



CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

BULLETIN

YOUR FIRE DISTRICT NEWS SOURCE

APRIL 8TH, 2023

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If you can't see yourself as a life-long learner, then please do us all a favor and retire.

THE CAPITAL CALENDAR:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

Thursday May 11th Meeting of the General Membership Zoom Available

Thursday June 8th Board of Director's Meeting 7PM

Thursday July 13th Board of Director's Meeting 7PM

August, No Meeting

Thursday September 14th, General Membership Meeting 7PM

Thursday October 12th General Membership/Nominations for Officers & Directors

Thursday November 9th, 7:00pm general membership dinner served at 6PM/Elections

December, No Meeting

Printable Calendar – See Last Page

It's March Already and Dues are Due!!

To date 62 **Fire Districts** have submitted renewal dues for 2023. Those fire districts that have not renewed that were members last year are: Coeymans Hollow, Hemstreet Park, ~~Quaker Street~~, Glenville #7, Hoosick Falls Joint, ~~Schoodack Valley~~, Town of Mohawk, ~~Selkirk~~, ~~Guilderland~~, North Creek, Speigletown, ~~Perth VFD~~ and Petersburg. We are looking forward to hearing from those districts plus any more in the Capital Area that wish to join.

To date most **business partners** have submitted renewals for 2023. Those business partners that have not renewed for 2023 yet are: Ballston Spa National Bank, ~~Fox Pest Control~~, White Wolf Computer, Salt City Fire Equipment, and The D'Amato Law Group.

Long Way to Travel to Meetings? Join remotely using Zoom!

It's our desire that every member district have the opportunity to attend Capital Area meetings. We know we cover a large area, in 8 counties and beyond and wish to give all of our members a chance to participate in the general membership meetings. You have a voice and we would like to hear it. Join us at our next meeting either in person or via Zoom. The link will be sent via constant contact prior to each general membership meeting. Thank you for being a member and we hope you will join us.

CAFDA FALL WORKSHOP: Put it on your calendar

Saturday, November 4th, 2023 8:00 AM Fall Workshop Verdooy Fire Department

SUBJECTS TO BE COVERED:

Harassment Challenges – Discipline in the Volunteer Department

How to SHOP for insurance

Ask the experts: CPA, VFBL, Attorney, Insurance, Candle Stick Maker

We want to thank the Clifton Park – Halfmoon Fire District for allowing us to use their facility for the Capital Area meetings.

You Are Invited to Become a Member of the Capital Area Association!

The Capital Area Association has voted to amend its By-laws to allow both individual and regional or county Fire District Associations to join. The updated By-laws are posted to the AFDCA.org website.

Individual membership fee will be \$50 annually, fire district association fees will be \$300 annually.

Download THE APPLICATION HERE: <https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Application.doc>

Benefits of membership include meeting attendance, receiving the Bulletin, access to legal advice

The Capital Area has logo ware available, long and short sleeve polo shirts. Contact Secretary/Treasurer Tony Hill to purchase shirts.

****IN-PERSON COMMISSIONER TRAINING REMAINING OPTIONS**

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN A POP-UP IN PERSON COMMISSIONER TRAINING IN THE NEAR FUTURE? FOR INSTANCE IN EARLY JUNE. THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION IS WILLING TO SPONSOR AN IN-PERSON TRAINING AT CLIFTON PARK FD. THOSE WHO STILL NEED THE TRAINING CAN PARTICIPATE IN AN IN-PERSON CLASS ROOM ENVIRONMENT! **LET US KNOW YOU ARE INTERESTED BY EMAILING CAAOFD@GMAIL.COM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.** Cost would be \$85.00 per seat.

The three classes which we hosted were very well received and very interactive with many questions answered. It seems the participants enjoyed the instructor and the new presentation format.

§176-e of Town Law: *Training requirements for fire commissioners. Each fire commissioner shall attend and successfully complete a commissioner-specific state-approved training course within **two hundred seventy days** of the taking of such office. When approved by the board of fire commissioners in advance of a commissioner attending such training course, the actual and necessary expenses incurred by a commissioner in successfully completing the training required by this section shall be a charge against the fire district. [270 days from January 1st = September 28th, 2023]*

A remaining option is the On-Line course hosted by the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York.

On-line Training Opportunity

Cost: \$100 per person

NEW Online Commissioner Training Course

This training is available to both Members and Non-Members.

Questions or further information call 800-520-9594

CAPITAL SHORTS:

- **We hope this Easter brings you peace and joy.**
- **2023 Tax Savings Generated By New York's Volunteer Fire Service provided by FASNY downloadable HERE: <https://afdca.org/wp-admin/post.php?post=4898&action=edit&classic-editor>**
- **If you are interested in becoming a State Director to represent Region 1 for the next two years, please contact Tom Rinaldi or any of the Capital Area officers.**
- **Our sympathies to the Jonesville Fire Department on the passing of member and treasurer Bob Fox Jr.**
- **See the Call To Action on page 4 and fill it out – send it!!**
- **Page 14 important information regarding Junior Firefighters from Fire Districts Mutual.**
- **Coffee with Commissioners Rescheduled, read on.**

If you no longer wish to receive the Capital Bulletin you have the option to “unsubscribe” at the bottom of the introductory email.

MUTUAL AID HELP REQUEST

- The Wilton Fire District is looking for policies regarding Driver Certification, send to Megan Washburn, District Administrator at mwashburn@wiltonfiredept.org. Thank you.
- The Arvin Hart Fire Co is looking to see if anyone has a written swift water mutual aid agreement on top of their county mutual aid agreement, holding the other participants harmless? Reply to tom@rinaldi1.com
- Fire Department Breakfasts are back, Gansevoort Fire Department holds theirs on the 3rd Sunday of each month except for July and August. Clifton Park Fire Department is every other month with the next breakfast on the first Sunday of April. (IF ANY OTHER DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE TO NOTIFY READERS OF THEIR ACTIVITIES PLEASE LET US KNOW THROUGH THE OFFICERS OR DIRECTORS.)
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STATE ASSOCIATION NEWS:

WWW.AFDNYS.ORG

[2023 Annual Meeting & Leadership Summit Expo](#)

Wednesday, May 17 - Saturday, May 20 Turning Stone Resort & Casino 5218 Patrick Road Verona, NY 13478

[Click Here to Register](#)

A link to reserve your hotel room at the Turning Stone Resort & Casino will be included on your confirmation page and in your confirmation email. No call in reservations will be accepted. 1 room per person. All Turning Stone rooms are sold out, but check for cancellations.

Anyone with hotel reservations in the AFDSNY block that is NOT registered for this event will be subject to your reservation being canceled by the host. Prior notice will be given when possible but is not guaranteed.

THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS ARE URGING ALL FIRE DISTRICTS WHO ARE DUES PAYING MEMBERS OF THE STATE ASSOCIATION TO TRAVEL TO TURNING STONE ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON MAY 19TH TO VOTE AT 4PM IN FAVOR OF THE STATE ASSOCIATION BY-LAW CHANGE ALLOWING FOR FUTURE VOTING BY YOUR FIRE DISTRICT EITHER IN PERSON OR BY PROXY. THIS WOULD EMPOWER ALL OF THE MEMBERS WHO PAY DUES TO VOTE WITHOUT HAVING TO TRAVEL, PAY FOR AND ATTEND THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

This Not For Profit Association If You Pay Dues, You Should Be Allowed To Vote For Officers and By-Law amendments with having to pay for attendance, travel etc.!

[State Fire Districts Announces a move back to a Fall Annual Meeting](#)

The annual meeting in 2024 will be held on October 9-13th at the Crown Plaza-Desmond Hotel in Colonie NY.

TRAINING APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR ENTIRE BOARD/SECRETARY/TREASURER

Mark your calendar for Saturday, November 4th 2023 for the **Capital Area Fall Leadership Workshop**, being held at the Verdoy Fire Station on Troy-Schenectady Road. Tentative subjects are Harassment in the Fire Service and Applying Discipline, How to SHOP insurance for your fire district, Expert's Panel.



[Coffee with Commissioners Rescheduled!](#)

Thursday April 20th at 7PM

Topic Protecting Your Assets

REGISTER HERE: https://archcapgroup.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GnxLI8OTSnKESyudFTXrew

THE LATEST FROM ALBANY



****CALL TO ACTION!!**

The NYS Budget deadline has been extended to April 10, and the time is NOW to weigh in and make a final push for provisions of critical importance to the future and viability of the volunteer fire service are included in the final language! The Governor put in language to enable the state to directly reimburse, as well as empower localities to additionally reimburse, volunteer firefighters for completing specific “core” trainings without eliminating current benefits. This would gain access to a \$6.5 million fund from the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control, and ensure better training for all of our members. This section, known as “PPGG Part H – Stabilizing the Statewide Fire Service”, is an integral component to our efforts to increase our ranks by removing a financial barrier to onboarding and outfitting a volunteer with the tools they need to protect the public.

The Senate also included other provisions that would directly benefit volunteers:

- A proposed \$600 tax credit increase to volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers, which would QUADRUPLE the current amount – this amount has remained the same since enacted in 2006! It is high time to raise this!
- A removal of the prohibition on collecting both the income tax credit and the real property tax exemption. This is a common sense fix that will benefit all members.

On these two aspects, the Governor and the Assembly need to hear our voice and agree with the Senate!

The Assembly included a provision that FASNY has long advocated for, which is a fix to the sweep of dedicated funding for municipalities’ code enforcement efforts into the General Fund. This money has not been going to its intended purpose for three decades, and the Assembly stopped the sweep in their proposed One-House budget language.

The Governor and the Senate need to hear why this measure is such a critically important preventative step to save lives in New York!

Both the Senate and the Assembly included money to establish the first-ever Volunteer Fire Service Capital Fund. This was a measure supported by both Democrats and Republicans to help address financial challenges volunteer departments run into when seeking to acquire equipment or build facilities.

The Governor needs to hear how volunteer departments are struggling to get the funding together to make necessary improvements and repairs.

While all of these measures together would be a home run for the fire service, negotiations are a give and take. It is helpful for decisionmakers to hear our support for this package of bills so they think of the safety of their constituents and remember their volunteer firefighters while they discuss!

Please take a minute and reach out to the Governor, your Senator and your Assembly Member!

START YOUR EMAIL NOW AT THIS LINK: <https://www.voterveice.net/NVFC/Campaigns/103590/Respond>

2023 Issues of United Concern – NYS Fire Service Alliance Legislative Initiatives

- **ENSURE VFBL PARITY WITH WORKERS COMPENSATION**
Bring the volunteer firefighters benefit law pay equal to worker’s compensation/what career firefighters receive when injured in the line of duty.
Corresponding legislation: S5436 SKOUFIS/A5991 MCMAHON
- **S4120 MAYER/A3992 OTIS---DESIGNATE EMS AS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE AND EXPAND THE BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO EMS PERSONNEL AND SET STANDARDS FOR EMS**
Recognizes EMS as an essential service, establishes a special district for the financing and operation of general ambulance services, expands access to health insurance and retirement benefits available to EMS providers.
- **ANALYZE FINDINGS FROM THE NYS DHSES RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TASK FORCE IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE ON:**
(1) RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

(2) RETENTION EFFORTS

PUBLIC SAFETY AND BUILDING CODE COMPLIANCE ISSUES

- **S3458 SKOFUS/A2776 ZEBROWSKI**---AMEND PENAL CODE TO ADD ENDANGERING THE WELFARE OF OCCUPANTS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

• **S2986 KAVANAGH/A4430 ZEBROWSKI**---RECOVERY OF 54-G FUNDING TO SUPPORT CODE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS
Ensure state funds collected through dedicated fees on each fire policy written in the state go to support local code enforcement activities and not continue to be swept into State General Fund.

Corresponding legislation: S.6970-A (Kavanagh) / A.8802-A (Zebrowski) (2021-2022 Session)

- **S3531 SKOFUS**---TIMELY ADOPTION OF UPDATED STATE FIRE AND BUILDING PREVENTION CODE

Would require that a new building code as published by ICC would be adopted by the NYS Codes Council within specified time frame.

- **ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS** – Ensure the Executive and Legislative prioritization of provision of affordable housing stock through legalization of more residential space is executed in a manner that prioritizes occupant safety and the safety of first responders in emergencies. Ensure a focus on legalizing existing units as well as create new units; advocate for increasing access to housing for first responders as a recruitment and retention tool.

Corresponding legislation: To be determined.

- **LITHIUM-ION BATTERY SAFETY STANDARDS**

Ensure proper registration/permitting, research and standard development, repairing and regulation of products containing lithium-ion batteries, work with stakeholders to raise public awareness around best fire safety practices, and examine solutions proposed from decision makers and opine as a trusted public safety voice.

- **S324 OBERACKER**---CONTINUE TO IMPROVE TAX BENEFITS FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Push to allow volunteer firefighters to receive both real property tax exemptions and income tax credit, while continuing to advocate for an income tax credit increase (has been at \$200 since its inception in 2006.) This credit would step increase tied to qualifying years of service up to \$2,500 for 10 or more consecutive qualifying years of service.

ALSO: A165 WOERNER AND S324 OBERACKER

- **A1999 HAWLEY**---CANCER COVERAGE COST RELIEF

Pursue data collection to enable establishment of a funding stream to alleviate fiscal burden on districts/departments providing the coverage.

- *occupational, and other information from firefighters on an ongoing basis to enable public health researchers to learn more about the causes of firefighter cancer in order to better treat and prevent it.*
- **The SIREN Grant**, which is run through the Department of Health and Human Services and helps public and private nonprofit EMS agencies that serve rural areas pay for equipment, training, and staffing.
- Housing Guaranteed Loan Program assists approved lenders in providing loans to low- and moderate- income households to build, rehabilitate, or improve a home in eligible rural areas. **This bill will allow volunteer firefighters to participate in the loan program even if their income exceeds the maximum allowable income level by up to \$18,000.** The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Good Neighbor Next Door Sales Program *gives law enforcement officers, teachers, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians a 50-percent discount from the list price of a home located in a revitalization area.*

THE LATEST FROM WASHINGTON

Bicameral FIRE STATION Act Introduced To Upgrade Fire, EMS Facilities Nationwide

With a proposed \$750 million grant program, the newly introduced FIRE STATION Act (Facilitating Investment Required for Emergency Services to All Towns in Our Nation Act), put forth by U.S. Sens. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), as well as U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ), pushes for modifications, upgrades and build-up of fire and EMS facilities across the country. "Our firefighters deserve the best possible facilities so they can be ready with everything they need to spring into action when duty calls," Van Hollen said. "Yet nearly half of the fire stations across America require major repairs – with some even posing serious health hazards to the men and women who protect our communities. ***This bipartisan bill will unlock more funding to ensure our fire and EMS heroes have modern, safe, and mission-ready facilities.***"

Biden Backs Schumer's Push To Renew Federal Firefighter Grants

Robert Harding

As Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer calls for the reauthorization of two federal grant programs to support fire departments and emergency responders, the legislative effort is backed by President Joe Biden.

In a statement released last week, the Biden administration announced it "strongly supports" passage of the Fire Grants and Safety Act sponsored by U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, a Michigan Democrat. The bill has 12 cosponsors — six Democrats, four Republicans and two independents.

The legislation would renew the Assistance to Firefighters and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant programs, both of which are administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Annual funding for the programs totals \$720 million.

Peters' bill would also reauthorize and increase funding for the U.S. Fire Administration, a federal agency that provides fire training and collects data on fires. The agency's funding level would rise from \$75 million to \$95 million if the legislative effort is approved.

"These programs provide critical resources to communities across the nation for firefighters, facilities, equipment and training," the Biden administration said in its statement.

The Auburn Fire Department and other departments in Cayuga County have benefited from the federal grants over the years. Auburn received grants totaling more than \$1.5 million in 2021 to hire five firefighters and buy 38 new self-contained breathing apparatuses. Departments within the Springport Fire District and the Sempronius Fire Department are among the recent local recipients of federal firefighting grants.

According to Schumer's office, since the programs began in the early 2000s, upstate New York fire departments have been awarded nearly \$700 million, including \$23 million in 2022.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

[View the final report of the NYS VFF Task Force HERE:](#)

<https://afdca.org/view-the-final-report-of-the-nys-vff-task-force/>

The report can also be downloaded from the Association's website at [AFDCA.org](https://afdca.org)



[Volunteer Firefighters Save N.Y. Taxpayers Billions Annually, FASNY Study Finds](#)

A COPY OF THE REPORT IS POSTED TO THE WEB SITE AND HERE AT: <https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FASNY-Economic-Study-2023.pdf>



YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES

[LODDs: Fla. County May Help Families Of Fallen Police Officers, Firefighters With Mortgage Or Rent](#)

Lisa J. Huriash

Broward County leaders unanimously agreed Tuesday to consider a future budget item that would provide 12 months' worth of mortgage, rent or property tax payments to the families of police and firefighters killed in the line of duty.

It's the brainchild of Commissioner Mark Bogen, who said officers are in a unique profession and deserving of protection. Other benefits required by state law include \$75,000 to the surviving family if the death occurs in "fresh pursuit," in response to an emergency, or while working a traffic accident or enforcing traffic laws; an additional \$225,000 in the event of a line-of-duty intentional killing; health insurance premiums for the surviving spouse until remarried and each child until age 25, and retirement plan benefits.

Because Broward's concept only covers "law enforcement," county leaders still have to decide who is eligible, such as detention deputies who work in the jails, or officers from federal agencies doing work in Broward. Security guards are not expected to be part of the plan.

The County Commission also will have to decide what “line of duty” means, including death by COVID-19, which might have been contracted on the job.

“It’s an important message to our constituency,” said Commissioner Michael Udine, who said he’d like to see the county’s cities participating in the benefits program.

Specifics are expected to be detailed in May. The idea was praised by police unions, who said it set a “great precedent” of support.

LET YOUR MEMBERS KNOW ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY!



April 15th, 2023

The 2023 Fire and Emergency Services Training Conference is virtual this year! Register for one two, or all three hot topic course offerings:

- Cancer Prevention
- Lithium-Ion Battery Emergencies
- Becoming an Effective Leader

Learn more & register: <http://on.ny.gov/3G018P4>



VFIS Instructor-Level Program Emergency Vehicle Driver Training (EVDT)

EMS Vehicle Operation (EMSVO) Description **This program is a train-the-trainer program** which is designed to teach the necessary instructional methodology in order to successfully deliver the following programs within your own agency. Upon completion, an instructor kit will be provided.

Course Information

4/15/2023 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

4/16/2023 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Wynantskill Fire Department / NGFD#1 511 Church Street Wynantskill, NY 12198



EVDT 12-16hr Instructor Level PDF.pdf

Register online at www.vfis.com

Insured by VFIS \$0 for first 3 seats, \$60 for each additional Not insured by VFIS \$500 per seat

VFIS Instructor-Level Program

Emergency Services Trailer Operations & Safety

Emergency Services UTV/ATV Safety

May 20th, 2023

Woodman’s Hall 980 County Route 401 Westerlo, NY 12193

Insured by VFIS Trailer: \$0 for first 3 seats, \$60 for each additional UTV/ATV: \$0 for first 3 seats, \$60 for each additional

Not insured by VFIS Trailer: \$300 UTV/ATV: \$300

REGISTER ON LINE AT: WWW.VFIS.COM

UL FSRI Fire Safety Academy – 1 Hour Web Based Course on Lithium Ion Batteries

This course focuses on foundational research about lithium-ion batteries, thermal runaway and how fire and explosion hazards can develop. The knowledge you gain in this course can help you identify the risks associated with lithium-ion battery products in your personal and professional life.

COURSE ACCESS AT THIS LINK: <https://training.fsri.org/course/035-science-lib>

[Available at any time for your members.](#)

REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE NYSAFC 117TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & FIRE 2023 EXPO!

June 14-17 • The Oncenter • Syracuse, NY With exhibits, fire and EMS classes, Hands-On Training, and networking events for personnel of all ranks, there's something for everyone at the premier fire industry, rescue, and EMS conference and expo in the Northeast!

CLASSROOM EDUCATION

More than **35 classes** will be presented by some of the most respected leaders in the industry from Wednesday – Saturday for Conference Full Term registrants. **EMS CME** classes will be delivered, and special training for **codes** personnel and **commissioners** will be available. The schedule of classes is coming soon!

ATTENDEE REGISTRATION

REGISTER IN ADVANCE or at the door! **New** – online registration is available for single registrants! Those registering groups must use the PDF form.

ONE DAY TICKETS (EXPO ONLY)

Pre-Registration: \$25 (per person, includes 3 tickets)

On-Site: \$10 (per person, per day)

FULL TERM REGISTRATION (EXPO & CLASSES)

NYSAFC Individual Member: \$100 (per person)

Non-Member: \$175 (per person)

Hands-On Training at FIRE 2023 in Syracuse Announced

Registration is open for Hands-On Training at the NYSAFC 117th Annual Conference & FIRE 2023 Expo! HOT will be delivered from Wednesday, June 14 – Friday, June 16 at the Syracuse Fire Department Training Center. Seven courses led by some of the nation's most knowledgeable and experienced instructors will be available: "Advanced Thermal Imaging Camera Ops," "Advanced Vehicle Extrication," "Aggressive Interior Fire Attack," "Fire Behavior On the Inside," "First-In Officers' Responsibilities," "Hoarder Fires," and "Truck Company Essentials."

Learn More and Register At This Link... <https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/fire2023hot>

NYSAFC 2023 Seminar Series, "Truck Skills Beyond the Textbooks"

Early in our firefighting orientation, we're taught basic skills and tactics from textbooks. In addition, we'll drill and be tested on many of these skills at fire academy buildings to attain our firefighting certifications. It's a good process, but our learning shouldn't stop there because we haven't been exposed to many of the situations we'll encounter at fires and emergencies. Plus, the buildings in the academy aren't conducive to allowing us to operate with tools to open the walls and ceilings, pull suspended ceilings, remove baseboard and window trim, or even cut open tongue and groove sheathed roofs. This [interactive lecture](#) strives to go beyond textbook learning and bring alive street skills, tips, and tactics of truck work in: portable ladders, overhaul, forcible entry, roof ventilation, tool use, and more.

Registration (per person):

\$35 – NYSAFC members

\$50 – non-members

Pre-registration encouraged.

Albany Co. October/23/23, Fulton Co. September/7/23, Saratoga Co. October/24/23

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: <https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/2023seminarseries>

 **University Provides a Wealth of Training Opportunities UPDATED FOR 2023**

VFIS TRAINING AND RESOURCE CATALOG 2023

<https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-ETC-Resource-Catalog-VFIS.pdf>

VFIS UNIVERSITY – USERS GUIDE

<https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/VFIS-University-User-Guide-3.pdf>

VFIS TRAINING OFFICER USERS GUIDE

<https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/VFISU-Training-Officer-User-Guide.pdf>

VFIS RESPONDER HELP FLYER

<https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2023-VFIS-Responder-Help-Flyer.pdf>

OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE –CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES!

OPPORTUNITIES:

State, Federal Efforts Helping Rural, Volunteer First Responders

VIDEO: Long before the COVID pandemic, staffing shortages and a lack of funding impacted rural and volunteer fire and EMS departments. In the last year state and federal efforts have focused on eliminating these problems. The rural ambulance task force was a pre-pandemic idea, aimed to address medical needs in rural communities. The 15 member group held the first meeting in February, Dean Romano, Director of Rotterdam ems services, is a member. "As we came together in one room all across the state that we're all talking about the same problems, no matter what the make-up of the particular system was, the system is composed of the same problems," said Romano. "So, we made what we're calling buckets of similar problems and we're working through those things." Those issues range from staffing shortages, inadequate funding, and creating treatment protocol equity. At the end of the year the group will give Governor Hochul a report with recommendations for legislation. State Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara leads the task force, and says they'll continue addressing the issues long after the report.

CHALLENGES:

Fiery Derailments Renew Americans' Focus On Railroad Safety

Americans are renewing their focus on railroad safety after a string of recent derailments, especially two fiery ones involving hazardous chemicals in Ohio and Minnesota that prompted evacuations. Federal regulators and members of Congress are urging railroads to do more to prevent derailments. They want standards for the trackside detectors used to help identify equipment problems, more notice to states about hazardous chemicals they are hauling, and at least two people at the helm of freight trains. A Senate bill would toughen the penalty for safety violations to up to 1% of a railroad's annual operating income and set standards for the maximum length and weight of freight trains, which have grown significantly in recent years. Trains now routinely stretch beyond two miles (3 kilometers) long.

Fredericksburg (VA) Fire Departments Paying More, Waiting Longer for New Ambulances

Cathy Dyson

Fire and rescue departments across the Fredericksburg region — and the nation — are dealing with the double whammy of higher costs and longer wait times for new ambulances and fire trucks.

Here's a situation that played out recently in King George County: Fire Chief David Moody requested a replacement ambulance in September and initially put in a "placeholder of \$300,000 with the disclaimer" that he didn't know the exact price because the manufacturer hadn't provided it.

When he got the final cost, Moody came back to the Board of Supervisors because he needed another \$34,000.

"Just to give you a little bit of context," Moody said last week, "this is the same model that we purchased in 2020 for \$285,000 ... and now the price today is \$333,957."

Wait times for new equipment are going up along with costs. Departments used to get new ambulances or fire apparatus three to six months after they placed an order. Now, the process is taking two to three years.

"It's a big mess," said Brian Frankel, deputy chief of EMS for Stafford County Fire and Rescue. "Pretty much every jurisdiction in the commonwealth is dealing with the same challenge."

Four American and international groups, representing various fire and rescue officials, spelled out the problems with rising costs and wait times, and the risk they pose, in an October letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg. "This issue is a rapidly emerging threat to public safety," the letter stated. ***"The lack of proper equipment puts additional pressure on an EMS system that is already over-stressed."***

The groups included the American Ambulance Association, International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Firefighters and National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians. They said that when an ambulance is totaled in a crash or has put in too many miles, the long wait for a new one makes it harder to ensure timely responses to 911 calls.

Most of the problems are tied to supply chain issues including the global shortage of microchips that's impacted all automotive production. But the production of the chassis used for ambulances has been particularly hard hit, according to a June article on the Firehouse website.

Manufacturers, such as Ford, GM and Chrysler, typically provide chassis to companies that then assemble ambulances with specifications requested by local fire and rescue departments.

But the companies that assemble the rescue squads have gotten only "a fraction of their orders" in the last 18 months, according to the letter from fire and rescue officials. To compound the problem, the ambulance industry is getting more requests for new equipment.

Before COVID, North American companies were receiving about 6,000 requests a year for new ambulances, according to the letter from fire and rescue associations. In 2021, orders increased to 8,500 a year.

"These are extremely difficult times for buyers, dealers and the manufacturers," Bob Reilly, owner of one of the largest ambulance dealers in the United States, said in the Firehouse article.

Chief Mike Jones with the Fredericksburg Fire Department has been in fire trucks or ambulances for almost 40 years, and worked to procure them for decades.

"The cost increases, the number of them and the delays are something I have not witnessed before in my time," Jones said, adding that he's also dealt with prices going up every month.

His department got permission from City Council to order a new ambulance a year earlier because of the backlog in getting the vehicles. He hoped the department could save money by placing the order in this fiscal year, but probably won't receive it until halfway through fiscal year 2025.

As Moody pointed out to the King George supervisors, the \$333,957 price for an ambulance is basically for the shell only. It doesn't include a \$20,000 power system used to load a \$30,000 stretcher into the unit, or a \$40,000 heart monitor.

"And it certainly doesn't include any trauma dressings, Band — Aids and what we have to do to support the mission," he said.

His department set out all the gear and monitors used by ambulances and affixed yellow tags with their prices, and the total was \$197,126. Paired with the initial cost of the vehicle, a fully equipped "mobile emergency room," as Moody called an ambulance, costs almost half a million dollars.

The only thing that isn't increasing is the reimbursement rescue companies receive from Medicaid or Medicare for transporting patients to the hospital, Frankel said.

"We're bringing in the same money that we did prior to COVID while seeing all these supply chain issues and cost increases," he said.

[Police, Fire, Government Agencies Across Florida Must Ground Millions Of Dollars In Drones Over Fears Of Spying](#)

Police, fire and other government agencies across Florida must ground millions of dollars in aerial drones because of a **new state rule banning the agencies from using devices made by China-based DJI**. The DJI drones are among the most widely used in the world, but the DeSantis administration said they pose a security threat and did not include them on a list of approved drone manufacturers. In addition to a Florida Statute change that went into effect at the beginning of 2023, requiring all government agencies to use drones only from approved manufacturers, another rule went into effect Wednesday. The Unmanned Aerial Systems Minimum Security Requirements rule prohibits government agencies from purchasing or using any drone made by a manufacturer in a "foreign country of concern," which includes China.

HOT TOPIC - LIVING WITH LI-ION TECHNOLOGY

IN 2022 WE HAVE SADLY EXPERIENCED *19 + 2=21 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com**

In 2022 we experienced 101 LODDs reported nationally.!

YOU JUST NEVER KNOW...

- A teenage woman who worked as an emergency medical technician on Long Island died suddenly. Susan Giovannello was 19 years old. The cause of death, which came while she was on duty, has not yet been released.
- Two California firefighters were injured early Wednesday at the scene of a previous crash on Highway 101, members of the Santa Barbara County Fire Department were responding to a single-vehicle rollover crash when another vehicle struck a captain and an engineer working at the scene. Both were transported to a nearby hospital the captain was moved to the ICU and engineer was released.
- A Washoe County, Nevada, fire chief was struck by a vehicle while helping another driver; Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue Chief Charles Moore was struck on northbound Interstate 530. He was transported to a medical facility for examination and treatment and is recovering at home.
- Two members of the Stinnett Texas, Fire Department were injured in an apparatus roll over while en route to a grass fire, one firefighter was released by Golden Plains Community Hospital, and the other was transferred to Northwest Texas Hospital with two possible hairline fractures to his neck.
- Riverside Fire Department Capt. Tim Strack, 53, and president of the city's Firefighter's Association and a veteran firefighter, passed away. Strack worked on legislation in California to remove flame-retardant chemicals in furniture known for causing cancer, as well as federal laws that would provide healthcare benefits to September 11 first responders.
- Chicago (IL) Fire Department (CFD) Firefighter Jermaine Pelt died in a multialarm fire that struck a home in the city's West Pullman neighborhood early Tuesday morning. Two other CFD firefighters were also injured in the incident. Pelt was spraying water on the home's interior when conditions worsened, and he and his crew were forced to leave.
- More at: <https://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/>

Reference Material for Use in a Line of Duty Death

- VFBL Firefighters Guide to Benefits, wcb.ny.gov/content/main/vf-vaw/injured-in-lin-of-duty.pdf
- Survivors Benefit Guide, www.firehero.org
- National Fallen Firefighters Foundation <https://www.firehero.org>

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER – BY CHAPLAIN FRED RICHARDS

It is with deep sadness we note that, during these past 12 months, we have increasingly witnessed the deaths of individuals who have served their communities as Fire District Commissioners or in other district officer capacities. On behalf of the Capital Area Fire District Association membership and officers condolences are extended to those family members and the boards of their local fire districts for the losses they have suffered. We desire to honor those who have served with a message of tribute. In this issue we humbly recognize deceased individuals we currently know or have been brought to the attention.

We have learned Past Fire Commissioner *Daniel J. Morgan, Sr.* (87) of the South Schodack Fire District passed away at his home on April 1, 2023. Dan was a charter member of the Schodack Landing Fire Company founded in 1955. Throughout his life he served in many capacities which included involvement with the U. S. Army Reserves, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local #294. To Dan's surviving wife of 53 years, Margaret "Tessie" Morgan, the members of his loving family and his fire service brothers and sisters we extend our thoughts and prayers. Daniel Morgan's obituary is at: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/timesunion-albany/name/daniel-morgan-obituary?id=51545367>

On March 18th 2023 Past Commissioner *Clovel St. Lewis Joseph* of Glenville Fire District #9/ Rectors Fire Department passed on. Throughout his life Clovel worked in the construction field, as a Heavy Equipment Operator. He was a member of the International Union of Operating Engineers 158, Local 106. Our sympathy for his passing is extended his wife of (43+ yrs.) Nancy Jo Joseph, his children and other family members. A celebration of Clovel Joseph's life will take place at the Glenville Funeral Home on Saturday, April 15, 2023 from 10 am -12 pm. The complete obituary and directions can be obtained at: <https://glenvillefuneralhome.com/tribute-ajax/print-obituary.html?id=1795>

Edmund C. Myers (Age 77) died unexpectedly on March 4, 2023. In addition to being a volunteer firefighter and life member of the Beukendaal Fire Department, Ed was a Past Fire Commission Board member in Glenville Fire District #5. Before his retirement he labored for 37 years with the Village of Scotia Water Department. At his passing Ed is survived by his wife Marlene and 3 children to whom we extend our sympathies. The full obituary is available at: <https://www.bekkeringellisfuneralhome.com/obituary/Edmund-Myers>

On November 28, 2022 *Willard J. Bailey* (Age 84) passed away in his home. He was survived by his wife Genevieve Bailey and children. After graduating from Scotia-Glenville High School in 1956 Willard became a volunteer firefighter in the Scotia Fire Department (*John Miller Hook & Ladder Co.*). From 1961 to 1966 he served in the U. S. Army. He was a volunteer member of the Beukendaal Fire Department from 1964 to 2022. After a 40 years as a self-employed painter he retired and placed 10 additional years in as custodian for the Beukendaal FD. He had also served with distinction on Glenville Fire District #5's Board of fire Commissioners. His Obituary is available at: <https://www.bekkeringellisfuneralhome.com/obituary/Willard-Bailey>

Gary L. Dopp passed away on November 15, 2022. Following Gary's graduation from Scotia-Glenville High School in 1966 he enlisted in the U. S. Army for 3 years, serving in Vietnam. After leaving the army he worked 35 years as a machinist for General Electric in Schenectady. It was stated Gary was a fire service volunteer throughout his life. He first joined the Scotia Fire Department. He then joined the Beukendaal Fire Department where he served in the positions of Firefighter, EMT, Assistant Chief, Chief, and was also previously elected as a Commissioner in Glenville Fire District # 5. Gary became a volunteer in several other community organizations including VFW Post #2157. We convey our condolences to his wife of 43 years Mary Beth Dopp, their two children and other family members. Obituary information can be viewed at: <https://www.bekkeringellisfuneralhome.com/obituary/Gary-Dopp>

It has been brought to our attention by Jonesville Volunteer Fire Department Chaplain Mike Murphey that their FD Treasurer, *Robert Janes Fox, Jr.*, died on March 31st following a long illness. Reportedly Bob had served his department as treasurer for six years and also held the position of LOSAP Chairman for four years. A memorial service was conducted at Jonesville Station # 1. To his family, the Jonesville VFD membership and Jonesville Board of Fire District Commissioners we extended our condolences for your loss. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/timesunion-albany/name/robert-fox-obituary?id=51546567>

Paul F. Schonewolf (age 85) passed away on October 18, 2022 at his home. During their 34 years Paul and his family resided in the Town of Niskayuna he held elected public office for 27 years (4 years as the Councilman overseeing public safety) on its Town Board. He also served for 20 as a Fire Commissioner, 10 years a Board Chairman, for Niskayuna Fire District #1. He was a 43 year member of the Grand Boulevard Fire Company (Schenectady County) and later became a member of the North Queensbury Fire Department (Warren County). Paul was considered an early leader in the field of cable communications. Paul reportedly served on Schenectady County's 911 Advisory Committee, which originated 911 service in that county and served as chairman of the Federal Communications Commission Region planning committee. Reportedly, in 1976 he joined the NYS Association of Fire Chiefs and served as a member of the Communications Committee. He joined that organizations Board of Directors in 1995 and served as its president from 2005 to2006. We too extend to the Schonewolf family our sincere condolences for their loss. https://poststar.com/lifestyles/announcements/obituaries/paul-f-schonewolf/article_ea3ef669-b2fe-52f2-9027-cc4ce912fb70.html

With each loss we must pause to eternally thank that given individual's creator for the life-giving contributions provided others. To comfort those left behind and suffering loss with thoughts and prayers. For those families and organizations involved we humbly ask our gracious Heavenly Father, His precious Son and the ever present Holy Spirit to abide with each mourning individual and bring them growing peace.

We always appreciate receiving a note when the death of a Fire District Officer (past or present) occurs in those counties served by the Capital Area Fire District Association so their community service, family and organization can be properly honored, Thank you.

BUILDING & FIRE CODE ISSUES – WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT TO YOU? WEEKLY FIRE FATALITY DATA AS REPORTED BY THE MEDIA

Home builders and realtors already “drive” legislation with a history of disregard for life safety and a disgusting misinformation campaign about the cost of residential fire sprinklers, deaths are an awfully expensive price to pay to save money. Stop the carnage, install residential sprinklers. Residential sprinklers are a component of the plumbing system, with approximately 1 head per room. The purpose of residential sprinklers is to allow time for the occupants to escape. Residential sprinklers are designed for quick response and only one at the most two heads may be triggered. With residential sprinklers present, the civilian death rate is 89% LOWER. Residential sprinklers will assist responding firefighters to do their jobs and save firefighters lives also, especially since everyone is short staffed!!
CHIEFS NEED TO SPEAK UP: This fire would not have been as bad if there were residential sprinklers!!

HOME FIRE FATALITIES BY THE MEDIA FROM THE US FIRE ADMINISTRATION	
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	29+1 = 30
Last fire death 4/2/23 Argyle, Washington Co. Male 42	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	50+2 = 52
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	440 + 26 = 466
Top Three State with the most 1&2 Family Deaths	1 NY = 30
	2 PA = 28
	3 OH & TN = 26
There has been a total of 0769 civilian home fire fatalities in 2023	
There were a total of 2251 residential fire fatalities reported in 2022 in the US media.	
Both the states of Maryland and California require sprinklers in residential dwellings	

In 2022 in New York State **77** residents perished in fires in 1 & 2 family occupancies.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



****VFBL Coverage for 16 & 17 Year Old Volunteer Firefighters from Fire Districts Mutual**

As the fire service prioritizes recruitment efforts, many fire districts look to a new, younger generation of members and future leadership development. It is an important tradition and process to ensure that the fire service will continue to evolve and meet the needs of our communities. As the recruitment of young volunteer firefighters develops, we must understand and prepare for the coming challenges. Our friends at FASNY have published a great article and overview on the issues to consider when recruiting younger members (minors) as volunteer firefighters, which you can read by visiting www.fasny.com/magazine_articles/volunteer-firefighting-and-junior-firefighters-what-your-department-should-know.

The purpose of this communication from Fire Districts of New York Mutual Insurance Co. Inc. is to clarify how to ensure your 16- and 17-year-old volunteer firefighters are covered under VFBL. First, for an individual in the fire service to be covered, **they must be categorized as an "Active Member."** Other sub-categories such as Full Members, Probationary Members, Cadets, and Junior Members must be defined as "Active Members" and written into the fire district's bylaws. They may also have restrictive duties. The fire district bylaws should clearly define and explain their status to have coverage under VFBL.

If 16- and 17-year-olds are NOT defined as "Active Members" in the fire district's bylaws, then they are NOT covered under the VFBL. The NYS Attorney General states that child labor laws apply to all minors (under age 18). However, labor law does not exclude a person aged 16 or 17 from being an "Active Member" of their fire district.

It is also essential that you understand the definition and use of the word "Youth." Across NYS, there are fire districts that successfully maintain well-managed Youth programs. These are considered "Non-Active Duty" volunteer members. These programs are provided for under General Municipal Law section 204-b. They include Explorer scouts and others. These "Youths" must not be permitted to participate in emergencies or any hazardous activities. **"Youths" are NOT covered by the VFBL.** The fire district must be familiar with federal and NYS child labor Laws for compliance. The fire district should check its other insurance policies for any coverage exclusions for "Youths." There may be some medical coverage for "Youths" if the fire district has purchased an Accident policy like many Youth sports teams.

These words and definitions matter in NYS and the Workers' Compensation Board for VFBL coverage to apply. Check your fire district's bylaws for granting appropriate "Active Member" status to your 16- and 17-year-old volunteer firefighters as described above. **Remember, in NYS, any individual NOT categorized as an "Active Member" volunteer firefighter does NOT have coverage under VFBL.**

Fire Districts of New York Mutual Insurance Co. Inc. serves to protect those who protect us! Together with our network of insurance broker partners, we are available to help answer your questions and concerns. Feel free to contact us and thank you for your business and support.

Photos From The Scene: Understanding Fire/EMS Department Records Retention

Curt Varone

Question: An employee on an EMS unit takes a picture of an injury such as a burn or some other severe trauma before bandaging to be able to show doctors at the hospital what is under the dressing. What is the appropriate way for the department to handle that picture now that it exists? Can it or should it simply be deleted, or must we collect and keep that picture even though the purpose and intent was fulfilled by the time the ambulance crew leaves the hospital?

Answer: There are two major considerations with regard to the retention of any imagery taken by fire and EMS personnel in the performance of their duties. The first pertains to evidentiary issues associated with the imagery; the second pertains to public records law. **Both considerations are best addressed by having a policy to preserve every image taken in a secure archive.**

Let's start with images as evidence. Firefighters respond to emergencies where people are killed and injured, and their property is destroyed. This reality means there is an inherent potential for litigation in much of what we do. *Spoilation* is the destruction or loss of evidence that is relevant to a legal proceeding. It has both criminal and civil consequences, both of which need to be avoided. When we possess evidence that we know, or should know, is relevant to a legal proceeding, the law imposes a duty on us to properly preserve it. Our failure to do so can be used against us in the event we are sued and can be disastrous for the outcome of the case.

For example, let's assume the medic takes a photo of a badly angulated fractured arm prior to splinting. The patient is packaged and transported. The image is shown to a doctor in the emergency department and then deleted. Should the patient later sue the fire department and/or the medic for malpractice, the loss of that image may prove to be a point of contention in the suit.

The medic may argue she had no reason to believe the photo was relevant to a legal proceeding, but the patient may claim the medic *should* have based on complaints the patient made while the arm was being splinted (questioning the medic's competency), and the excruciating pain the patient experienced. If the medic is found to have spoliated the photo, the jury may be instructed that they can infer **the medic deleted the image because it would have been hurtful to her case.** In other words, the jury may infer the medic deleted it because she was concerned it may show she was negligent.

The decision to delete imagery must be evaluated in hindsight, and that hindsight simply does not exist in the moments after the image is taken.

A more common example occurs when a fire apparatus is involved in a crash and firefighters take photos at the scene. Any time there is an accident involving fire apparatus, there is the potential for litigation.

The evidentiary relevance of a given photo may not be immediately apparent to a firefighter or medic at the time it is taken. For that reason, **personnel must be trained not to delete incident-related imagery**. The decision to delete imagery must be evaluated in hindsight, and that hindsight simply does not exist in the moments after the image is taken.

The other big consideration with regards to retaining digital imagery relates to public records concerns. All 50 states plus the federal government have laws that require agencies and individual employees who are in possession of public records to retain them for the duration of what is called the *record retention period*. Public records are typically defined as any document, correspondence, report or image created or received by a public employee in the course of his/her duties. Deleting a public record prior to the expiration of the record retention period—or refusing to produce a public record when lawfully ordered to do so—is a criminal offense in many jurisdictions, and a finable civil infraction in the others.

When spoliation-related concerns are coupled with a legal duty to retain public records, the scope of the problem becomes apparent. Fire departments need to require that all imagery taken or received in the course of business be retained and archived.

An area of confusion commonly arises with regards to EMS-related imagery. The fact that we retain an image for public records purposes does not mean the entire image will be released to the public; nor does the fact that an image contains medically confidential information mean it is exempt from the public records law. The connection here is somewhat paradoxical.

Public records laws allow and/or require public agencies to redact certain types of information from a record prior to release. Medically confidential information and personal information (date of birth, Social Security number) are precisely the types of information that can be redacted from a public record when released. However, a public agency cannot withhold an entire public record simply because some parts of it contain protected information. As such, an image taken of a patient may constitute a public record, but portions of the photo may have to be redacted before it is released.

This is no different than the public records aspect of a patient care report. A typical public records request for a PCR will result in the release of a document that is little more than a blank report with black boxes where virtually everything pertaining to the patient has been redacted. The same approach must be taken with imagery.

The determination of whether an image must be released to the public, and/or how much of the image must be released, should be made by attorneys familiar with the intricacies of public records laws. It should not be made by individual firefighters deleting images. The original unredacted images themselves should be retained.

All fire departments need a record retention policy to ensure compliance with both the evidentiary and public records concerns discussed above. The policy should explain the retention periods required by state law and have provisions for what is commonly referred to as a “litigation hold.” A litigation hold is a way of flagging certain records for retention beyond the standard time limits because they may be relevant to a legal proceeding.

[FOLLOW UP: Prosecutor Drops Case Against Connecticut Fire Company Officer for Social Media Share of Crash](#)

Brendan Crowley

Charges were dropped last week against the Chesterfield Fire Company’s public information officer, likely the first person to have been charged under a decade-old state law prohibiting first responders from sharing photos without a victim’s permission.

After a two-car crash closed Route 85 in Montville the morning of Feb. 7, 2021, the fire company’s Public Information Officer Steven Frischling posted an alert to the Chesterfield Fire Co. Facebook page, including photos of first responders working at the crash.

That March, Frischling was arrested and charged with two counts of violating a law that prohibits first responders from taking and distributing photos of victims at a scene without their permission, unless it’s a part of their duties — charges that carry a possible punishment of up to a \$2,000 fine or a year in prison.

Frischling’s attorney Mario Cerame said that on Friday, more than two years after the arrest, state Superior Court Judge Arthur C. Hadden dismissed the charges before the case went to trial. With the charges dismissed, but no ruling made on whether he violated the law, Frischling told CT Examiner on Wednesday he hoped the dismissal would set a precedent that taking photos at a crash scene is a public information officer’s job.

Frischling **posted** four photos from the February 2021 crash to the Facebook page, one of which appears to show someone covered with a blanket on a gurney, and another showing a person sitting in the driver's seat of a car while firefighters cut off the damaged driver's side door.

Court records identify the person sitting in the driver's seat as a crash victim. Speaking to CT Examiner on Wednesday, Frischling claimed that the person, whose head is blurred in the photo on Facebook, is a deputy chief, not a victim of the crash.

Cerame said he and Frischling were ready to make their case in a trial, but the case was dismissed after Assistant State's Attorney Sarah Bowman entered a "nolle" — a formal notice that the state was not going to continue to prosecute.

Bowman told CT Examiner that the state entered the "nolle" after the judge highlighted weaknesses in their case that would make it difficult to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt. Bowman declined to say what those weaknesses were.

The law Frischling allegedly broke was passed in 2011 after a New London police officer took photos on his personal cellphone of a man who had died from an overdose, and sent the photos to other people. State lawmakers responded by passing a **law** that bars first responders from taking a photo of someone at a scene without their permission.

According to a **report** from The Day newspaper of New London, at least one lawmaker was concerned the law could disrupt first responders' efforts to reconstruct accident scenes, so the law is written to apply only to photos taken "other than in the performance of (a responder's) duties."

Frischling told CT Examiner taking photos at crash scenes is something he does regularly as public information officer for the Chesterfield Fire Company. He said it informs people when major roads are closed and will be closed for an extended period of time, and it highlights the efforts of the town's firefighters.

According to Frischling, the department spells out that the public information officer "photographs and visually documents incident scenes for release to the public," he said.

"It used to be, years ago, you would have newspapers with multiple photographers and reporters, and TV crews were far more abundant so the news could be covered," Frischling said. "Now, especially when it comes to local markets, we have to drive our own information, because there is a lot of misinformation that comes out of incidents. So it's up to the department to put that information out in a timely and accurate manner."

John Barbagallo, public information officer for the Norfolk Volunteer Fire Department, said that as a trained fire department member, he documents what his fellow firefighters are doing.

"A lot of folks have moved in from the city and still think they have a fire department with career guys sitting at the firehouse waiting for tones to go off, and that is not the case," Babagallo said of the fully-volunteer Norfolk department. "So we certainly use it as an educational component to inform the public."

Mark Brady, a retired longtime public information officer in Prince George's County, Maryland, who has instructed public information officers across the country including in Connecticut, said taking photos at a crash scene has become a regular part of the job over the last 15 years. He said it helps to show the public the resources of the department and the challenges they face in their day-to-day work.

But not all photos of a crash scene are acceptable, Brady acknowledged. Earlier this month, the family of NBA star Kobe Bryant **settled** a lawsuit against Los Angeles County after deputies and firefighters shared graphic photos of the victims of a 2020 helicopter crash that killed Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter and seven other people.

Brady said a public information officer taking and sharing graphic photos of people who are seriously injured or killed would not be ethical, saying there's a general rule that they shouldn't post anything they wouldn't show their own family. There are also legal standards to consider, especially patient privacy laws that require public information officers to remove personally identifying information from photos, including blurring out license plate numbers, he said.

"If you're a PIO and taking pictures showing your agency at work, while considering the laws of patient privacy, and showing pictures that are not graphic, those are acceptable," Brady said. "There's a line to be drawn between what is a graphic picture, and one that's not."

Barbagallo said he has his own standards for when to post a photo: would he want the photo to be out in the public if it was his own family in the photo? He said that standard is much more strict than the state law, and if he follows it, he won't have to worry about getting near the line of what state law allows.

"I don't want to upset my neighbors, my friends, my family, because it might have been them that were involved," he said. "And I extend that to people I know, whose houses I know and whose cars I know, and to perfect strangers."

Cerame said that, as far as he knows, Frischling is the only person who has been charged under the state law since it was passed in 2011. He said he couldn't find another case of anyone being prosecuted for taking photos at a crash scene, and believes the law was being twisted from its intent in order to prosecute Frischling.

"It's one thing to take some pictures on your cellphone to pass around. It's another thing for a public information officer to post something, in accordance with regulations, as part of your duty to inform the community about what you're doing," he said.

Barbagallo said he doesn't think the law will impede the work of public information officers. Frischling is likely the only person charged so far under the Connecticut law, but Barbagallo said that firefighters and EMTs have been charged in other states for "blatant disrespect and blatant stupidity," like taking a sensational photo and putting it up on their own Facebook page.

"That's what the law was intended for. It was not intended to impede the official job of the PIO," Barbagallo said. "That's why this case is so interesting."

For information only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. The opinions expressed are the opinions of the individual author at the time the facts were presented and based on the law then applicable. The information contained in these opinions is not guaranteed to be up to date. The information provided is not legal advice. Since legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case, and laws are constantly changing, nothing on this site should be used as a substitute for the advice of competent legal counsel. The authors assume no responsibility to any person who relies on information contained herein and disclaim all liability in respect to such information. You should not act upon information in this publication without seeking professional counsel from an attorney admitted to practice in your jurisdiction.

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE:

****The Followership Formula: How Good Followers Make Good Leaders**

Jim Spell

As an officer in the fire service, you likely have many certificates in your training folder. As you peruse this documentation, you might begin to see a pattern of words emerge – words like *authority*, *command*, *executive* and *leadership*. It is almost a guarantee, however, that there is not one document in your portfolio that distinguishes your achievement in *followership*.

Like most organizations, the fire service has no real working definition of a "good follower." Ironically, it is the job of leaders to define effective followership and understand how it is supposed to fit into a successful management system without upsetting command and control, or worse, jeopardizing the safety of the fireground.

Interestingly enough, it is only recently that the military, corporations, businesses and various universities have conducted studies specific to the role of followership in an attempt to understand it. Here's what they found:

- **Military:** Emphasizing chain of command, the military sees followership as essential, noting the significance of, for example, thousands of teenage mechanics working on the most sophisticated combat jets.
- **Corporations:** Despite their many consultants, workshops and seminars, corporations tend to see followership as a type of character flaw that could possibly lead to a lessening of profits if not controlled. In the business world, no one is truly satisfied or successful unless they are at the top; therefore, no one really wants to be a follower – at least, not for long.
- **Universities:** Educators see followership as necessary to the survival of any social network, but they study it by looking into the microscope backward. That is, they study all the significant human traits that characterize a great leader, only to repackage them as technical descriptions of followership.

While this information is insightful, for firefighters and officers looking for behavioral tools, these insights lack the hands-on application they have come to expect in their training.

THE EVOLUTION OF SPEAKING UP

In the distant past of bucket brigades and bed keys, followership was taken literally. Firegrounds were large, complicated and dangerous places. Communications at fire scenes were poor at best, relying on voices through brass trumpets to control a vast sea of men and machines.

It was imperative for everyone's safety that instructions were carried out with focus and determination, whether they were understood or not. Early handheld radio communication was spotty and often led to misunderstanding and confusion. It was better to have a clear game plan going in and stick to it. ***For years, the most effective way to run a large fire was by "following orders to the letter" because they were most likely issued only once.*** Tragedies were

unavoidable when situations changed on the inside while no one knew on the outside and yet, with noble conviction, orders were carried out ... until the end.

With the introduction of incident command and crisis management concepts, along with more advanced communication technology, orders transmitted were easier to give and receive. Because information was allowed with either one's immediate subordinate or superior, changes could be made in a straightforward manner. Suddenly, good ideas presented in a timely fashion became procedurally appropriate to both firefighters and officers alike, valuable regardless of who and where they came from. Followership had become an active and workable concept, not just some passive philosophy of unquestioning obedience and traditional loyalty.

Today, we couple this "new command communication" with education and training to create an environment of followership, one in which participants have more to contribute than blind obedience. Further, firefighters are becoming highly trained and adept at confident decision-making in line with the goals of command. There is the realization that the "strong, silent type" may not be the most effective firefighter. They are following with leadership instincts and assurance – the progression of hope.

DEFINING A GOOD FOLLOWER

Researchers describe followers as "impulsive or compulsive," "pragmatic or alienated," "isolationists or activists," "implementers or individualists" – the list goes on. Regardless of the endless classifications, most scholars agree that the traits of followers are akin to those found in great leaders.

What separates followers from leaders – and ultimately defines them – is not classification by type or personal traits but rather their role in any situation. How an individual reacts to a particular set of circumstances and their ability to transition seamlessly from an effective leader to a supportive follower and back again determines their function at any given time. Good followers, like great leaders, are asked to think for themselves. They are driven to go above and beyond any situation and still support the team. Followers must see the path toward progress clearly and take with them a structured set of values borne of critical review and the acceptance of new ideas, both theirs and their leaders.

This is not to say there are no clear roles in the fire service, but rank and command are not enough. In the past, the fire service focused on the definition of roles and spent little time on their suitable values.

FOLLOWERSHIP PRINCIPLES

The first step in understanding these values is to recognize the principles of good followership. Firefighters are ready to listen to good advice but need to have solid reasoning behind all actions. ***Firefighters should have faith in their leaders, but it must be a devotion supported by collective agreement and not just by charisma.***

Followership is not as simple as it sounds, as there are several principles that distinguish between good and bad followership:

- **There are more ideas conceived than decisions made**, just as there are more followers than leaders. Allow for time and the consideration of consequences when you present an idea, especially during a crisis.
- **Ideas are spatial and decisions are linear.** Ideas, whatever their origination, must be implemented in order. You must understand the value of order as well as the importance of ideas. Your idea may be of value but simply out of order.
- **Ideas must be presented in an appropriate manner.** Learn your department's cultural criteria for the presentation of ideas. You may have to wait. Patience is not only a virtue, it is a tactical consideration.
- **Be pure in motive.** Ideas, to be effective, cannot be presented with the thought of reward. The desire for appreciation obscures the clear evaluation and utilization of ideas. To expedite a solution is its own reward – or at least it should be.
- **The job of a good follower is to provide support**, remembering that loyalty travels in all directions.
- **Critical thinking, objective analysis, and initiative** are the keys to successful followership.
- **Pay attention at all times and listen**, especially before presenting ideas.
- **Reliability and consistency** are reflected in good followership.
- **Trust and honesty** are the cornerstones of both leadership and followership.
- **Accept responsibility** whenever appropriate.

THE FOLLOWERSHIP FORMULA

It's important to remember the formula for successful followership: Followership = Foundation + Focus + Follow-through.

- **Foundation:** *Build a good foundation of education and training so that you become a problem-solver whom everyone depends upon for answers.* Know that by the sheer volume of work you undertake, you will be recognized as an effective follower and a future leader. Good ideas combined with a solid work ethic speak volumes. Further, be the best teammate you can be. Help others and take pride and satisfaction from group accomplishments. Create a supportive environment for leadership success. This will translate to triumph and loyalty at all levels.
- **Focus:** Amid a world of multi-tasking, infinite inputs, smartphones and endless social media channels, the ability to focus is becoming increasingly more difficult to maintain. We tire easily, especially if the assignment is not interesting or inappropriate to our professional goals or personal satisfaction. We become easily distracted and find any excuse to move our attention to passive entertainment. Discipline, practice and time management are the keys to successful focusing of the mind. Remember, “make time to task.”
- **Follow-through:** This is where the rubber meets the road. Ideas are cheap and plentiful. Ideas only become valuable when they are utilized in an effective and meaningful way. This means commitment, tenacity, work and the willingness to take a risk. Presentation is only the beginning. You must be willing to battle for your beliefs. Ideas exist only in their implementation.

BEYOND THE “SAFE ZONE”

The follower’s motto: “Better to bring one solution to the table than a list of problems.”

In our history, we have all heard about fire departments steeped in tradition and unsullied by progress. Even couched in humor, these staunch and stoic pockets of long ago are coming around to the realization that when it comes to managing a group of firefighters, *submissive behavior is a slow, unimaginative and potentially dangerous way to run a fire, firehouse or even an entire organization.*

A fire department that lacks argumentative insight and the freedom to express ideas outside some perceived “safe zone” is doomed to failure or worse.

For years, the emphasis has been on leadership and for good reason. Changing times have brought to the fire service the challenge of managing a new breed of firefighter, one who is not only strong, brave and true but also knowledgeable, empowered and demanding. Because of these members, officers are becoming a leadership of responsible compassion, reasonable explanations and synergistic success.

Fire service culture is changing, and a new paradigm is being found. By nurturing the elements of trust and integrity within an accepted code of conduct, we ensure ourselves – independent of fear and rich in imagination and productivity – the ability to progress.

This is the legacy of followership – true to the past and focused on the future.

THE LIGHTER SIDE!

Did I read these signs correctly?

“Toilet out of order, use floor below”

**In a London Department Store: “Bargain Basement Upstairs”
and finally**

Notice Posted in a farmer’s field: “We allow walkers to cross the field for free, but the bull charges”

CLASSIFIED

Position Announcement Greenfield Fire District

The Greenfield Fire District is looking for a professional and highly-motivated person to perform custodial services and maintenance of fire district buildings, grounds and equipment. Must have good communication skills, the ability to

manage several projects simultaneously, and be flexible with work hours when necessary. Prior experience preferred and all candidates must have clean driver's license. Employment application and job description can be found on the district website at www.greenfieldfd.org.

Please send application, cover letter & resume to Joyce Petkus, District Administrator via email at jpetkus@greenfieldfd.org or regular mail to Greenfield Fire District, P.O. Box 103 Greenfield Center, NY 12833 no later than Friday, March 17, 2023.

Position Announcement
West Crescent Fire District



NEW POSTING

The West Crescent Fire District is looking for a professional and highly motivated person to perform custodial services and to maintain fire district buildings, grounds and equipment. Must have good communication skills, the ability to manage several projects simultaneously, be flexible with work hours when necessary. Prior experience preferred and all candidates must have clean driver's license. Employment application and job description can be found on the district website at www.westcrescentfire.com or by emailing Fire District Secretary Arthur Hunsinger at wcfsec@nycap.rr.com
Please send application, cover letter & resume to Arthur Hunsinger via email at wcfsec@nycap.rr.com

Position Announcement Station Keeper/Maintenance Person

Full Time (40 hours/week) hourly position, commensurate with experience. Benefits available (health and disability insurance, vacation, sick days, holidays, retirement).

Qualifications/Requirements:

- Minimum High School diploma or equivalent
- Relevant work or experience
- Pass District Physical, able to lift objects weighing 70 lbs.
- Preference given to those candidates at least 21 years of age
- Ability to understand and carry out instructions.
- Ability to deal with the public and work successfully with other employees and members of the Fire Department
- Familiarity with equipment found in fire stations.
- Experience with cleaning and light building maintenance.
- Ability to perform minor mechanical repairs.
- Initiative, resourcefulness and good judgement.
- Basic computer knowledge for data entry.
- Hold a valid NYS vehicle operator's license. A CDL-B license will be required within six (6) months of employment, to include Air Brake Endorsement. Driver's license will be enrolled in the NYS License Event Notification Service. License acceptable to Fire District's insurance carrier
- Background check for Arson Conviction and Sex Offender Registry.
- Preference may be given to an active SCBA qualified member in a local fire department.
- Need to be CPR/AED Certified

General Statement of Duties and Responsibilities:

- Performs work under the general direction of the Building Committee Chairman and Fire District Secretary, as directed by the Board of Fire Commissioners
- Maintain Fire District buildings, grounds and equipment.
- Provide custodial type services at District Office and firehouse
- Other duties as assigned and approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners

- Within one (1) year of hire date, must be a qualified driver and pump operator on all District vehicles. (Training will be permitted on District time).

Examples of Work to be performed:

- Mowing and trimming of lawns, pruning and mulching, rake and remove leaves/debris as necessary.
- Custodial type services including but not limited to: mopping, vacuuming, washing, scrubbing, cleaning windows, buffing, carpet cleaning, and garbage removal.
- Paint interior/exterior of buildings as needed; power wash exterior buildings as necessary.
- Responsible for maintenance and upkeep of vehicles and equipment provided by the Board of Fire Commissioners to complete duties.
- Assist in the coordination of fire apparatus and equipment. Clean, fuel, maintain and transport apparatus and equipment as necessary.
- Assist in coordination of various equipment testing (i.e. hose, ladder, pump).
- Create written correspondence, generate maintenance records as necessary, enter data into fire district software and create reports as needed.

OFFICERS OF THE CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS

2023 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President: Tom Rinaldi, Commissioner Stillwater/Saratoga

1st VP: John Meehan, Commissioner West Crescent/Saratoga

2nd VP: Art Hunsinger, Commissioner Clifton Park Halfmoon/Saratoga

Board of Directors: Les Bonesteel Commissioner Burnt Hills/Saratoga, Tom Wood Commissioner Northumberland/Saratoga, Joyce Petkus Treasurer Greenfield/Saratoga, Ed Woehrle Commissioner Niskayuna #1/Schenectady and Mike Podolec Commissioner West Glenville/Schenectady

Secretary/Treasurer: Tony Hill

Sargent at Arms: Tom Wood

Chaplain: Fred Richards

Legal Council: Greg Serio

The Capital Area Association represents fire district officials from the fire districts in Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Warren, Washington, Saratoga, Fulton and Montgomery Counties

Fire District Officials include Commissioners, Treasurers, Secretaries and Chief

All are invited to participate in all of the Capital Area Activities

The Capital Area Association wants to take this opportunity to thank all the Fire Districts who continue to support the local Capital Area Association as members for 2023.

Please advise your secretaries that all correspondence go to the Capital Area Association Mailing Address at:

AFDCA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063

EMAIL: CAAOFD@GMAIL.COM

518-407-5020

FIRE DISTRICT RESOURCES - -THE BACK PAGE - - FOR YOU TO FOLLOW UP!

What are the duties and responsibilities of a Commissioner?

The Answer is posted on our web site at www.AFDCA.org

Vital Statistics on the State Association Regions – the break out is on our web site.

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

PLEASE SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US!!

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.AFDCA.ORG

Welcome Back all of our Business Partners for 2023

We invite our business partners to submit educational information to be included in this Bulletin for district commissioners and chief officers

Write me at tom@rinaldi1.com

Please Support Those Who Support Us!!

If you have information on new products you wish to showcase or is educational and informative for fire districts, please submit it and we will use it in this Bulletin under the appropriate heading.

LEGAL SERVICES

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Jack Clark, Fire District Attorney
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BANKING



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 Brendan Kennedy ext 356

The Capital Bulletin is reaching well over 400+ fire district members and now other members of the fire service on a regular basis. Since the Capital Area Association covers an area the size of Connecticut it is difficult to meet in person to exchange information and ideas.

This is a service of the Capital Area Association through the effort of Tom Rinaldi who can be reached at tom@rinaldi1.com for comments or content contributions are always welcome.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS OF THE CAPITAL AREA

Would you like to join the Association of Fire Districts of the Capital Area and join 75 members in 8 counties? Both fire protection districts and Village departments are eligible for membership.

The yearly membership dues (January 1st to December 31st) shall be as follows and shall be based on the annual budget of the Fire District/Organization;

To take effect January 2023:

- \$0 to \$200,000: \$50
- \$200,001 to \$400,000: \$100
- \$400,001 to \$600,000: \$200
- \$600,001 plus: \$300

Business Partners: \$100.00 annual member fee



**association of fire districts
OF THE
CAPITAL AREA, INC.**

2023 Events Calendar

Date	Time	Type	Location
Thursday, April 6, 2023	7:00 PM	Board Meeting	Clifton Park
Thursday, May 11, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Thursday, June 8, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Thursday, July 13, 2023	7:00 PM	Board Meeting	Clifton Park
Thursday, September 14, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
October 2023	NO MEETING		
Thursday, October 12, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Saturday, November 4, 2023	8:00 AM	Fall Workshop	TBD
Thursday, November 9, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
December 2023	NO MEETING		
Saturday, January 6, 2024	9:00 AM	Organizational Meeting	TBD

**For General Membership meetings food is served 1 hour prior to the start time of the meeting,
usually 6pm.**