



EDITORS FORUM



Human "Terror" and "Error" have played a significant factor in recent aviation safety related events. "Human Terror" has once again become frighteningly evident with the recent foiling of the U.K. terrorist plot to detonate liquid explosives on multiple passenger jets crossing the Atlantic. There is no doubt that aircraft are still very much a prime terrorist target. "Human Error" played a part in the cause of the recent C-5 military crash at Dover Air Force Base, and may also have been a significant factor in the Comair CRJ100 passenger jet crash in Lexington, Kentucky which occurred just as this issue is published.

The 'Human' factor is one element in aviation safety - and in ARFF - that is difficult to predict, or in some cases, to change. Some important changes are happening regarding U.S. ARFF vehicles that needs to be carefully watched, however many of you out there may not even be aware of it. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has recently conducted one of two meetings in Boston with 20+ ARFF vehicle manufacturers and component suppliers for the purpose to revise FAA Advisory Circular (AC) 150/5220-10C into a '10D'. This AC is used by airports to secure FAA grant funding for ARFF vehicles. The meetings were being moderated by an FAA representative and a private firm contracted by the FAA to conduct a review and recommend changes to this document. Besides a representative of the NFPA, there was little or token repre-

sentation present from ARFF firefighters. The FAA decided to use NFPA 414-Standard for Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting Vehicles - 2007 as the parent document for the new AC 10/5220-10D revision. The National Fire Protection Association is a reputable organization, and their ARFF standards making and revision process is a credible process that occurs every five years, and involves a year long review process of revision meetings comprised of a myriad of professionals - including ARFF firefighters. The standards are enacted only after examining and debating all recommendations and evidence, a call for public comments and a review of them before a final recommendation and vote is cast. Until recently, the 'influence' of some ARFF equipment manufacturers and OEM's on the committee against other manufacturers technologies were causing questions regarding the validity of the NFPA standards making process. This problem became very apparent to the NFPA, and steps were taken to correct it.

At this FAA meeting in Boston, the NFPA representative in attendance was there to answer any questions on how the NFPA 414 Standard was formulated and adopted. But the same ARFF vehicle component manufacturer who could not get their way through the NFPA's process, now had a new arena to let the corporate backstabbing recommence, as they attempted to undercut one particular ARFF vehicle manufacturer by demanding that all references to certain advanced ARFF vehicle technologies adopted in NFPA 414 that applied to that manufacturers vehicles be made "exceptions" and not be adopted in the new AC 10D revision. This included technologies such as a lower vehicle axle / differential ground clearance that can provide better vehicle stability, among others. While these technologies have absolutely no effect on any of the other ARFF vehicle manufacturers, the reasoning given to make 'exceptions' to these technologies was

because "they were not proven." In reality anyone could surmise that the underlying rationale was actually, "We didn't invent it and we don't build it, so it is no good". Smelling blood, other ARFF vehicle manufacturers soon joined together with unified thumbs pointed down.

Since the FAA funds most ARFF vehicle purchases through taxpayer dollars - and it is these same manufacturers making recommendations and 'exceptions' at this meeting who gain to profit from those dollars - the FAA should be very wary and take careful notice of what is actually transpiring. They must be wary of the ulterior motives of any manufacturer(s) who wish to dictate what 'their standards' are for ARFF vehicles. The NFPA 414 document has already examined the validity and inherent value of the advanced technologies that were made "exceptions." to the new AC 10D. NFPA 414 is an unbiased professional standard that the FAA should be proud to adopt *IN TOTAL*.

The guise of recommending 'exceptions' of NFPA 414 for the new AC 10D, is nothing more than a manufacturers 'coup' to eliminate competition. This action—as well as some of the fallacious statements of some self-serving profit driven companies to eliminate new ARFF technologies at the expense of firefighters to do their jobs more effectively to save lives—is unprofessional, unethical, and serves no other purpose except to increase their bottom line while shortchanging airport firefighters, and in the process denigrates the FAA AC 10D revision process. I hope that your voice is heard by the FAA when these "exception" recommendations go out for public comment. In my opinion, NFPA 414 should be adopted in total.

There is one other 'Human' factor that plays an important part in the future evolution of ARFF, and that is *APATHY*. So get off your ass and get involved in something that affects your next ARFF vehicle procurement - and the future development of new ARFF tools and technologies. See how on page 26. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

WILLIAM MULCAHEY

www.aviationfirejournal.com



**IN EVERLASTING MEMORY OF OUR
343 BROTHER FIREFIGHTERS OF THE
FIRE DEPARTMENT CITY OF NEW YORK
WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE FIVE
YEARS AGO ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 AT
MANHATTAN BOX 8087
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN**