

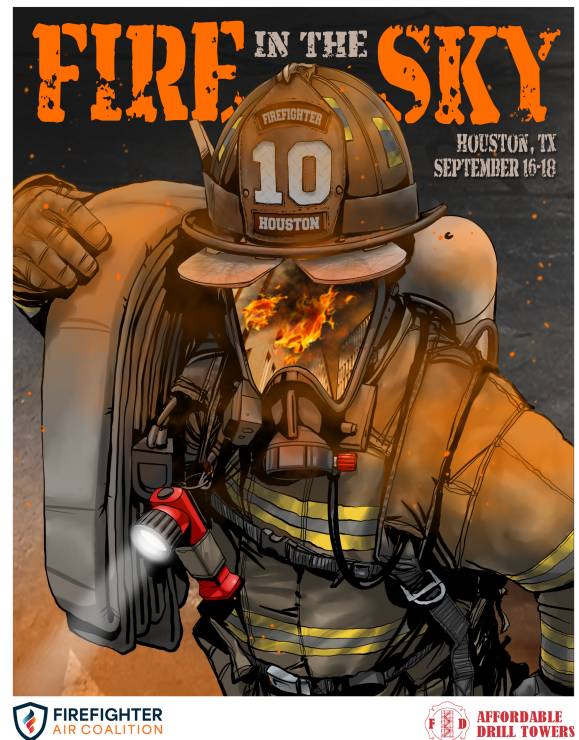
# Fire in the Sky Firefighter Training Focused on High-Rise, Mid-Rise and Big Box Eligible for TIFMAS Grant Reimbursement

*Fire service experts will bring firefighters the latest on high-rise, big box and mid-rise fire attack, ops and command at Fire in the Sky, September 16-18 2025*

CORPUS CHRISTI, TX, UNITED STATES, August 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ten of the most prestigious fire service experts will arrive in Houston, TX on September 15, 2025, to kick off the second annual [Fire in the Sky](#) Training Conference. As the structural building environment changes around the world, firefighters and fire departments need to adapt to the ever-changing requirements of mega-tall and horizontal structures. These buildings are unique. As a result of the massive size, every phase of the firefighting effort is complex. Firefighting must evolve and embrace the challenges and complexities with these outsized structures.

The rural landscape of the United States is disappearing under the weight of big-box distribution centers. Small towns near interstate transportation are prime targets for large-scale distribution centers. There is one major challenge that could be disastrous in those small towns: small fire departments. In a small town with a fire department of 10 people, a ladder truck, a couple of pumpers and maybe an ambulance, how do you provide a fire attack for a 1,000,000 square foot facility with 2,000 employees?

Modern cityscapes present unique challenges for emergency responders. Urban and rural expansion is characterized by high-rises and sprawling complexes, bringing unprecedented complexity to firefighting. Firefighters are required to adapt their tactical approaches to meet the oath of ensuring life and property when faced with limited air supplies in large structures. Fire in the Sky introduces firefighters to the necessary evolution on how we approach firefighting in these environments.



Fire in the Sky by Paul Combs

Revered fire service experts from across the country and Canada include Kris Blume, John Norman, Daniel DeYear, Aaron Heller, Jack Murphy, Dave McGrail, Brent Brooks, Jimmy Davis, Mike Gagliano, J. Eric Abbt, and Robert James (RJ). All will bring years of experiential knowledge to Fire in the Sky. Their focus will be on the topics of big box fires with limited staffing, high-rise and standpipe operations, super-block complexes, mid-rise firefighting, commercial tactics, firefighter air, and essential lessons learned from extreme fire events, which will be presented by the renowned Chief John Norman, FDNY, (ret).

The three most important ingredients for battling a fire are firefighters, water, and air. Understand the interior fire cannot be attacked, no rescue can be performed - nothing can be done without air.

### Stairway to Hell

High-rise structures have been likened to large distribution warehouses standing on end. Both pose similar dangers, but notable differences exist due to height. “The elevators are out - we’ll have to take the stairs” has probably been heard by every firefighter who’s battled high-rise fires. Industry studies tell us that “a firefighter can climb one minute per floor wearing Personal Protective Equipment. However, fatigue becomes a critical factor by about the 12th floor,” says Jimmy Davis, a high-rise fire service instructor and a Captain with the Chicago Fire Department.

“Big buildings demand more air. Firefighter air technology is advancing, and firefighters must understand its necessity to extend their human respiratory capacity to do the job.”

*Mike Gagliano, FAC President*

contingent will be a splintered group from different fire units lacking adequate supervision, affecting their ability to coordinate an effective fire attack. This is a realistic example of systemic failure, potentially affecting every portion of the high-rise operation.

“High-rise fires require many full air cylinders,” says Capt. Davis. “Fresh air cylinders must be available without delay during a high-rise fire. In the early stages of fire suppression, air cylinders



Fire in the Sky Houston, TX



are supplied in limited quantities. After about twenty minutes, supplemental air cylinders need to be brought in. If they are delayed, say, by a lengthy stairwell-only ascent, the entire high-rise operation is set back. This is due to the inability and lack of support to replenish breathing air for already committed firefighters."

