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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Fire Chief Virgil Fernandez Leads the Nation to Diversity**

*– Joins 14 of the Finest Fire Chiefs to Discuss the Importance of Inclusiveness –*

**Miami Beach, FL** – When it comes to fire hazard and emergency response leaders, Miami Beach Fire Chief Virgil Fernandez is acclaimed for innovation in fire protocol and education. Now, the city’s very own is also being recognized for helping pave the path to diversity.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) recently selected Chief Fernandez for the Diversity Executive Leadership Program (iDELP) in response to his successful efforts addressing inclusiveness and recognizing the impact those challenges have on the fire and emergency service community.

Under Chief Fernandez’s leadership, the Miami Beach Fire Department has made significant strides in diversity, including Firefighter Digna Abello’s promotion to chief of training in 2014, which made her the first female firefighter to reach the rank of a division chief in the history of Miami Beach Fire. A year later, Chief Fernandez promoted Darryl Bell to the command staff position of division chief of support services — making him the first African American to rise within the ranks of the department to assume this leadership role.

“Chief Fernandez has made a name for our city as a leader in fire protection and prevention,” expressed City Manager Jimmy L. Morales. “We’re also proud to see his management efforts are not only recognized here at home, but on a national stage where he can inspire others to follow suit.”

In its inaugural year, iDELP aims to provide current and future leaders the opportunity to come together to explore, learn and develop solutions to present and emerging challenges in regards to diversity. Chief Fernandez will work alongside 14 other renowned fire service chiefs and public figures sharing ideas that foster a diverse and inclusive fire emergency workforce in their departments – creating a stronger and safer fire community across the nation.

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