Energy Storage Response Group (ESRG) brings nearly 50 years of combined experience in firefighting, training, fire and failure investigation, risk assessment, hazardous materials, and energy storage safety and testing. ESRG is uniquely qualified to help you prepare for, prevent, and manage the unthinkable incidents we all hope to avoid.
Nick Warner - Principal

Nick Warner's professional career has focused primarily on safety topics related to battery storage integration and fire safety as well as failure analysis of energy storage systems. He has applied his experience in battery testing to supporting battery degradation and performance validation, failure analysis and the evaluation of materials and sensors for passive and active safety applications. These hands-on skills have also been applied to the validation of state-of-the-art technologies for deployment in grid storage applications. Nick also works on due diligence and bankability studies, including hardware and safety reviews, and performs field inspections on ES systems. Nick has become heavily involved in standards activities as well including all UL standards related to ESS as well as NFPA and ICC codes for fire safety and ESS deployment. Before leaving DNV GL, Nick led the development of the industry’s first third-party controls and battery management system (BMS) validation testing service as well as streamlining DNV GL’s explosion modeling efforts for permitting of ESS. Nick holds a BS and MS in Mechanical Engineering from The Ohio State University.

Paul Rogers - Principal

Paul Rogers is a retired FDNY lieutenant that has worked in the field for over 25 years. As a Hazardous Material (HazMat) Specialist, Lt. Rogers supervised the NYC FDNY’s premier HazMat team. Lt. Rogers also served as a HazMat manager for the FEMA NY Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue Team, where he responded to emergencies around the country. During high profile events, he was assigned as a liaison on joint teams with the FBI, Secret Service, US Military, NYPD, and other local, state, and federal agencies. During his tenure with the fire service in his finals years, Lt. Rogers was assigned to the Bureau Fire Prevention to lead a project on Energy Storage Systems (ESS). Through this effort, he collaborated with the NFPA, UL, Con Edison, FM Global, DOE, EPA, DOT, and many other regulatory entities becoming a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in this area. As an SME, the FDNY utilized him for training all the Incident Commanders within the department as well as the command staff, including FDNY Commissioner Nigro. His respect as the FDNY subject matter expert was widely known to the upper ranks of the FDNY and NYC Buildings Dept. Upon retirement, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) encouraged him to work as a consultant to help guide local code officials in New York State on the safe installations of ESS. Lt. Rogers has become very well-known and respected in this area, and he currently sits on the NFPA 855 (Energy Storage Systems Installations) standard. Lt. Rogers is also a member of the International Fire Code Action Committee for ESS installations.

Tom Benson - Principal

Thomas A. Benson has been a full-time fire investigator since 2000, working both public and private fire investigations. Thomas holds a Bachelor of Science in Fire Protection Safety Engineering Technology from Oklahoma State University and has trained at the Georgia Fire Academy and the Ohio Basic Peace Officer Training Academy. Thomas also has experience as a firefighter and in law enforcement as well as with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. Tom has conducted numerous large-scale fire tests on lithium batteries. Tom is a current committee member of NFPA 855 and has presented numerous times regarding the investigation of energy storage systems and firefighter response to energy storage systems.

Thomas’s certifications include:
- Certified Fire Investigator (IAAI)
- Certified Fire Investigator Instructor (IAAI-CI)
- Certified Fire and Explosion Investigator (NAFI)
- Certified Vehicle Fire Investigator (NAFI)
- Certified Fire Instructor
- Certified Fire Fighter II
- Certified Peace Officer
- Instructor, Department of Homeland Security
Ed Ferrier recently retired from the New York City Fire Department after 35 years of service. He spent almost 31 years working in the Bureau of Operations performing active fire suppression until he was appointed to the rank of Deputy Assistant Chief by the Fire Commissioner and became a member of his Executive Staff. He was assigned to the Bureau of Fire Prevention (BFP) where he leveraged his years of suppression experience to increase firefighter and public safety. He was in charge of the following BFP Units:
- Hazardous Control
- Fire Suppression
- Range Hood
- Explosives
- Code Development
- Tech Management

He was an active participant in the NYC/ICC 2008 and 2014 Building Code adoption processes beginning in 2003 and again in 2011. He served on two different committees; Fire Protection (2008); and Use/Occupancy/ Egress (2014); and was also the chair of the General Fire Safety Committee for FDNY review of the 2015 IFC prior to retirement. He also worked as an adjunct professor at CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice for a period of time. Chief Ferrier was able to leverage all his years of firefighting knowledge and job-related experiences with the mission of Fire Prevention. This was particularly important when dealing with technical and code-related issues and their impact on New York City. He was considered to be fair when trying to determine optimal solutions for these varied projects and was able to work with various stakeholders - business, industry, NYC and NYS agencies as well as the general public- to minimize risk, enhance life safety and property protection while moving the projects forward.

