<u>**Lending Purpose to NFIRS**</u>
Goal: Opening presentation from Ross Hauck with KS Forest Service. Identify partnerships that would benefit from NFIRS data to prove the worth of our program.

Prompt questions:
- Who do you already send data to?
- Do you process the data for them or let them do it?
- Who has requested numbers/stats from you?
- Who would you like to partner with?
- Who has implemented decisions based on your provided stats?
- Do you advertise your data? If so, whom do you send adverts?
- What is your ultimate goal with NFIRS data?
- What datasets do you use in conjunction with NFIRS?
    - Is anybody tying fire data in with water main breaks and other utility failures?
- What NFIRS data would you like to see on a map?
- Do you partner with any businesses, industries, other departments, other government agencies?

Ross Hauck was unable to make the presentation and Sara Wood from the KS Fire Marshal instead gave a short, impromptu presentation on what the KS Forest Service wanted to share. Main points were:
- Kansas has a higher percentage of grass/Wildland fires than any other fires and are high on the list of incidents per state. Historically, KS has remained in the Top 3 states for the percentage of acres burned for the whole state, (Acres burned divided by total state acres)
- KS fire departments are supposed to report to the KS Forest Service on a form called the 209. Reporting rarely happens and Kansas went unrepresented at the National level year after year
- The information collected in the 209 is exactly the same information that is collected through NFIRS, although some codes are different
- The USDA Forest Service could be changing their funding formulas to base it on acres burned and number of fires. Since KS FDs were doing so poorly at reporting the 209's, NFIRS data stepped up to fill that void.
- Sara and Ross worked together to shift the NFIRS data into a format that the USDA Forest Service would accept. The main difficulty came from the lack of longitude and latitude on the NFIRS reports
- Education was provided to the KS FDs on using the Wildland Fire module instead of the Fire module and also providing longitude and latitude. Many of the "responding apps" include a long/lat in the original call which can be entered in the NFIRS report. Of course, if the FD did not have a responding app or the call wasn't close to where the reporting party stated, a FD would then have to figure out the Long/Lat. Online websites like http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html or http://www.latlong.net/ can be utilized after the call is finished
- Many, many articles, emails, and phone calls were made to urge FDs to improve their reporting to NFIRS. Contact was made by both the KS Forest Service and the KS Fire Marshal
- The KS Forest Service has been a great partner for the state NFIRS program. Compliance with reporting to NFIRS is both a stick and carrot for KS FDs because the Forest Service won't let any FD get money or equipment if they haven't been reporting
- More State and Federal departments need to be working together for better information. Double reporting is both burdensome and negative for FDs and every effort should be made to consolidate reporting to a central area. Different entities should then pull the information they need from the central area. The software currently in existence could easily be updated to create a 209 based off the information a FD is already entering for the NFIRS report

We must all be customer service oriented and recognize that our information is just that: information. It is useless if nobody uses it or applies it towards making decisions. The floor was opened to discuss who (both inside and outside of the FD or State program) were accessing/Requesting/Using NFIRS data. Responses were:
- Department of Conservation or Forest Service
- Emergency Management (Both state and county level) who are studying the resources in areas. Using the population, call volume, and available apparatus/personnel many mutual aid plans are drafted

- Public Information Officers, especially PIOs from the governor's offices. In general the State administration is interested in obtaining numbers, especially close to Legislative Session
- Weather agencies. Kansas mentioned a partnership with the Kansas Interagency Wildfire Council which normally was made up on meteorologists. These meteorologists were making weather fire predictions but had never had access to fire data. They were unsure if there were any fires, when, etc. NFIRS data from KS was supplied to many members of the Council who have started their own analysis, pairing actual fire reports to the available weather data. The end result should be better fire predictions with weather.
- Many, many people shared that media/journalists have requested data and stats. This is both good and can be scary. If the stats are misrepresented it can mean negative effects for all involved (FD and/or State)
- Legislative stat requests
- City councils and County Commissioners generally want the numbers for their FDs.
- The question was asked if anybody kept an open data portal in a city government. While unrepresented at the Workshop, Seattle was mentioned for its online data portal (https://data.seattle.gov). Conversation circled to the fears that open data can bring. "What will they do with it?!" and if there are any negatives in a FD how would they be exposed
- In Nebraska, Health and Human Services request stats and works with their State PMs
- Landowners and real estate parties might request historic information on certain properties to see if there is a history of fires or issues. FD data can also give some clues to the health of a neighborhood. If there are a lot of EMS calls or Hazard calls it can clue a potential buyer into the area
- Department of Transportation can access the data for traffic information. However, traffic accident data might be better coming from law enforcement that usually is required to report directly to a DOT. This may not be the case for all states but generally a specialized Accident Report (with many more fields than any NFIRS report) is submitted to DOT
- Watchdog organizations might request the stats for whatever their mission is. Some might be using it to keep tabs on a FD but hiding the stats from them is not going to help anybody
- Public Service Announcements during the "seasons" usually result in requests for stats. Seasons can include space heater fire season, fireworks season, grass fire season, Christmas tree fire season, etc. It would be a good idea to keep these stats on hand when the season is coming up
- In Oregon, the County Tax assessors request information because if a house burns down, the resident does not pay taxes on the house, just the land, if there is +75% damage. This requires good reporting on the part of the fire department and follow-up. It might be worth looking into for all reading this to see if your counties operate the same way
- South Carolina mentioned working with InnovaPad which works to recover costs for FDs.
(http://innovapad.com/) Excerpt from the website: "Automobile insurance policies provide for the reimbursement of fire services rendered and/or materials used with no penalty to the policy owner. And innovaPad brings mobility and incredible efficiency to the process of recovering those costs. Your department is entitled to recover costs from the at-fault parties insurance carrier. Not processing these incidents would be ignoring a steady revenue stream."
- ISO should probably be looking at NFIRS data but isn't. Reporting to NFIRS will give a FD points on their rating, though, but it doesn't actually look at the numbers/data. However, ISO is developing some sort of "fire comparison" tool. (I did a Google search but didn't locate anything immediate)
- Oregon was able to notice within a week a trend of keeping space heaters in the bedrooms that led to fatalities. Actively analyzing the fire data led to the dissemination of appropriate information at a critical time
- In Austin, TX, the City Health Department has looked into the fire stats regarding smoking fires. They have applied this information to their tobacco cessation programs (http://www.austintexas.gov/department/tobaccosmoking-cessation-and-prevention)
- Red Cross has requested fire data from many states. The Red Cross can use this information to gain funding in areas with high incidents and make sure they know what's going on. The Red Cross helps in cases beyond fires such as flooding or medical issues. Kansas shared that the Red Cross had requested residential structure fire numbers per city because the Red Cross felt they were being underutilized. Information wasn't known or shared about when to call the Red Cross and get them involved to help the family

