

Culture Shock in the Fire Service

November 13th, 2010 Firefighter Chance Hyatt Zoble of the Columbia Fire Department (SC) was tragically killed while operating at a brush fire on a busy interstate just outside the City of Columbia. Since that tragic day nearly 8 years ago, through investigations, instruction and reinforcement, the Columbia Fire Department has taken steps to drastically change nearly every single response consideration while operating on or near the roadway. Through this experience, each CFD member has been educated how to do things differently. But changing the fire department's culture can be a battle of wills and egos. Drawing from personal experience of what it takes to change a department's behavioral culture after a tragedy, this lecture will explore this and several additional high profile incidents of LODD lessons learned which according to the US Fire Administration almost all point to one root cause: The need for culture change and the reduction of risk-taking behaviors in the fire and emergency service at large. We will also explore several insights from industry experts, as well as publications by the US Fire Administration and International Association of Fire Chiefs. By becoming students of the cultural change needed in the fire service, together we can strive to ensure that "Everyone Goes Home". It should be our profession's solemn belief that it shouldn't take another tragedy like that of 23-year old firefighter Chance Hyatt Zoble to convince fire department leaders everywhere, the need for culture shock in the fire service at large.