls.com, explaining who John was and the lasting legacy he left behind.

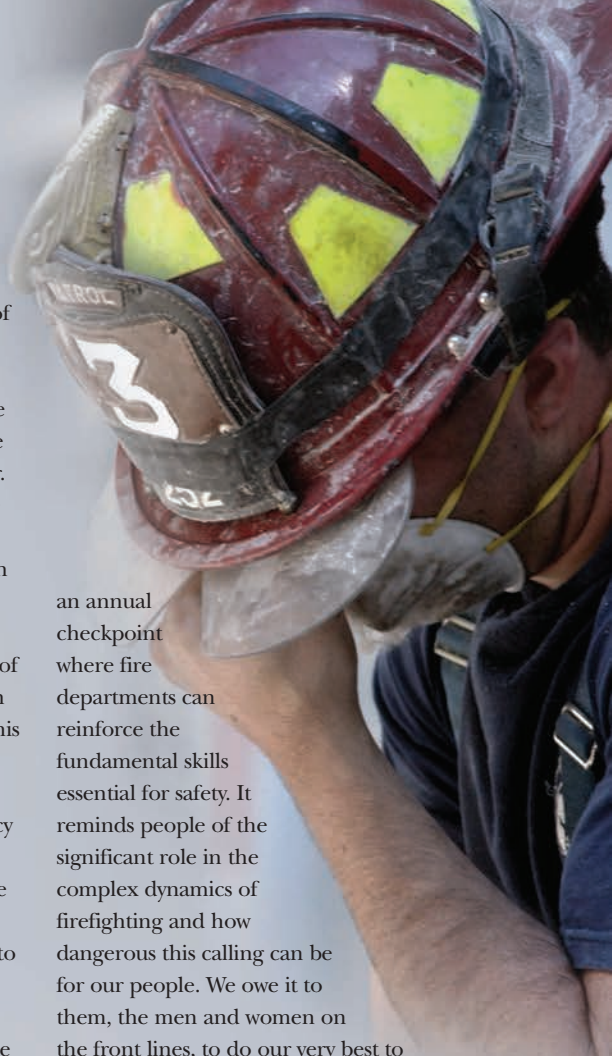
This story perfectly ties into the significance of the 2024 Firefighter Safety Stand Down, which carries the theme "Fire Training: Back to Basics." This initiative reinforces fundamental firefighting skills and knowledge for effective emergency response and firefighter safety. The annual initiative takes place during the third week of June, and this year, the Stand Down runs from June 16 – June 22nd.

The Genesis of Safety Stand Down

The military adopted the Safety Stand-down concept, which has been well integrated into the fire service for many years. The Stand Down is a collaboration between the IAFC Safety, Health & Survival Section, the IAFF, and the NFPA, to name a few. It ensures that firefighters dedicate time to focus exclusively on safety and health protocols. This tradition has been crucial in reducing injuries and fatalities within the service. Fire departments, public safety, and emergency service agencies are asked to suspend all non-emergency activities during the week to focus on the health, safety, and well-being of firefighter education and training.

To make the most of this year's Safety Stand Down, there are plenty of resources on www.safetystanddown.org that detail the "5" Daily Focus areas of building a solid training program and feature structured activities and topics for each day. The featured content also emphasizes the "12" Foundations of Fire Department Training with additional resources from NFPA 1400: Standard on Fire Service Training, featured on the NFPA Online Learning page.

The Firefighter Safety Stand Down serves as



an annual checkpoint where fire departments can reinforce the fundamental skills essential for safety. It reminds people of the significant role in the complex dynamics of firefighting and how dangerous this calling can be for our people. We owe it to them, the men and women on the front lines, to do our very best to provide the safest and healthiest work environment possible, fully understanding the unpredictable elements of an IDLH, or the ramifications of PTSD on our first responders. This week allows those initiatives to take to the stage of our awareness, front and center!

For more information on event planning and resources, visit [Safety Stand Down](#) and [Safety Stand Down Overview](#).

Doug McGlynn is a 27-year veteran of the fire service and the Emergency Management Division Chief with Palm Beach County Fire Rescue. Doug is an Incident Commander with the South Florida Regional AHIMT and has deployed to multiple disasters in Florida and Oklahoma over the past 7 years. He has a Master's Degree in Leadership from Palm Beach Atlantic University, a Bachelor's in Public Administration from Barry University, and a Fire Science degree from Palm Beach State College. Doug is a graduate of the Emergency Services Leadership Institute of the Florida Fire Chief's Association, an EFO of the National Fire Academy, and a graduate of the Fire Service Executive Development Institute (FSEDI II) of the IAFC. Doug is also a designated Chief Fire Officer with the Center for Public Safety Excellence. He sits on the Board of Directors with the Fire Chief's Association of Palm Beach County.

