

The Driving Force of Change



Around the 1990s and on to today, the environment of today's organizations has changed a great deal. A variety of driving forces provoke this change. Increasing telecommunications has "shrunk" the world substantially. Increasing diversity of firefighters has brought in a wide array of differing values, perspectives and expectations among firefighters. Public consciousness has become much more sensitive and demanding that organizations be more socially and professionally responsible. Much of the fire service and the firefighters have joined the global communications arena, creating a wider awareness for services. Organizational leadership need to become more responsible not only to their fellow workers but to a wider community of "stakeholders."

As a result of the above driving forces, organizations were and are required to adopt "new paradigms," or view on the fire service of Minnesota and the world, to be more sensitive, flexible and adaptable to the demands and expectations of stakeholder demands. Many organizations have abandoned or are abandoning the traditional top-down, rigid and hierarchical structures to more "organic" and fluid forms.

Today's organizational leadership must deal with continual, rapid change. Organizational leadership faced with a major decision can no longer refer back to an earlier developed plan for direction. Management techniques must continually notice changes in the environment and organization, assess this change and manage change. Managing change does not mean controlling it, rather understanding it, adapting to it where necessary and guiding it when possible.

Organizational leadership can't know it all or reference resources for every situation. Organizational leadership must count on and listen more to their members and in our case the rank and file volunteer firefighters of Minnesota.

The **first organization in Minnesota was the Minnesota State Fire Department Association (MSFDA) which started in 1873**. The MSFDA included everyone, all ranks, in the fire department, in its membership. Below is a list groups that have split away from the MSFDA over the years most likely because they had a special interest or a need that was not being met by the MSFDA. You can ask yourself, WHY did all these groups feel a need to start their own associations. All of these groups could have been represented by the MSFDA, couldn't they? Obviously not or they would not have started their own groups.

In **1927** the MSFDA sponsored the organization of the **Volunteer Firemen's Benefit Association (VFBA)**. Another group that started to represent a specific need for the firefighters in Minnesota.

Then in the **1935** the fire chiefs that were members of the MSFDA made a decision much like the MSVFA is doing now, and that was to break off from the MSFDA, and start their own association called the **Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA)**.

In **1938** the career firefighters decided they needed to start an organization that dealt with their specific needs as career firefighters. They started the **Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters Association (MPFF)**.

In **1969** another group, yes another organization, this time it was the fire instructors that banded together and formed the **Fire Instructors' Association of Minnesota (FIAM)**. The founding fathers of this group included members from the MSFDA, MSFCA, as well as other groups.

In **1975** the **Minnesota Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators** started a special association to address the issues that were specific to their needs.

In **1985** **The Minnesota Fire Service Foundation** was incorporated as a joint effort of the Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters, the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association and the Minnesota State Fire Department Association.

In **2007** the **Minnesota Volunteer Firefighters Association (MSVFA)** was started with an emphasis on volunteer and paid-on-call volunteer firefighter's interests.

The point in listing all of these splinter groups (more below) and so called radicals, that would break away from some parent organization to start their own association is historic and will continue long after you and I are gone from this earth.

There appears to be a grave concern by some organizations that a new organization has started in Minnesota. Why is that you ask that they should be so concerned? Maybe it is because there is no single organization, with a specific focus on the rank and file volunteer firefighters of Minnesota.

MSVFA exists as both a means to accomplish a result and the obvious role – a means of providing representation, service, camaraderie, and support. The second but equally important role is as a means of engagement in a democracy.

We need to remember that our organizations are creatures of the 1st Amendment - freedom of speech and freedom of association.

