



## Saudi firefighters broaden their skillset

Each day firefighters from Saudi Arabia respond to emergencies for the Atlanta Fire Department.

They handle everything from putting out house fires, to freeing people trapped in cars after crashes, to assisting people suffering from medical emergencies.

The idea of the program in the United States, organized by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), is to expose the Saudi firefighters to a wide range of situations and broaden their experiences.

“This program, from what I’ve seen, will have a great impact to our work quality, knowledge, techniques and skill level,” said Adham Mariesel, one of the seven Saudi firefighters on assignment in Atlanta.

Aramco, the Saudi Arabian oil company, has 2,000 firefighters, making it the world’s largest private fire department in the world. Aramco firefighters work mainly on preventing industrial accidents or responding to emergencies related to the company’s vast network of oil extraction, processing and storage facilities.

The program in the U.S., which was started several years ago, is designed to broaden their skillsets and prepare them for leadership roles, with a mix of classroom and on-the-job training for the nine participants.

“I really liked being exposed to the culture and the people. The culture of the fire department itself. The brotherhood and camaraderie is amazing,” said Hatim Bakhmi. He

“This program, from what I’ve seen, will have a great impact to our work quality, knowledge, techniques and skill level.”

especially enjoys living and cooking at the firehouse with his colleagues.

The high frequency of calls and the fondness people in the community have for firemen are the best parts of the experience.

“What is great from a training perspective is how busy the stations are and the amount of respect firemen get from the community,” said Naif Aladal. “This program gives us exposure to tactical skills, different scenarios, and a lot of general fire experience.”

Rob Brown, acting head of the IAFC, said Saudi Arabia was the pioneer of this program in the United States, and now other countries are reaching out to set up similar programs with departments from different U.S. cities. So far fire departments in Miami, San Diego, Sacramento and Oklahoma City have also participated in the Saudi exchange program.

“Being an energy company, one thing Aramco does very well is safety and prevention. But that has its downsides too because you may not get many chances to react to incidents,” said Brown. “So this program takes up and comers and embeds them in a U.S. fire department, where they get experience handling a wide range of situations.”

There are nearly 150 Saudi Aramco professionals currently on training assignments at companies and agencies across North America in an array of disciplines.

[contactatsc@aramcoservices.com](mailto:contactatsc@aramcoservices.com)