



ASSOCIATION OF
FIRE DISTRICTS
★ ★ CAPITAL AREA ★ ★

THE CAPITAL BULLETIN



FIRE DISTRICT NEWS

DECEMBER 10TH, 2022

EDITOR - TOM RINALDI

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*If nothing else read the articles preceded by ***

CAPITAL CALENDAR:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

2023 CAPITAL AREA MEETING & TRAINING SCHEDULE

Saturday January 7th 9:00am general membership breakfast served at 8AM

Thursday February 9th 7:00pm general membership dinner served at 6PM

Thursday March 9th 7:00pm general membership dinner served at 6PM

Saturday, March 11, 2023 6:00 PM Officer Installation Location in Saratoga Springs TBD

Thursday April 6th Board of Director's Meeting 7PM

Thursday May 11th Meeting of the General Membership

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

Mandated Commissioner Training Sanctioned by the State Comptroller's Office, \$85.00 per person

Saturday, February 11, 2023 8:00 AM 6 hour Commissioner Training Averill Park, Rensselaer Co. w/Greg Serio

Saturday, March 4, 2023 8:00 AM 6 hour Commissioner Training Clifton Park Saratoga Co. w/Greg Serio

Saturday, March 25, 2023 8:00 AM 6 hour Commissioner Training Berkshire Fire District Fulton, Co. w/Greg Serio

2023 Membership Activity Options Being Explored

Saturday, November 11, 2023 8:00 AM Fall Workshop Location and Date to be determined

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

CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION NEWS:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

You Are Invited to Join Us!!

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>

AS WE WORK OUT ALL THE GLITCHES AND PURCHASE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT THE CAPITAL AREA WISHES TO INFORM ALL OUR MEMBERS THAT WE ANTICIPATE THAT **ZOOM** WILL COMMENCE AT THE JANUARY 2023 MEETING. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

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

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

If you see ** it indicates a must-read article with educational value or leadership qualities.

CAPITAL SHORTS:

- **WE STILL NEED SOMEONE TO STEP UP TO BE A REGION 1 DIRECTOR FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS, PLEASE CONTACT TOM RINALDI OR ANY OF THE OFFICERS IF YOU ARE INTERESTED. A nomination letter needs to be into the State Association no later than December 15th.**
- Anyone interested in purchasing the FASNY 150th Anniversary Commemorative Book, you can use this link: <https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FASNY-150th-Commemorative-Book-Order-Form.pdf>
- Congratulations to my son TJ, I had the privilege of pinning his Lieutenant's badge on him in a ceremony at Albany City Hall where he is an 8 year veteran as a paramedic/firefighter.
- *The final Coffee with Commissioners is scheduled for **December 8th a 7PM**, see below.*

- *If you no longer wish to receive the Capital Bulletin you have the option to "unsubscribe" at the bottom of the introductory email.*

TRAINING APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR ENTIRE BOARD/SECRETARY/TREASURER



COFFEE WITH COMMISSIONERS LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023

[Click Here for Previously Recorded Webinars](#)

The Final Coffee with Commissioners for 2022 has moved to **Thursday December 8th at 7:00PM**

The Subject is, *Topics for the Organizational Meeting*

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: https://webinar.ringcentral.com/webinar/register/WN_kHxRb8KjRoa6UWIKtK-yYQ

Duties & Deadlines Secretary Webinar

Duties & Deadlines Secretary Webinar Schedules

Start time 6:00pm

December 20, 2022 - Organizing for the New Year

***If you have already registered you DO NOT have to register again, you will automatically received all zoom links.**

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: https://mms.afdsny.org/members/evr/reg_event.php?orgcode=FDNY&evid=32091843

THE LATEST FROM THE NYS LEGISLATURE

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: S.1340 (Brooks) / A.3597 (McMahon) (2021-2022 Session)

- **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.

Corresponding legislation: S.8432-A (Mayer) / A.9509-A (Otis) (2021-2022 Session)

- **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

- **AMEND PENAL CODE TO ADD ENDANGERING THE WELFARE OF OCCUPANTS AND FIRST RESPONDERS**

Corresponding legislation: S.3741 (Gaughran) / A.6087 (Zebrowski) (2021-2022 Session)

- **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)

- **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.

Corresponding legislation: S.6210-A (Skoufis) / A.3559-A (Hunter) (2021-2022 Session) provides a framework to accomplish; support amendments to extending the timeline of enactment from 12 months.

