

Orange County, FL - FRI Meeting Minutes

Metro Chiefs Business Meeting August 14, 2025, 10:30 am (Eastern) Orlando, FL

Board Members in Attendance

Chief John Butler, President
Chief Trisha Wolford, Vice President
Chief Steve Dongworth, Secretary
Chief Chuck Ryan, Treasurer
Chief Aaron Lipski, Board Member
Chief Keith Bryant, Senior Board Member
Chief Alec Oughton, Alternate Board Member
Chief Ernest Malone, Immediate Past President
Ken LaSala, IAFC Staff Liaison
Chief Otto Drozd III, Executive Secretary

Call to Order/Welcome

Executive Secretary Drozd called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

President Butler welcomed the Metro Chiefs members and guests.

U.S. Fire Administration Update

Chief Donna Black, the Acting U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), updated the Metro Chiefs about developments at USFA. She highlighted the opportunities for the fire and emergency service. She discussed the issues of reform to both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the federal response to wildland fires. She also emphasized the need to highlight the fire and emergency services' role in preparedness. She also reported that USFA was working more closely with FEMA's National Urban Search and Rescue Office and is staffing the ESF-4, Firefighting and ESF-9, Search and Rescue desks at the FEMA National Response Coordination Center (NRCC).

Welcome to Orange County

Fire Chief Anthony Rios of the Orange County Fire Rescue Department welcomed the Metro Chiefs. He discussed the importance of collaboration at the city, state, county, and federal levels. He also discussed the evening's Metro Dinner plans.

FirstNet Update

Chief Mike Varney provided an update about the federal First Net Authority (FirstNet). FirstNet is focused on improving coverage of the network; it currently has 7.5 million connections across the U.S. It also improved its customer service portal to provide real-time alerts. FirstNet also is working on improving in-building coverage by providing free in-building coverage in facilities. Also, FirstNet can provide high power output (6X) in the field. FirstNet also has issued close to 2,000 deployments

of deployables. It also leans forward and deploys assets to potential disasters and is preparing to assist jurisdictions for the FIFA World Cup.

National Fallen Firefighter Foundation

Chief Danny Kistner discussed the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (NFFF) and its First Responder Center for Excellence. He asked Metro Chiefs to provide one life safety advocate per organization. So far, the life safety advocate program has expanded from 10 Metro departments to 26 departments. The NFFF provides training for the advocates. There will be a 2025 Advocates Summit in New Orleans.

Chief Kistner also discussed other NFFF programs like its 2024 survey on fire department behaviors and viewpoints. He said that NFFF is revising its Life Safety Initiatives. He also discussed NFFF's Staff Ride program that uses virtual reality, and its community and government education programs.

National Firefighter Registry for Cancer

Chief Dave Downey highlighted the need for fire departments to register with the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer. The program has a Gold Helmet Award for departments that enroll 50% of the department or more than 300 enrollees from one department.

LifeScan

Chief Todd LeDuc announced that Life Scan will partner with the Metro Chiefs to produce a series of podcasts. They will be focused on health and safety issues and discuss best practices.

ISO

Mike Moresh, the ISO Vice President of Hazard Mitigation, discussed ISO's interest in partnering with Metro fire departments. He said that ISO wants to help departments get the best ratings and understand the reason for ISO's ratings.

Metro Business Meeting

Call to Order/Introductions

After the guests left, President Butler asked for a call to order.

A motion to call the meeting to order was made by Chief Tom LaBelle, seconded by Chief Brian O'Neill, and agreed to unanimously.

President Butler asked the Metro members to introduce themselves and recognized the first-time members.

Approval of the Last Meeting's Minutes

President Butler asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the Metro business meeting in Myrtle Beach.

A motion to approve the previous meeting minutes was made by Chief Brian O'Neill, seconded by Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr, and agreed to unanimously.

President's Report

President Butler reported on the recent Memorandum of Understanding with the Africa Fire Mission. He also discussed his attendance at the FEU conference, where he presented on the challenges of data and technology. It was FEU's 30th anniversary.

President Butler also discussed his attendance at the CTIF Delegate Assembly in Sofia, Bulgaria, where Chief Anthony Marrone gave a presentation on the January 2025 wildland fires in Los Angeles.

President Butler also discussed his work with IFSTA to develop a professional development partnership. He would like to develop the next ladder of education after CFO, EFO, the Naval Postgraduate School, and other programs.