Capt. Davis will walk attendees through the challenges and effective strategies and tactics in high-rise ops and tactics.

### Millions of Horizontal Square Feet

Big-box stores, distribution centers and warehouses present numerous fire hazards due to their size, inventory diversity, and storage practices. These facilities can contain flammable liquids, electronics with lithium-ion batteries, and large quantities of goods made of plastic materials and textiles, which can rapidly ignite.

High ceilings and vast open spaces offer a make-ready volume of air that can rapidly fuel a fire. While buildings of this size generally require sprinkler systems in buildings, it's important to understand this is the same challenge experienced in high-rise. Sprinklers, while lifesaving, only contain the fire. Firefighters are still required to conduct search and rescue and carry out overhaul and salvage operations in a cloud of gases, toxicants and carcinogens. These activities all require a continuous, breathable air supply. Firefighters simply cannot breathe the toxic, asphyxiating smoke and gases on today's fireground.



More Air, More Time



High Rise Fire



Firefighter Air Coalition

Research conducted by Underwriters Laboratories, Inc. found that the “smoke and gas levels were quickly reduced by suppression activity however they remained an order of greater magnitude during overhaul.” IDLH (Immediate Danger to Life and Health) levels of carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide (The Toxic Twins), benzene, formaldehyde and arsenic were exceeded during fire growth and overhaul stages, all of which firefighters would be exposed to without air. What this means is that firefighters absolutely must have a continuous breathable air supply to protect them from the [fire smoke](#) and toxic gases. Otherwise, they are at risk of immediate danger to life or cumulative exposures that produce life and health risk and consequences.

"This is a new era for firefighting," said Mike Gagliano, President of the FAC. "Back in 1840, firefighters didn't have air masks or SCBA—they didn't need the protection we do today. Houses were made of wood and natural materials, and fire smoke wasn't as toxic as it is now in this synthetic world we live in. When those materials burn, we face an asphyxiating, suffocating environment to save lives and property. Big buildings demand more air. Firefighter air technology is advancing, and firefighters must understand its necessity to extend their human respiratory capacity to do the job."

More Air, More Time.

Meet the Masters of High-Rise, Mid-Rise and Big Box Firefighting

Fire in the Sky brings together a stellar lineup of instructors, each a luminary in the field of firefighting with a wealth of experience and expertise:

- Brent Brooks, a renowned figure in high-rise operations from Toronto Fire Services, will lead "Highrise Firefighting," focusing on updated equipment and tactics necessary for modern skyscrapers.
- Dave McGrail of Denver Fire Department (retired) will present "High Rise Ops: Keep it Simple," emphasizing straightforward strategies for effective incident management in complex structures.
- Jimmy Davis, with over 30 years at the Chicago Fire Department, will conduct "Protecting Vertical Cities: The First Five Minutes," centered on critical, time-sensitive decision-making during high-rise fires.
- John Norman, a veteran of FDNY, will share his expertise in "Lessons Learned from Extreme Fire Events," with insights into strategies developed from past firefighter fatalities.
- Mike Gagliano, from Seattle Fire Department (retired), will delve into air management tactics in "Lost, Disoriented & Out of Air," crucial for ensuring firefighter air safety in large-scale incidents.

- Jack Murphy, an expert in high-rise buildings and fire response, will address "Response Challenges: Super Block Hospital," covering strategic responses to complex urban structures.
- Daniel DeYear, retired Deputy Chief of Operations from the Dallas Fire Department will explore "Low and Mid-Rise Building Construction, a Recipe for Disaster."
- Aaron Heller from Hamilton, New Jersey Fire Department will speak to Commanding the Commercial Fireground.
- Chief Kris Blume from Meridian (ID) Fire Department will present "When Size Matters: Navigating the Challenges of the Big Box," focusing on unique fire dynamics in expansive commercial spaces.
- Robert (RJ) James with the Frederick County Maryland Fire Department will present "Bigger Buildings Present Bigger Challenges."

These instructors are more than educators; they are guardians of their craft, imparting essential skills and knowledge to firefighters. "We all have to Up Our Game to live up to our oath to protect and preserve life and property," said Gagliano.

#### A Call to Action

"Buildings are taller and larger than ever before, presenting unprecedented challenges for firefighters in protecting lives and property," said FAC President Mike Gagliano. "With limited air supply, firefighters must adopt innovative tactics to overcome these life-threatening obstacles. Without air, there is no interior attack."

Fire in the Sky is more than a conference to train firefighters — it's a call to action for firefighters to understand and learn how to adapt to the evolving demands of modern firefighting.

As cities grow and landscapes change, the need for advanced strategies has never been greater.

While this training is open for national registration, Texas firefighters have the unique opportunity to attend with grant reimbursement through TIFMAS. Do not miss this opportunity. This applies to both career and volunteer departments. [View details.](#)

Choose a two-day session or the full conference in the registration process.

The time for change is now. Equip yourself with cutting-edge knowledge and skills to rise to the challenges of the new fireground.

Join the Firefighter Air Coalition, Affordable Drill Towers, in cooperation with the Houston Fire Department and IAFF Local 341 as we help shape the future of firefighting.

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