- **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 decisionmakers and opine as a trusted public safety voice.

- **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.

Corresponding legislation: S.3989-A (Reichlin Melnick) / A.1320-A (Zebrowski) (2021-2022 Session)

- **CANCER COVERAGE COST RELIEF**

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

We need you to pick up the phone and call the governor's office in support of this Bill!

Call 518-474-8390 in support of bill S9131!

As you all know I have working for the last 8 months to get the NYS Legislature to pass legislation **allowing counties** to give tax breaks to First Responders.

After the June recess I thought the issue was dead until January when the new session would convene.

However, I made all the material (Draft of proposed legislation, Drafts of County implementation of the proposed legislation and news articles describing the need for assistance by fire companies for aid in recruitment and retention.) to the lobbyists for several of the New York State Fire Service organizations.

Well, it appears the fire service lobbyists continued the fight and the result is the bill now before the Governor for signature **granting all 62 NYS Counties the power to enact legislation** to grant First Responders tax breaks.

As more details become available after Governor Hochul signs the Bill, I will keep you informed.

Copy of the Bill is attached.

My thanks to Commissioner Robert Blauw for bringing the passage of this legislation to my attention. My special thanks to Rensselaer County Executive Steve McLaughlin, Past Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino and retired State Senator Kathy Marchione for their very active support in all phases of this endeavor.

Now we need to encourage the Governor to sign this bill.

LINK TO BILL:

<https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/BILL-NUMBER-9131-10-2022-3.docx>

The 2022 Legislative Session and Fire Service Bill Status

Bills that didn't gain any traction and were stuck in committee were amendments to the heart and lung bill making them permanent, rather than renewing them every five years or so. Hopefully this effort will be renewed next year.

Several other bills that affect fire service business operations are the following, many have not been signed by the Governor yet, she is probably too busy running for re-election:

- (S7623AGAUGHRAN/A8591 THIELE) EXTENDS PROVISIONS OF LAW AUTHORIZING POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS TO PERMIT ANY PUBLIC BODY TO HOLD MEETINGS REMOTELY AND WITHOUT IN-PERSON ACCESS DURING THE COVID-19 STATE DISASTER EMERGENCY, UNTIL THE EMERGENCY IS DECLARED TO BE OVER. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR 1/14/22**
- (S7718) AN ACT TO AMEND A CHAPTER OF THE LAWS OF 2021 ESTABLISHING THE NEW YORK STATE RURAL AMBULANCE SERVICES TASK FORCE IN RELATION TO MODIFYING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK FORCE. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR 2/24/22**
- (S7144) PROVIDES CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM TRAINING, MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID, IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING AND NALOXONE TRAINING TO FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PERSONNEL BY THE COMMISSIONER OF MENTAL HEALTH. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR 5/6/22**
- (S9405) THE NYS ENERGY CODE PRODUCT AND APPLIANCE STANDARDS WILL DELIVER A PROJECTED \$15 BILLION OF TOTAL UTILITY BILL SAVINGS (SUPPOSEDLY) BY 2035 FOR NEW YORK CONSUMERS, INCLUDING AN ESTIMATED \$6 BILLION IN TOTAL UTILITY BILL SAVINGS FOR LOW-TO MODERATE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS. THIS LEGISLATION ALSO PROVIDES DOS WITH ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY OVER ANY STATE STANDARDS. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR**
- (S3532) AUTHORIZES STATE AND MUNICIPALLY OWNED VEHICLES TO AFFIX GREEN OR ALTERNATING GREEN AND AMBER LIGHTS TO MOTOR VEHICLES ENGAGED IN SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF INCREASING VISIBILITY DURING WINTER WEATHER EVENTS. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR**
- (S7399A) AN AMENDMENT TO THE GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW, IN RELATION TO AUTHORIZING A MUNICIPALITY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF YEARS OF SERVICE THAT **A VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE** PARTICIPANT IN A DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PLAN SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM OR A DEFINED BENEFIT PLAN SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM MAY RECEIVE A CONTRIBUTION. **SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR ON 11/23/22 [PERTAINS TO AMBULANCE VOLUNTEERS ENROLLED IN A LOSAP PROGRAM NOT FIREFIGHTERS]**
- ((S9131) A BILL TO ALLOW ANY COUNTY TO ADOPT A LOCAL LAW THAT WILL PROVIDE AN EXEMPTION ON REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY AN ENROLLED MEMBER OF AN INCORPORATED VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY, DEPARTMENT, OR VOLUNTARY AMBULANCE SERVICE. THE BILL WOULD EXEMPT UP TO 10% OF THE ASSESSED VALUE FOR MEMBERS WHO SERVED A MINIMUM OF TWO YEARS. THE BILL WOULD REQUIRE LOCALITIES THAT CURRENTLY PROVIDE THE EXEMPTION ADOPT A LOCAL LAW TO CONFORM TO THIS PROVISION. **DELIVERED TO GOVERNOR 12/2/22**
- (S7863A) THE GENERAL BUSINESS LAW IS AMENDED TO PROVIDE THAT NO ELECTRIC SPACE HEATERS MAY BE SOLD IN NEW YORK STATE BY A PERSON, FIRM, PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATION OR CORPORATION REGULARLY ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF ASSEMBLING, MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTING, OR RETAIL SALE OF SPACE HEATERS UNLESS THEY: CONTAIN A