Vice President's Report

Vice President Wolford said that she supported President Butler. She discussed her inauguration as IAFC President and Board Chair. She said that she is working on the educational agenda for the Metro Chiefs 2026 conference. Vice President Wolford also said that she would report on the Leadership Development Group.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Dongworth reported that the Metro Chiefs have 237 members:

- 132 Regular Metro members
- 7 International members
- 98 Senior members

The following members joined since the last Metro business meeting at FRI:

- Brian Carson, Puget Sound Regional Authority
- Dr. Michael Cunningham, Cobb County Fire & Emergency Services
- John Curtis, South Metro Fire Rescue
- Joseph Dixon, Baltimore County Fire Department
- John Esposito, New York Fire Department
- Ryan Gynn, Pasco County Fire Rescue
- David Lazenby, Edmonton Fire Rescue Services
- Robert Logan, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department
- Jim Jessop, Toronto Fire Services
- Jani Pitkänen, Helsinki City Rescue Department
- Tom Shannon, Scottsdale Fire Department
- Corey Smedley, Montgomery County (MD) Fire and Rescue Service
- Stephen Smith, Queensland (Australia) Fire Department
- Richard Stewart, Lubbock Fire Rescue
- Dennis Mark van Zanten, Safety Region Gelderland Zuid, Netherlands (International Member)
- Keith Watts, St. Petersburg Fire-Rescue
- Commissioner Eric Yap, Singapore Civil Defense Force
- Robert Zoldos II, Durham Fire Department

The following members have applications in process:

- Sidney Carroll, Norfolk Fire Rescue Department

- Valerie Frausto, San Antonio Fire Department
- Julie O’Berg, City of Spokane Fire Department
- Jeffrey Thompson, Philadelphia Fire Department
- Billy Alcorn, Fresno Fire Department

The following Metro Chiefs transitioned to Senior Metro members:

- Jeff Buchanan
- Keith Johnson
- Jim Kay
- Matthew Pegg
- Sam Peña

Invitations to join the Metro Chiefs were sent to:

- Peter Arnevall, Greater Stockholm Fire Brigade
- Thomas Coe, Frederick County (MD) Fire & Rescue Services Division
- Dean Crispen, San Francisco Fire Department
- Emily Jaramillo, Albuquerque Fire Department
- Thomas Muñoz, Houston Fire Department
- Billy Samuels, Clark County Fire Department
- Deron “Pat” Wilson, Henry County Fire Rescue
- Melvin Carter, Richmond Fire Department (Senior Metro)

Secretary Dongworth reported that he is looking to add members by better identifying Metro fire departments in North America. He also would like to develop a process for retiring Metro Chiefs to transition to become Senior Metro members.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Ryan reported that from 2024, the Metro Chiefs had a carryover balance of \$1,062,534. For 2025 (through March 31), the Metro Chiefs had revenue totaling \$9,740 and expenses totaling \$54,146, which resulted in net loss of \$44,407. The overall Metro Chiefs’ balance is \$1,018,127.

A motion to approve the Treasurer’s report was made by Chief Dave Downey, seconded by Chief Brian O’Neill, and agreed to unanimously.

Senior Metro Board Member’s Report

Senior Board Member Bryant reported that he participated in the Member Services Task Group.

Board Member’s Report

Board Member Lipski said that he joined the Metro Board at the Horry County Metro meeting and will discuss his work with the Communications task group.

Alternate Board Member’s Report

Alternate Board Member Oughton reported that he was the Metro liaison to the “Science in the Station” effort. He also hosted three additional podcasts for the Metro Chiefs. He also reported that the Metro Board met at the NFPA conference and met with the Abu Dhabi Civil Defense Force. He also expressed concern with the recent attacks on codes and the code development process in the U.S.

Past President's Report

Past President Malone reported that -- in the past year -- he attended the Urban Fire Forum and the Vision Summit. He also attended the FEU conference in Cyprus, where he gave a presentation on recruitment and retention. He also attended the IAFC Board meetings; the Metro Winter Board meeting; met with the IAFF; lobbied for Metro issues on Capitol Hill; and met with the IAFC and IAFF at the CPSE conference. He also participated in the IAFC's Fire Apparatus Supply and Demand Work Group.

