

STATEMENT OF DR. JOSEPH E. CLARK, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, BEFORE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF FIRE SERVICE INSTRUCTORS, ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA ON NOVEMBER 15, 1974

It is a particular pleasure for me to be here to speak to the leaders in fire service instruction. You have a unique and important role in our Nation's fight against fire.

The members of our most hazardous profession, fire-fighting, rely significantly on you in the search to make their job both safe and highly effective.

It is not necessary for me to recount the grim fire statistics to you. You are all too familiar with the lifeless faces of hundreds of firefighters and thousands of innocent citizens killed each year by fire. Living burn victims are scarred reminders of these incidents.

Particularly because of this human toll, the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 is a vital piece of legislation. Today, I would like to tell you about the plans which we in the Department of Commerce are formulating to implement this legislation. On November 1, Secretary of Commerce Frederick B. Dent announced the formal initiation of the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration

called for by the Act. It is my particular task to lead this Agency during its first few days of intense activity. A most effective way for me to describe our plans to you may be to answer those questions which have been asked of us most frequently in the two weeks of the existence of our new Agency.

When will the new Fire Administration called for in this Act begin operations?

For several months, we have had a task force in the Department which has been planning for this new agency. Now that this law has been enacted and an Acting Administrator appointed, efforts will move forward swiftly.

What will be the funding to implement this Act?

Congress has appropriated \$6 million for Fiscal Year 1975. During this first year of planning, we will estimate the cost for following years.

When do you expect a permanent Administrator to be on board, and what qualifications will he have?

Several candidates are already under consideration and we expect that the new Administrator will be nominated by the President in the near future. Such a nomination will, of course, require the advice and consent of the Senate.

The qualifications of the Administrator may include:

- Should be a prominent figure in the fire community;
- Should have experience with firefighting and prevention;
- Should be familiar with the national fire problem;
- Philosophically, should have the view that the national fire program is to supplement local programs, and not supplant them;
- Should be skillful in working with people who hold different views, with the ability to bring them to consensus;
- Should have demonstrated management skills;
- Should have the ability to attract able people to the agency.

What programs will be given highest priority in the new agency?

We have testified to the Senate and the House that an essential base for the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act must include an education and training program, a fire data system, and a research and development program united by a single integrated systems management approach. The education and training program will consist of a National Fire Academy system as well as a public safety education thrust.

How will the fire services and all the fire experts make their input into your plans?

We will form a Fire Advisory Committee composed of representatives from all parts of the fire community. The Advisory Committee will include persons such as:

- Fire Prevention Experts
- Firefighting and Training Experts
- Fire Data Specialists
- Public Information and Media Professionals
- Building Code and Design Officials
- Insurance Experts
- Physicians
- Manufacturers
- Consumer Representatives

Our goal is to have representatives from every facet of the complex fire community who are informed on every aspect of this issue that touches upon the life of every American.

How do you envision the National Fire Academy System?

The Fire Academy System, headed by a superintendent, will provide education and training for firefighters and the fire personnel across the Nation. A major effort to provide better training must be provided.

The U.S. already has many existing training establishments. Large urban fire departments typically have their own training divisions which handle recruits and specialist training. Smaller and volunteer departments are often served by State vocational training offices, or by State university or community colleges. This informal system is not uniform in quality and varies from region to region. The education and training program we purpose would help improve the existing State and local fire education and training capability.

Several existing State training schools may be upgraded to provide regional centers for training middle-level firemen in techniques of strategy and tactics not available locally.

Certain of these centers would undoubtedly specialize in areas of interest to a certain region. For example, wildfires might be a top priority in western regions. In Texas and Oklahoma, fires at the oil well-head area a special problem. In densely populated areas, high-rise fires must be addressed.

Prevention programs will be emphasized as well as inspection programs and public education. Among other things the Academy System would provide course material for specialized and advanced training programs. Such courses might cover prevention of tank car fires, chemical, and other special hazards. There is also a need to develop advanced training

materials and new types of courses at the management or command level in cooperation with State universities. For example, areas such as examination structure and promotion policy, resource development, use of computers, and municipal budgeting and finance be strengthened.

The training program will have a function broader than firefighting training. There will be courses for other persons needing fire safety information, such as code officials, building inspectors, equipment manufacturers, and industrial fire safety managers. Moreover, the program will develop material for public educators. Here the approach will be to develop specific information for specific audiences. Statistical data will be used to identify problem areas and appropriate audiences. A central program will be established for command courses and courses in public administration for senior officers. This will be the Headquarters, the hub of the National Academy System.

Where will the headquarters of the Academy be, and when will it be built?

The Act calls for the Academy to be located on a site which the Secretary selects subject to the following provisions:

- (1) A Site Selection Board consisting of the Academy Superintendent and two other members will survey the most suitable sites for the location of the Academy and make recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce.
- (2) The Site Selection Board in making its recommendations, as well as the Secretary of Commerce in making the final selection, will consider the training and facility needs of the Academy, environmental effects, the possibility of using a surplus Government facility, and other important and relevant factors which our search uncovers.

The Act calls for a final site selection within two years.

Note that we have already taken a first step toward establishing the Academy System by issuing a Federal Register notice on September 20 in which we asked the assistance of the fire community in developing a national survey of fire education and training programs already in existence throughout the country.

What will the National Fire Data Center do?

This Center will integrate all important information and data on our fire loss, then analyze and disseminate this information. The program if the Data Center will be

designed to:

- (1) provide an accurate national analysis of the fire problem,
- (2) identify major problem areas,
- (3) assist the Administration and local authority in setting priorities,
- (4) indicate possible solutions to the problems, and
- (5) monitor our progress in reducing fire losses.

How will the Public Education Program be carried out?

The objective of this public safety education program is to minimize the ignorance and carelessness which are significant factors in causing fires. This year we will study different methods of reaching the public so that in fiscal year 1976 pilot campaigns could be designed and conducted. We might launch a sequence of controlled tests using different selected cities. The special target of these educational efforts would be those fires such as building fires in which human action or carelessness is a prime contributor. Additional focus is expected on:

- (a) increasing awareness of equipment faults and usage which are recognizable fire hazards, and

(b) increasing the public's knowledge of proper reaction to a fire situation. The most effective communication media will be determined and monitors will be built in for measuring the impact of the message.

What research activities are called for by the Act?

The present fire research programs at the National Bureau of Standards come under the umbrella of this Act, along with a thrust toward near-term results which will be carried by the new Administration.

The NBS program of basic and applied research to understand the fundamental processes of destructive fire will be given new life by Section 18 of the Act. Finally, the Technology Development Program called for by Section 8 of the Act will build on the present NBS Fire Services Technology Program to an expanded effort in development, testing and evaluation of equipment and devices ranging from firefighters' turnout coats to smoke detectors.

What will be the relation between NBS fire research and the new National Fire Prevention and Control Administration?

Section 18 of the Act calls for a Fire Research Center with a mission of performing and supporting research on all aspects of fire, with the aim of providing scientific knowledge applicable to the prevention and control of fires. This program will focus on basic and applied research on combustion processes as well as on factors affecting both victims of fire and firefighters.

The content and priorities of the research program will be determined through consultation between management of the research program and the Administrator of the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration.

In conclusion, I wish to convey to you the sense of urgency which we in the Department of Commerce feel in implementing this legislation. We welcome your comments and advice and ask for your support as we move forward together in reducing our Nation's fire loss.