Gerard T. Fontana was a member of the Boston Fire Department for 35 years, from 1984 until 2020, and has achieved every rank up to the position of Chief of Operations. During this tenure, he was responsible for leading the planning team for the 2004 Democratic National Convention and all special events to include the Boston Marathon, the Boston July fourth concert, and all events related to the Boston major league sports teams. Chief Fontana also coordinated the development of the response system to the Mass. Department of Transportation tunnel and roadway system, as well as the LNG facility located within the city. Other significant contributions include the creation of the special operations division that consolidated all hazmat, technical rescue, and marine operations; this allowed these units to determine their training and equipment needs as well as to allow these units to plan independently with the regional UASI partners in the metro Boston area. During this time, he helped coordinate regional multi-disciplined exercises, including two versions of Urban Shield: which included the testing of technical rescue and hazmat resources in coordination with Swat and EOD operations. Chief Fontana was instrumental in securing funding for the first Energy Storage System training site within the metro Boston area that will be used to train firefighters and other stakeholders in safely responding to incidents involving photovoltaic equipment and lithium-ion battery energy storage systems.

Chief Fontana is certified at all levels of incident command systems (ICS), and is certified by the Center of Domestic Preparedness to teach all ICS curricula. He has attended multiple courses at the Harvard University Kennedy School including Leadership in Homeland Security, Leadership in Crisis, and the Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government. He has attended the Naval Postgraduate School Homeland Security Executive Leaders Program and is a graduate of the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officers Program. He received the Gerard J. Molito Award for Professional Excellence for developing operation plans for responding to terrorist or major hazardous materials incidents for the Boston Fire Department and the Metro Boston region. Chief Fontana was the Chair of the Interagency Board of Emergency Preparedness and Response a national multidisciplinary organization representing 152 states, local, and federal first responders from 35 states; that is a unified voice of the first responder community whose main concerns are first responder and community safety, equipment operations and standardization and best practices.
Casey Grant’s professional career is focused on the design and implementation of research for the fire protection and emergency response communities.

For more than a dozen years prior to 2019, Casey managed numerous research projects with the Fire Protection Research Foundation (FPRF), the non-profit research affiliate for the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). He served as the FPRF Executive Director since 2015, and prior to joining the FPRF in 2007, Casey was the Secretary of the NFPA Standards Council and Assistant Chief Engineer, among other roles at NFPA since 1988.

Casey holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland and a Master of Science degree from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, both in Fire Protection Engineering. He is a Registered Professional Engineer in Fire Protection Engineering in the States of California and Tennessee. He is a member of both the Beta and Gamma Chapters of the Salamander Fire Protection Honorary Society. Casey is a Fellow of the Society of Fire Protection Engineers, a Fellow of the Institute of Fire Engineers, and has one fire protection related U.S. patent.

George Hough is a retired FDNY Lieutenant with over 25 years of field experience, including 15 years as an officer in the department’s principal hazardous materials response unit, Hazmat Co. 1. He has served as an instructor at the NYC Fire Academy, providing Hazmat Technician Training to members of its Special Operations Command. Lt. Hough was a Hazmat Team manager for the FEMA NY Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue Team and has deployed with the team to areas throughout the U.S. affected by severe weather events. He has also worked and trained with agencies, including the FBI, Secret Service, and National Guard CST units for special events and incident responses within NYC.

Lt. Hough participates on committees for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology directorate and the Interagency Advisory Board (IAB), which focus on identifying preparedness gaps and evaluating new first responder technologies. He assisted in developing standardized testing procedures for the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Robotics Group and served on the NFPA 2400 committee, helping to create the first draft Standard for Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Used for Public Safety Operations.

Lt. Hough holds a Masters of Arts (M.A.) in Security Studies from the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security as well as a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Industrial Engineering from Columbia University. Through his master’s research on robot communication issues, he conducted testing with the National Institute of Standards (NIST) and co-authored conference papers from the data collected. He has had extensive training in firefighting, hazmat, and technical rescue disciplines.

Ryan Franks’ professional career has focused on the testing, inspection, and certification of batteries and energy storage systems as well as the development of codes and standards. Ryan was Global Energy Storage Business Manager at the Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL) CSA Group and led the development of that organization’s battery and energy storage business. Ryan has also led international and domestic standardization projects for energy storage, microgrids, smart cities, and other strategic and emerging electrotechnical concepts at NEMA, the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, and the U.S. Green Building Council. He has served as Secretary of the US Technical Advisory Group to IEC TC120 Electrical Energy Storage Systems, Convener of the IEC ad hoc Group on Energy Storage System Aspects and Gap Analysis, and Secretary of the ANSI Accredited Standards Committee on Energy Storage Systems. He was a Working Group Chair of the EPRI Energy Storage Integration Council (ESIC), a Working Group Chair of the DOE Protocol for Uniformly Measuring and Expressing the Performance of Energy Storage Systems, and the US Expert to IEC Systems Evaluation Group 6 on microgrids. Ryan graduated with a BS in Engineering Mechanics from the University of Illinois, is currently pursuing an MBA, and is the inventor on two patents.