THERMOSTAT; HAVE AN AUTOMATIC SHUTOFF; AND HAVE BEEN CERTIFIED BY AN APPROVED BODY. **DELIVERED TO GOVERNOR ON 12/2/22** My Question is, who is going to enforce this. Suspect only action will be on complaints or as a result of lawsuits.

- S926B) REQUIRES ELECTRIC CORPORATIONS TO PRIORITIZE RESTORING SERVICES TO POLICE DEPARTMENTS, FIRE DEPARTMENTS, AND AMBULANCE SERVICES, WHEN SUCH SERVICES ARE INTERRUPTED. **NOT YET SIGNED**
- (S6093A) THIS BILL IS INTENDED TO CLARIFY THE INTENT OF THE LEGISLATURE REGARDING EXISTING STATUTORY PRESUMPTIONS PERTAINING TO HEART-RELATED DISABILITIES SUFFERED BY MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK STATE LOCAL POLICE, FIRE RETIREMENT SYSTEM AND THE NEW YORK STATE AND LOCAL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM. CLARIFICATION IS NECESSARY BECAUSE A SERIES OF NARROW JUDICIAL INTERPRETATIONS HAS PREVENTED THE STATUTORY PRESUMPTIONS FROM ACHIEVING THEIR INTENDED PURPOSES. **NOT YET SIGNED**
- (S953A) REQUIRES BUSINESSES THAT MAKE PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES TO PROVIDE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH NOTICE OF THEIR INTENTION TO CHANGE ASSESSMENT. **NOT YET SIGNED**
- (S8524B) ALLOWS FOR THE USE OF GREEN LIGHTS ON THE VEHICLES OF MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONDERS. **NOT YET SIGNED**
- (S7582A) TO REQUIRE THAT THE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL COMPOSITION INCLUDE PERSONS WITH KNOWLEDGE OF FLOODING HAZARDS AND THAT THE BUILDING CODE BE REVISED TO INCORPORATE MEASURES FOR FLOOD MITIGATION AND FLOOD SAFETY. **NOT YET SIGNED**

It's recommended that the fire service start to think about legislation it would like to present for 2023, bills will begin to be introduced on the first week of the legislative session starting January 2nd. If you have legislation you would like to suggest, contact your local representatives or a member of the legislative committee of one of the fire service organizations in the State.

NEWS FROM THE NYS VOL. FF R&R TASK FORCE

Updated Link for the Recruitment and Retention Task Force:

<https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/volunteer-firefighter-recruitment-and-retention-task-force>

The task force in their most recent meeting has broken into sub committees.

Open Meetings and Webcasts are located at: <https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/open-meetings-and-webcasts>

LET YOUR MEMBERS KNOW ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY!



Posted to our web site at this LINK: <https://afdca.org/vfis-training-opportunities-a-wealth-of-information/>

You will find:

[2022 VFISU-Flyer](#)

[2022 VFISU Course Catalog](#)

[2022 ETC-Resource-Catalog-VFIS](#)

[2022 VFIS-Responder Help Flyer](#)

New Course! Leadership for the Fire & Emergency Services

The NVFC has released a new course in the Virtual Classroom on "Leadership in the Fire & Emergency Services." This on-demand course provides an overview of leadership roles, how anyone can be a leader regardless of rank, and tips to help in succeeding as an emergency service leader. Virtual Classroom courses are always free to **NVFC members**, but this course is free for a limited time to all members of the fire and emergency services. **Register now:** <https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/products/leadership-for-the-fire-emergency-services>

Innovative Recruitment Ideas for Volunteer Fire, EMS, and Rescue Departments

Recruitment is a challenge for many volunteer and combination emergency service departments. The NVFC has released a new one-pager featuring 10 ideas to help jump-start your recruitment initiatives. Download it [here](#). You can find more

tools and resources to help with recruitment – including customizable outreach materials and PSAs – from the NVFC’s [Make Me A Firefighter campaign](#).

OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE –CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES!

OPPORTUNITIES:

Senator: New Pennsylvania Law To Help Attract, Retain Junior Firefighters

Junior firefighters will now have an earlier opportunity to access the training they need to become full firefighters across Pennsylvania, state Sen. Carolyn Comitta said. Act 155 of 2022 allows junior firefighters, age 17, to train on live-burn, interior firefighter modules. Currently, only those 18 and older are allowed to enroll in this training program. Comitta, who serves on the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee, said the measure helps ensure that junior firefighters are immediately able to serve as full-fledged firefighters once they turn 18. "I hope this law helps bolster the ranks of our volunteer firefighters by harnessing the interest and energy young people have for the fire service and empowering them to hit the ground running once they turn 18," she said.

Create A ‘Leadership Library’ To Help Develop Your Members’ Skills

Janelle Foskett

Lifelong learning is key to a successful fire service career, whether through continuous training on critical skill sets or growing your leadership attributes.

One way to show your members that you prioritize career development is to start a “Leadership Library” at your fire department headquarters or a station.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM BEYOND THE FIRE SERVICE

Some of the greatest leadership books offer tips that can be applied to any profession, industry or service. These books might not use fire service-focused examples, but the lessons are universal.

[“The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable”](#) by Patrick Lencioni

[“Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs lead and win”](#) by Navy SEAL Jocko Willink

[“Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance”](#) by Angela Duckworth

[“Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change”](#) by William Bridges

[“It’s Your Ship: Management Techniques from the Best Damn Ship in the Navy”](#) by Captain D. Michael Abrashoff

[“Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World”](#) by David Epstein

[“Eat That Frog”](#) by Brian Tracy

[“Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time”](#) by Susan Scott.

[“The Hero Code: Lessons Learned from Lives Well Lived”](#) by Admiral William McRaven.

[“Awakening the Sleeping Giant: The Political Empowerment of America’s Heroes”](#) by Congressman Curt Weldon.

FROM OUR FIRE SERVICE LEADERS

Now, if you really want to get your leadership lessons from within the industry, there are more than enough options to add to your Leadership Library.

Deputy Chief Billy Goldfeder has produced not one, not two, but three “Pass It On” books, sharing words of wisdom from dozens of fire service leaders, with book sales benefitting the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation:

- [“Pass It On: What we know ... What we want you to know”](#)
- [“Pass It On 2: The Second Alarm”](#)
- [“Pass It On 3: Making Good Progress”](#)

Fire Chief Gary Ludwig has collected hundreds of tips and tricks of the trade in his books:

- [“401 Things Veteran Firefighters Can Teach You: Firefighter Tips and Tricks of the Trade”](#)
- [“Fully Involved Leadership: Successful Strategies in Leadership from the Firefighter to the Fire Chief”](#)

Fire Chief Alan Brunacini revolutionized the fire service’s approach to command, safety and customer service. We are fortunate that Bruno shared his indelible advice on these topics in some of the most read fire-focused publications.

While not easy to find – or cheap – the late chief’s books would be a fantastic addition to any Leadership Library:

- [“Fire Command”](#)
- [“Fire Command \(Second Edition\): The Essentials of Local IMS”](#)
- [“The Anatomy and Physiology of Leadership”](#)
- [“Essentials of Fire Department Customer Service”](#)
- [“Command Safety: The IC’s Role in Protecting Firefighters”](#)

FROM THE FIRERESCUE1 COMMUNITY

Members of the FireRescue1 community offered these recommendations for the Leadership Library:

- ["In Extremis Leadership: Leading As If Your Life Depended On It"](#) by Thomas Kolditz
- ["Hal Moore on Leadership: Winning when Outgunned and Outmanned"](#) by Harold G. Moore
- ["Pride & Ownership: A Firefighter's Love of the Job"](#) by Rick Lasky
- ["Sources of Power"](#) by Gary Klein
- ["The Hour Between Dog and Wolf"](#) by John Coates

CHALLENGES:

**Hot Potatoes, Dispatchers And Volunteer Fire Departments

Chief Billy Goldfeder

We should never put dispatchers in a situation where they have to wonder if members are playing hot potato with the call.