IAFC Staff Liaison's Report

Mr. LaSala updated the Metro Chiefs on developments within the federal government and Congress. The National Fire Academy re-opened after it was closed, and the grant application periods for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program; the Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER); and Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants became available. In addition, the Metro Chiefs are urging Congress to preserve the federal FirstNet Authority and extend eligibility for the federal Public Safety Officers' Benefits program to the families of fire, EMS, and law enforcement officers that died in the line of duty from cancer.

Executive Secretary's Report

Executive Secretary Drozd reported that he sent out surveys and information bulletins to the Metro Chiefs' membership. He also is working on the upcoming Metro Conference in Milwaukee, which is June 7 -11, 2026. Executive Secretary Drozd also attended the CTIF and FEU meetings, where wildland fire response was a major topic of discussion. He also will send out the Metro Chiefs' budget with the member packet per a recently passed motion.

Conference Reports

Chief Joseph Tanner reported on the revenue and expenses from the 2025 Metro Chiefs conference in Horry County. He set up a simpler registration process for the 2025 conference.

Board Member Lipski reported on the 2026 Metro Chiefs conference in Milwaukee. The website for the conference is [Metro Fire Chiefs Conference 2026 | Milwaukee, WI](#). The conference will be held at the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee. He is working on getting sponsors and scheduling events for the conference.

Task Group Reports

Member Services Task Group

Chief Dave Downey reported that the task group developed a welcome package for recruiting new Metro members. It also is working on a website for new members and working with ESRI to map potential new members. He also reported that the NFPA 1710/1750 committee is voting on the second revision of comments.

Leadership Development Group

Alternate Board Member Oughton reported that he continues to produce podcasts on topics of interest to the Metro Chiefs. He is looking for feedback on the new content and has podcasts scheduled for the rest of the year.

Communications Task Group

Board Member Lipski said that his group is working on a single-branded webpage for the Metro Chiefs. The Metro Chiefs have bought www.MetroChiefs.org and are developing social media pages. Also, they are creating a Member Services platform to make it easier for Senior Metro Chiefs to renew their membership.

Business Development

Chief Tanner said that the Metro Chiefs want to diversify their income. The task group is looking at both cash donations and in-kind sponsorships.

International Outreach

President Butler reported that the task groups chair, Chief Brian Fennessy, was unable to attend, so he provided an update. He discussed the upcoming Metro attendance at meetings in Australia. He also said that the Metro Chiefs continue to be recognized as fire service leaders in Europe.

A motion to add an FEU meeting in agenda and a Metro meeting in Ecuador to the Metro travel agenda was made by President Butler, seconded by Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr, and agreed to unanimously.

Executive Secretary Drozd said that Metro Chiefs travel was based on MOUs with other organizations like FEU and OBA. The Metro Chiefs budget would be adjusted to prevent deficits.

Committee Reports

IAFC TED Committee

Chief Jonathan Killings reported that the quantity and volume of seminar proposals for FRI has improved. The number of attendees at FRI is increasing. The popular courses include topics involving technology including the use of artificial intelligence and the fire service.

IAFC EMS Section

Chief Kennedy reported that he met with Chief Kevin Joles, the IAFC EMS Section Chair, The IAFC EMS Section wants to work more closely with the Metro Chiefs of topics such as the use of Whole Blood to provide blood transfusions in the field.

IAFC Battery Committee

Chief Don Lombardi reported that the IAFC was focused on passing the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act (H.R. 973). Also, the committee is asking for information about how to respond to fires involving electric vehicles. It also is examining issues like codes and standards for lithium-ion batteries and their charging stations.

Old Business

President Butler called for Old Business. None was offered.

New Business

President Butler discussed the proposal to create a non-voting international liaison to the Metro Board. The position would be appointed by the Metro President for a two-year term.

A motion to create a non-voting international liaison, who must have experience working with international fire service organizations, to the Metro Board was made by President Butler, seconded by Chief Mary Cameli, and agreed to unanimously.

Chief Dave Downey offered the amendment, which required experience working with international fire service organizations. President Butler clarified that the definition of “international” meant that the liaison came from a country that is non-contiguous to the U.S.

Chief Smokey Dyer promoted the candidacy of Chief Mike Snider, the fire chief of the City of Lee’s Summit, for the IAFC 2nd Vice President.

Motion to Adjourn

President Butler asked for a motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Chief Julian Dixon, seconded by Commissioner Annete Nance-Holt, and agreed to unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:36 pm (Eastern).
Rescue