- In the Ottawa Fire Department (Ottawa, KS), the FD has partnered with a local community leadership program. The leadership program decided to focus on smoke detectors given the numbers and direct impact. The program raised funds to purchase smoke detectors
- In Atlanta, GA, vacant structures were sitting open instead of being secured. It is well known (and backed with data) that vacant structures are more than just a drug crime hotspot and are a common target for arson.
- Also shared by Atlanta, GA, the inspectors could not enter structures without an owner present so if the FD was called, inspectors could rush to those structures and get inside before the FD returned control of the scene
- It would be interesting to compare structures that have had inspection violations against structures that had actual fires. How likely were the structures with violations to have fires? Comparing the inspections to actual incidents can also help target inspections and make sure the right areas/property types are being inspected, instead of using up resources on low-risk buildings (jails)
- Homeland Security regions have requested stats from NFIRS to see how the resources are in each region. A certain amount of money also goes to each region
- Matt from Atlanta mentioned the effect "traffic calming devices" can have on response times. Too frequently used, speed bumps damage FD apparatus and force slower movements through the streets. One product, called a speed cushion, is narrower and meant to let the wider axle of FD engines pass over it between the wheels, instead of hitting it
- Data has to be used both historically and dynamically, much like Oregon explained with the space heater fires. The UK uses data more dynamically to apply trends and targets to current problems. Vision 20/20 and Community Risk Reduction were mentioned. "Community Risk Reduction" is normally made up of the same people who worked in Prevention/Inspection prior to FDs renaming the task units
- FDs can use the data collected for NFIRS to determine staffing levels and performance indicators. Putting the right people in the right place at the right time can mean all the difference in outcomes for the public
- It's not a bad thing to advertise that you have data. South Carolina releases stats all the time on SCFIRS twitter (https://twitter.com/SCFIRS)

GIS is firmly within the future of the Fire Service and the data collected for NFIRS can easily be applied to informative maps. The question was asked of attendees "What do you want to see on a map?" These are the responses:
- Station maps with response times
- Dynamic maps for critical incidents (think of Ferguson and the massive Public Sector response needed, even outside city limits in other areas affected by the turmoil)
- Response times in general. In Kansas, Homeland Security reps have requested response time analysis to see if more funding can get more stations where the response time is high, simply because resources are too far away
- Fire incidents in homes with or without smoke detectors
- Buildings and regions that are sprinkled (automatic extinguishment systems)
- Where an FD has installed smoke alarms
- Low income neighborhood fires
- Where resources are being sent in response for mutual aid (could this be a pocket of area that's uncovered and would benefit from a new station?)
- Investigations can benefit from fires or incidents mapped that fit a certain *modus operandi*

The question was raised if, upon request for stats, FDs and States process the data into statistics or release the data raw. Answers were:
- Large, highly detailed requests for data often resulted in just the raw form of data (properly cleaned of course) released to the requester
- Some will process the data into stats first and release those

One question was raised about how far back a negligent department should go in submitting reports? Answers included:
- 3 years because of ISO and grant requests
- Get caught up with recent year and then do whatever the FD could for prior
- If a departing administration took everything (or it was destroyed), start with today and move forward

- According to state Records Retention laws. Kansas has a 10 year records retention requirement for KFIRS reports (Kansas version of NFIRS) so if a FD has those papers (which they are legally required to have) they should enter them all

One stray comment during the session that doesn't fit into any current topics mentioned above came from Matt in Atlanta who stated that CoStar has all the commercial property information on zoning regulations, ownership, etc. This could be a very valuable dataset to combine with NFIRS information and see what is happening.

How do you Fight Fires with Facts? How do you lend purpose to the data contained in NFIRS? Please continue the conversation.