Ever play the game called hot potato?

For those of you who haven't, it's an old school party game that's fun, simple and gets everyone participating. Essentially, players form in a circle and pass around a steaming hot potato. These days, it's typically a ball or similar toy, but in the old days when liability wasn't so much a concern, an actual hot potato was used. (Hey, they were having fun, minor burns or not.)

With music playing, the participants keep passing the “potato” as fast as possible to not get “burned.” When the music stops, whoever is holding the potato (ball, whatever) is out! Start the music again and resume the same passing play with the remaining players until the music stops, again and again until there's one player left. The last person left holding the potato is the winner.

In the fire service, we have a similar game. It's when someone dials 911 because their world is on fire, the dispatcher activates the local volunteer fire department (rural, suburban or urban) and then waits ... and waits ... and waits. Again, there is a *house on fire*, the dispatcher has received multiple calls, and that one volunteer department's tones go off again ... and again. Or maybe the whistle blows until it burns out or whatever system of "HEY, COME DO THE JOB YOU CLAIM YOU DO" alerting exits – and yet no one responds. Or maybe a few show up, but no driver. Or maybe it's senior firefighters who should no longer be interior firefighters. Or maybe a chief drives, meaning they can't do their chief duties at the scene.

You know exactly what I am talking about.

What is needed when a house is on fire? ***Put another way, what do YOU want when YOUR house is on fire?*** Probably not firefighters refusing to take the potato, instead leaving it steaming in the hands of the dispatcher.

RESPONSE MODELS AND BAD NUMBERS

Let's stay focused on our worst-case scenario here – a house fire, people trapped, and the local VFD fails to get out in a timely manner. What is “timely” exactly? Pretend your family is in that house. How “timely” would you like the fire department to arrive? There ya have it.

According to the [NPFA 1720](#), this is what response times and staffing should *minimally* look like for VFDs:

- **Urban Zones** with >1,000 people/sq. mi. call for 15 staff to assemble an attack in 9 minutes, 90% of the time.
- **Suburban Zones** with 500-1,000 people/sq. mi. call for 10 staff to assemble an attack in 10 minutes, 80% of the time.
- **Rural Zones** with <500 people/sq. mi. call for 6 staff to assemble an attack in 14 minutes, 80% of the time.
- **Remote Zones** with a travel distance = 8 mi. call for 4 staff, once on scene, to assemble an attack in 2 minutes, 90% of the time.

Those are some very liberal numbers. *Actually, those numbers suck if your house is on fire.*

In some areas, you just have to accept this. You can make a difference, though. If you live in a rural or remote area, sprinkler your house and join the local VFD. However, if you live in a suburban or urban area, you are probably paying taxes (fire district, municipal tax or using tax dollars to fund a fire company, etc.), and you are probably under the impression that, when summoned, we will be there quickly. It's a fair assumption.

Let's compare the above NFPA 1720 standards (for volunteer departments) to [NFPA 1710 \(for paid departments\)](#), which calls for four qualified firefighters to arrive within 5 minutes, 90% of the time, as well as 15 qualified firefighters to arrive as part of the "Full Alarm Assignment" within 9 minutes, 90% of the time. (And please don't start with the "NFPA is BS" BS. Those standards were – and still are – developed by firefighters, fire officers and chiefs with years of experience.)

I remember back in the 90s when NFPA 1710 and 1720 were being discussed and debated, plus the fighting that ensued because those representing the volunteers didn't want to be held to the same requirements as career departments. Why? Because they were volunteers. "You can't expect volunteer fire departments to meet the same standards," they would say. I don't recall much discussion about what was best for the people having the fire.

One of the problems was that many who opposed being held to one standard refused to consider changing the volunteer model. In those discussions – and fierce arguments – opponents advocated the traditional "home or work response" model where fire sirens were sounded, home alert radios and beepers beeped, and whoever was available came running or driving really fast. It worked pretty well in the 40s, 50s, 60s and even some into the 70s, but even as communities were growing, the model stayed the same. Of course today, that model continues in many areas, and along with it the very real issues of recruitment, retention and often slow or non-existent turnout.

3 SIMPLE (INITIAL) STEPS

A fully sprinklered dwelling would solve a whole lot of problems, but with homebuilders dating local politicians and other conflicts of interest at work, there are few communities where sprinkler mandates will ever occur. So for now, let's consider three simple steps that can ease the problem.