Groups that have formed Associations in the State of Minnesota

1. **Fire Instructors Association of Minnesota (FIAM)** - Promoting & assisting the development of fire service training through a timely exchange of information & new ideas in a comprehensive & ethical manner.
2. **Fire Marshal's Association of Minnesota (FMAN)** - FMAM seeks to promote both public and professional awareness of fire prevention, public fire safety education and inspection. Membership is open to all working in those fields.
3. **Int'l Association of Arson Investigators-MN Chapter (IAAI-MN)** - The IAAI-Minnesota is dedicated to the education of its members in the field of arson investigation and prevention. It works closely with law enforcement, the judicial system and insurance industry.
4. **Minnesota 100 Club** - The purpose of which Minnesota 100 is organized is as follows: To receive funds and property, to invest and reinvest the same, and to disburse the same, as voluntary, gratuitous and charitable gifts and contributions solely to or for the benefit of: Public Safety Officials and members of their families and citizens assisting those public safety groups.
5. **Minnesota Area Relief Association Coalition (MARAC)** – An association of firefighter relief associations that have joined together for a common cause.
6. **Minnesota Fallen Firefighters Memorial Association (MFFMA)** - Our mission is to ensure that every Firefighter Line-of-Duty Death (LODD) within Minnesota is provided a dignified memorial service. This will be done no matter what departmental affiliation, religious, political or any other preference. We are only here to honor a fallen brother or sister within the fire service.
7. **Minnesota Professional Firefighters Association (MPFF)** - Minnesota career firefighters association
8. **Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA)** – The MSFCA is an organization whose charter is to support you in your challenging role as Fire Chief. This is an organization for Fire Chiefs, run by Fire Chiefs. All of our committee members are active fire service leaders, people that are dealing with the same issues you are.
9. **Minnesota State Fire Departments' Association's (MSFDA)** - The Minnesota State Fire Department Association first met in Minneapolis Minnesota in 1873. The purpose at that time still holds as the purpose today. "Foster and encourage greater skill and efficiency, cultivate friendship and fellowship among members: Maintain proper remuneration for duties performed: Improve moral, intellectual, social and economic condition of members."
10. **Minnesota State Volunteer Firefighters Association (MSVFA)** - This organizations main objective and purpose is to establish and maintain a voice for the support of volunteer firefighters of Minnesota.
11. **North Suburban Regional Mutual Aid Association (NSRMAA)** - The members of the North Suburban Regional Mutual Aid Association (NSRMAA) began October 14, 1947 when just a small group of fire departments decided there was value in sharing resources.
12. **Red Knights International Motorcycle Club** - We are a club for members of the fire service, and their families, who enjoy riding motorcycles. Membership is open to ALL firefighters, active or retired, volunteer, or industrial, who have access to a motorcycle and hold a valid motorcycle drivers license. Spouses, members children, boy/girlfriends are also welcome as Social Members.
 - a. Minnesota Chapter 1 - Red Knights International Motorcycle Club – Eagan
 - b. Minnesota Chapter 2 - Red Knights International Motorcycle Club – East Grand Forks
 - c. Minnesota Chapter 3 - Red Knights International Motorcycle Club - Willmar
 - d. Minnesota Chapter 4 - Red Knights International Motorcycle Club - New Hope
13. **The Minnesota Fire Service Foundation** was incorporated in 1985 as a joint effort of the Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters, the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association and the Minnesota State Fire Department Association. A Board of nine people, consisting of each founding organization appointing three members administers the Foundation. The Foundation is registered as a 501 c 3 non-profit organization. One of the purposes of the Foundation is to raise funds from donations and sales of miniature memorial statues and memorial coin sets and administer these funds for educational purposes.
14. **The North Star Women's Firefighter Association** was founded by Kimberly (Hanlon) Cummings from the Eden Prairie Fire Department. Now that more women are joining the fire service, we need to have resources for uniforms, gear, mentoring, and peer support. We are creating an organization that can benefit all firefighters in these areas.
15. **Volunteer Firefighters' Benefit Association of Minnesota (VFBA)** - This organization general object and purpose shall be to create, establish and maintain a fund for the relief and support of volunteer firefighters who sustain injury, sickness, disability or loss of life in the line of duty, who at the time of such injury, sickness, disability or loss of life are members in good standing of the Association. Association funds shall be provided by dues, donations, assessment of members and other proper means.