



# Coffee Break Training - Management Science Program

## AAR: After Action Review in the Fire Service

No. MS-2013-3 May 15, 2013

**Learning Objective:** The student shall be able to explain how fire service After Action Review works and promote its use “every time wheels roll.”

**A**AR protocols are widely but not universally used in the fire service. Good officers have known instinctively for years that performance improvements occur by creating a continuous feedback loop. Most often, these improvements are associated with fireground tactics and resource needs. AAR can be a vital tool in improving performance and correcting behaviors that can lead to a firefighter line-of-duty injury or death.

Stress injuries to firefighters are often underobserved, but their impact can destroy careers and affect families with tragic consequences. The earlier that (potential) stress injuries are identified, the more likely that successful outcomes will occur. In many ways, the first step in observing stress in firefighters and Emergency Medical Services personnel begins at the “back step” or “kitchen table talk,” where every call and response is discussed with an informal AAR.

AAR supports the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation’s Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives 1 (change the culture) and 13 (psychological support) to connect firefighters to the behavioral support they need.

The NFFF motto, “every time wheels roll,” means just that — after every training exercise, every call, every time firefighters and emergency medical technicians are performing their duties, five simple questions are reviewed:

1. What was our mission? (Did we plan for this event? Were there any gaps in our planning?)
2. What went well? (Did we have adequate resources? Did we do all that we could?)
3. What could have gone better? (Did we observe any unsafe behaviors? Was our training effective?)
4. What might we have done differently? (If we ran the same incident, what would we do differently?)
5. Who needs to know? (What needs to be fixed, and how do we pass this information to the correct source?)

AAR training is delivered by the NFFF as a free online module, complete with a test and an immediately printable certificate of completion at the Fire Hero Learning Network ([www.fireherolearningnetwork.com](http://www.fireherolearningnetwork.com)). If you visit the Firefighter Life Safety Initiative 13 website ([FLSI13.everyonegoeshome.com](http://FLSI13.everyonegoeshome.com)), you will find more AAR support including a flyer, poster and printable pocket cards for all your firefighters and EMT personnel. If you need some guidance or more information, contact Dr. JoEllen Kelly at [jkelly@everyonegoeshome.com](mailto:jkelly@everyonegoeshome.com).

This Coffee Break Training item was provided by the NFFF.



This poster is just one of several reminders available free from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.



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## ABSTRACT

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"AAR [After Action Review] protocols are widely but not universally used in the fire service. Good officers have known instinctively for years that performance improvements occur by creating a continuous feedback loop. Most often, these improvements are associated with fireground tactics and resource needs. AAR can be a vital tool in improving performance and correcting behaviors that can lead to a firefighter line-of-duty injury or death. Stress injuries to firefighters are often underobserved, but their impact can destroy careers and affect families with tragic consequences. The earlier that (potential) stress injuries are identified, the more likely that successful outcomes will occur. In many ways, the first step in observing stress in firefighters and Emergency Medical Services personnel begins at the 'back step' or 'kitchen table talk,' where every call and response is discussed with an informal AAR. AAR supports the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives 1 (change the culture) and 13 (psychological support) to connect firefighters to the behavioral support they need."

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