



# PERSPECTIVE NEW YORK

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# Croker Fire Drill

## ...The Fire and Life Safety Professionals

By Jan Wilson

**F**ounded in 1911 by the former Chief of the Fire Department of New York in the wake of the horrific Triangle Factory Fire, Croker Fire Drill Corporation has been at the forefront of fire and life safety innovations for nearly a century.

"We are the largest emergency and fire safety firm in the nation, and we are dedicated to maintaining a high standard," says Ray Weinstein, President and CEO. "We have raised the bar of excellence, pushing beyond the basics of local, state and federal codes." The firm has a client roster that reads like a "who's who" of prominent New York real estate names, including CBRE, Cushman & Wakefield, Colliers ABR, Grubb & Ellis, GVA Williams, Newmark & SL Green. Now poised to expand its reach by offering broader educational services for its clients, Croker Fire Drill's future has never been brighter.

### A SEASONED WORKFORCE

When Ray Weinstein joined Croker in 1976, Local Law 5, which mandates that commercial office buildings in New York develop plans to deal with fire emergencies, had been in place for three years. Weinstein came to the company from the District Attorney's office in Philadelphia. "I was hired to oversee Philadelphia, and my responsibilities gradually increased until I became director of operations for the mid-Atlantic region," he says. At the time, the company's president was its only principal, and the firm had no senior management level. After becoming the company's fourth president in 1999, Weinstein created vice president and managerial positions, and, the firm now has 14 employees in its Long Island offices, as well as several dozen people in the field as fire and life safety consultants.

Weinstein notes that Croker employees "don't

look at this just as a job—there is a family feeling at this company." Many of them have been with the company 15 years or more, and many of the employees in the field have serviced the same accounts for more than a decade. "At our firm we want continuity of relationships. It's longevity along with a proven formula of success that allows people to trust us."

The firm employs the many senior FDNY retirees. "Who better to assist in that effort than very senior people who have devoted their lives to fire safety and preparedness at the highest levels?" says Weinstein. Weinstein also is particularly proud of the six women he has working in managerial positions. "This has always been a male dominated field, but we have been

able to move beyond to reward everyone in the company for the work they do," he says.

Even though the job is rewarding, Weinstein says, people stay with Croker because of the at-

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**Ray Weinstein, President and CEO,  
Croker Fire Drill Corporation**



mosphere. "Our company is big enough to be dominant but small enough to personalize everything that we do for our employees," he says.

**A VARIETY OF SERVICES**

Croker provides a variety of services covering in excess of 250 million square foot portfolio of real estate consisting of over 1,400 commercial buildings, hotels and healthcare facilities. Services consist of fire, evacuation, disaster, and shelter-in-place drills, plans for fire and non-fire emergencies, consulting on new rules and regulations and training in emergency preparedness procedures.

"We work in four-story landmarked buildings as well as major skyscrapers," Weinstein says. "We have to be well-versed in all of the codes and be able to train a variety of individuals with differing professional experiences to be fire safety directors."

Croker offers building owners and facilities managers the piece of mind of knowing that their buildings are in compliance with the law. Additionally, the firm warehouses building records in the event that copies are requested. "Building owners need to know that their tenants will be safe and they are knowledgeable on Fire Safety and Emergency Action Plan procedures," Weinstein says.

Healthcare facilities create special challenges, because residents can not always easily evacuate and employees are on site 24-7. "We have to run evacuation drills at all times of the day and night," Weinstein says. "These clients look at us as key providers of expertise that they cannot afford to employ in-house."

Weinstein notes that some services that might be considered optional in other firms are all part of the "one-stop shopping" that clients get when they engage Croker. "We train your employees, we keep you in compliance, and, if there are any violations, we help plead your case," he says. When Croker's current list of clients and potential list of new customers have an opportunity to realize all that is being offered in the contractual service packages, it really accentuates the "one-stop shopping concept."



*Ray Weinstein, President and CEO, Croker Fire Drill*

**EDUCATION IS KEY**

Croker's newest division, the Croker Fire & Life Safety Institute, located in Midtown, will help fire safety directors do their jobs even more professionally. Croker Fire Drill Corporation has been accredited by the NYC Fire Department (FDNY), and has opened the Croker Fire & Life Safety Institute to teach the Fire Safety Director and Emergency Action Plan Director courses.

"People who have reviewed our curriculum say that our manuals are much more detailed than what is typical in the industry,"

**"Our institutional partners require that our contracted services are of the highest caliber, and Croker delivers those services."**

**William Reiter, Senior Vice President, Director of Operations, Murray Hill Properties**



says Linda DiCola, Educational Services Coordinator. The school's director of educational services, H. Tom Borrero possesses expertise in both the FDNY and private industry. Its two assistant directors have extensive law enforcement and fire department experience as well as instructional.

The Fire Safety Director course is mandated by the FDNY for a person to perform the duties of Fire Safety Director in New York City commercial office buildings and hotel/motel occupancies. Since the passage of Local Law 5 of 1973 (Fire Safety Director – commercial office), and then Local Law 16 of 1984 (Fire Safety Director – hotel/motel), Fire Safety Directors (or FSDs) are required to be on duty to assist in evacuation, provide information to the FDNY, and maintain a fire prevention program in the building in which they are certified. The Croker Fire & Life Safety Institute prepares these individuals by instructing them in various laws, rules and regulations, in addition to proven principles in fire and life safety prevention.

The Emergency Action Plan Director course is the next step that Fire Safety Directors must take in order to be certified as Emergency Action Plan Directors

**“Croker is innovative. When we talk to our tenants they feel that they have the answers they need about fire and life safety.”**

**John Farrell, Director of Security and Life Safety, SL Green**

(EAPDs). In 2004, New York City passed Local Law 26, a bold initiative to impart the importance of preparing for “other than fire emergencies” to commercial office buildings throughout the five boroughs. Through its EAPD course, Croker Fire & Life Safety Institute helps take Fire and Life Safety professionals to that next level with intensive training that covers emergencies ranging from biological incidents to weather related disasters.

Increasing the knowledge base of the people who will be in charge when an incident occurs in their building is very important in maintaining the safety and security of the property.

#### **THE FUTURE OF FIRE SAFETY**

Rick Kreps, Vice President of Operations having 26 years of service with Croker Fire Drill Corporation notes that awareness and enforcement has increased throughout the city. “The stakes are higher today than they ever have been. Although much of what we do may seem to be quite routine, people’s lives depend on it. That’s why we can’t rest on our past accomplishments. We must strive for continual improvement.” ■

**“Croker brings a very special team to our building to conduct fire and evacuation drills. When I hear applause from people when the drill is over I know we have something special here.”**

**Patrick Kinsella, Fire/Life Safety Director, Cushman & Wakefield’s 388-390 Greenwich Street Complex**