

News Release
Houston Fire Department
Public Information Office
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HFD Receives Accreditation

Acting Fire Chief Chris Connealy Receives Chief Fire Officer Designation, Department of Defense Mandates Accreditation

(April 5, 2001) The Houston Fire Department received Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) Accredited Agency status March 24, 2001 for meeting the criteria established through CFAI's self-assessment and accreditation program. The CFAI Board voted unanimously to accredit the Houston Fire Department at its biannual meeting in Fairfax, VA.

Acting Fire Chief Connealy said, "The members of the Houston Fire Department earned this accreditation. This honor belongs to them. It is a testimony of their hard work and dedication to the citizens they serve."

An agency closely related to CFAI, the Commission on Chief Fire Officer Designation (CFOD) conferred March 21, 2001 the professional designation of Chief Fire Officer upon Chief Connealy. With this designation Chief Connealy is among a select group of 23 senior fire executives to hold this honor in the world.

Mayor Lee P. Brown said, "I want to thank Acting Fire Chief Connealy and the entire Houston Fire Department for working hard for Houstonians. CFAI accreditation and Acting Chief Connealy's Chief Fire Officer designation are distinct honors that reflect well on the men and women of the Houston Fire Department who perform above-and-beyond the call of duty every day."

Individuals who hold Chief Fire Officer designation have demonstrated through their education, leadership, and management skills that they possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the fire and emergency services profession.

Five senior fire officers join Acting Fire Chief Connealy as recently designated Chief Fire Officers.

- James Callahan, St. Petersburg, Florida
- Gary Calder, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- Richard Carrizzo, Parkville, Missouri
- Monica Morgan, San Diego, California
- Peter Wilms, Westerville, Ohio

Background

Serving 1.9 million people and an area more than half the size of Rhode Island - 617 square miles, the Houston Fire Department (HFD) is the largest fire agency to receive accreditation.

After attending an accreditation workshop in April 1999, Acting Fire Chief Connealy and his accreditation team worked for a year and a half to prepare an 800-page self-assessment document submitted to CFAI August 2000 for consideration.

Through this self-assessment process that included a review of 45 criteria and 255 performance measures, HFD staff members evaluated the operations of the department, identified its strengths and weaknesses, and developed a plan to improve areas that needed to be addressed.

CFAI provides a comprehensive system of fire and emergency service evaluation that can help local governments determine their risks and fire safety needs, evaluate the performance of the organizations involved, and provide a method for continuous improvement. CFAI can elevate the professionalism and level of service delivery within the fire and emergency services. CFAI was established as an independent non-profit entity in 1996. CFAI is the result of a decade of hard work and development of many fire service leaders and local government officials.

To date, 44 fire protection agencies have been accredited, including Plano, Texas; Honolulu, Hawaii; Charlotte, North Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee; Calgary, Canada; and the Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland agencies.

Department of Defense

For the past several years CFAI has been providing information to the Department of Defense on the advantages of incorporating the self-assessment process to its fire and emergency services. According to Chairman of the CFAI Board of Trustees Chief Ron Coleman, "The decision by the Department of Defense to use the self-assessment process to evaluate fire defenses is an enlightened and informed event."