



**Torrington Fire Department
City of Torrington**



Chief of Fire Services
Gary M. Brunoli

Chief of Operations
Christopher Pepler

Training/Safety Division
David A. Tripp, Jr.

Fire Prevention/Investigation Division
Timothy J. Tharau

Introduction

My name is Chris Pepler and I currently serve as the Chief of Operations for the City of Torrington Fire Department. I have been a member of the Torrington Fire Department for 15 years, and prior to that I served as a volunteer firefighter and EMT. In all, I have 24 years in the emergency services. Thank you for allowing me to give testimony regarding S.B. 439.

Currently we operate under CGS 7-313e. in which any member serving in the capacity of fire officer in charge shall (a) control and direct emergency activities at such scene. I believe that the fire service as a whole has better experience and education as it relates to incident scene management and control. To put this into the simplest context, someone has to be in charge, and the fire service is the best fit for this due to our para-military command structure.

Fire companies are deployed for service based on the nature of the incident and or location. In the majority of departments, a fire apparatus responds to an incident with a company officer (supervisor) who is responsible for the people serving under their command, assessing the needs of the incident, and keeping their crew safe from any types of danger. The company officer is responsible for requesting any resources that will be needed to effectively bring an incident under control. If an incident becomes more complex, a higher ranking (more experienced or trained officer) will take over and serve as the Incident Commander of the scene.

Unfortunately emergency incidents are rarely the same, fire officers are trained to rapidly assess scenes and make sure the incidents are safe for other agencies (EMS) to work in. The fire officer is trained to conduct a risk benefit analysis before allowing people to enter a scene. It will not do anyone, any good if those who are there to render aide, become part of the problem and cannot be part of the solution.

In March 2004, HSPD-5 directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The overall goal of NIMS was to enable responders at all levels to work together more effectively and efficiently to manage domestic incidents no matter what the cause, size or complexity, including catastrophic acts of terrorism and disasters. NIMS established a uniform set of processes and procedures that emergency responders at all levels of government can use to conduct



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organized response operations. The fire service is way ahead of EMS in regards to scene safety and management and control for no other reason than we practice (NIMS) on a daily basis.

Conclusion

The fire service has hundreds of years of scene management experience from the great Chicago fire of 1871, to the attacks of 9/11. We embraced the NIMS template making it part of our routine to emergencies and train constantly striving for perfection. I feel the proposed bill undermines the purpose and intent, of HSPD-5 and if this law does go into effect, the Connecticut Emergency Services as whole will go backwards after so much progress has been made. Therefore, I respectfully ask you to oppose S.B. 490.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher T. Pepler

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