



Interaction with Elected Officials and Staff – Tips and Speaking Points

Your participation in political advocacy on behalf of the fire service is meaningful and important. Regardless of your rank, department size, or perspective, our collective voice can bring about meaningful and positive changes to make our communities and firefighters safer. The IAFC Hot Sheet ([Legislative Action Alert](#)) contains several legislative priorities that we encourage you to speak about with your elected officials. Additionally, we want to provide you with the following talking points about fire and fire departments to help convey the conditions and needs of our profession:

1. Firefighting is hyper-local. Examples of how legislation has helped/could help YOUR local community or department are some of the most compelling stories. Keep your stories and points targeted and brief since all of these staffers/elected officials are likely extremely busy.
2. Since 2013, the frequency of fires has continued to rise along with the deaths. While fire is a risk that we are taught about in school and familiar with, it continues to plague communities large and small.
 - a. The number of civilian injuries has declined in those same years showing the effectiveness of engineering, fire protection systems, and public education.
3. Fires kill more people than all other natural disasters combined.
4. Most fire deaths occur in people's homes (75%). If we want to make a difference, we must make people safer in their dwellings in a multi-strategy approach.
5. Fire departments respond to all types of emergencies (fires only representing about 4% of the total call volume). This is because the fire/EMS industry has adopted the philosophy as being "all hazard" and tackling all time-sensitive emergency needs in a local community across all risk categories.
6. Wildfire and its interaction with the built environment are troubling and represent an evolving disaster type that we must deal with. Fires like the recent fires in Los Angeles, California; the 2023 fire in Lahaina, Hawaii; and the 2016 fire in Gatlinburg, Tennessee demonstrate the need for conventional firefighting organizations to be better equipped, trained, and prepared to handle these incidents.
7. Of the more than 1 million firefighters in the United States, only about a third are career firefighters. Most fire and emergency response responsibilities fall on volunteers in this country, making it even more important to protect and equip these cost-effective public servants.
8. While firefighting is a local problem with local funding and political ingredients, fire departments also serve as primary responders to incidents of national consequence and federal disasters. All 28 FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams are constructed using local firefighters who deploy as federal assets during times of disasters. In short, firefighting forces represent a safety blanket in this country for emergencies of all types and intensities and do so in an efficient and effective manner.