1. Ensure your volunteer fire department can get out with the number of needed firefighters. That means your leadership *knows* who is around and will turn out. That requires sign-up time as well as an app that your members update when responding – and responding means they'll be at the firehouse in 2-3 minutes at most. Keep in mind that if you are in an area with firehouses from numerous jurisdictions very close to one another, the in-house staffing can be shared.

2. Establish automatic mutual aid. If you know that your VFD is failing its responsibility, then set up automatic mutual aid. To be clear, this is mutual aid, not mooch-ual aid where one department continually bails out another.

3. Set a time limit for second alarms. *Resetting your tones again and again is BS.* Either the members turn out for a dwelling fire or they don't. And with an app, your dispatchers will know immediately who is responding. If they don't instantly see over a dozen members turning out, then give them the authorization to strike the second alarm immediately. From transmitting the first alarm and immediately determining (through the app) that the turnout sucks to transmitting the second alarm should take about 30 seconds.

BAND-AID SOLUTIONS AND REAL SOLUTIONS

It is UNFAIR, IRRESPONSIBLE AND IMMORAL of fire department leadership (chiefs, commissioners, mayors – whoever) to expect the fire dispatchers to be answering the call, alerting a fire department with an "unknown" response and answering 9-1-1 call after 9-1-1 call from citizens asking, "Where is the fire department?!" In 2022 the technology is there to immediately know who is turning out.

That's the "hot potato" – the house is on fire, people are reported trapped, and the dispatcher has an immediate solution to get them help, other than hitting the tones and blowing the whistle over and over. However, if a fire department follows the three above steps, they have a relatively workable, cost-free Band-Aid solution.

I say "Band-Aid" because that's all it is. It immediately increases the caller's chance of getting help quickly by allowing the dispatcher to do what they say: "We will get you help immediately" or "help is on the way" vs. "I will alert the fire department but your guess is as good as mine if they will turnout or not."

In addition to the above, it must be realized that the home response model is no longer effective in 2022 in suburban and urban areas. That is because the average-sized room furnished with modern products is fully engulfed in fire in three minutes. The same room, furnished with items 50 years ago, took 30 minutes to do the same.

The solution is for the members of the VFD to change the response model to in-house duty crews on a rotation basis. Yes, it is different, but so are today's fires, and we have an obligation to change if we are actually going to provide timely

responses and be who we claim to be. Volunteer fire service and related community leadership needs to own this and take steps to represent the public's needs. The goal: 15-20 qualified firefighters with qualified chiefs en route within a minute or so.

This won't be easy for some VFDs, but know that many have already changed to the in-house duty crew model – and it works. It also increases training, morale and pride within the membership of many departments.

WHAT WE LIKE VS. WHAT IS NEEDED

When we make our decisions based upon what we like, what's best for us, and our reluctance to change vs. doing what's best for those dialing 911, the people who are funding the service, guess who loses? And if that's not an issue for you and your department, then things are even worse.

In hot potato, when the music stops, whoever is holding the ball is out, BUT the last person in the circle holding the potato ends up the winner. In our game – reality! – a dispatcher having to hold the hot potato means the person who dials 911 is the loser. Actually, there are two groups who end up holding the burning hot potato – the dispatchers and the citizen who is watching their world burn up. In reality, the citizen doesn't even know there is a hot potato, but they are still unwitting participants in this dangerous game that some fire departments knowingly play.

So what's the next step if you are still unable to recruit volunteers? Then it is time to educate your public about what your VFD can and cannot do, and start getting serious about mergers and consolidations as well as developing a plan for a career, paid service (which will not be simple). Those are the options ... unless you have a better idea. I always welcome your thoughts.

****Voter Burnout: Overlooked Fire District Elections Come With A Price**

Gino Fanelli

On a Tuesday afternoon in December, Charlie Ennis donned a Vietnam Veteran baseball cap and a flannel shirt and made the short jaunt from his home off Latta Road in Greece to the firehouse down the street. He went to vote for a pair of commissioners in the North Greece Fire District, an annual exercise in civic duty Ennis figured he had completed for the last 25 years. Polls opened at 2 p.m., and when they closed seven hours later, Ennis was one of 361 people to cast a ballot in a race that included four candidates, according to the election results. "Citizens in a fire district, or in any election, should take an interest in the society they live in," Ennis said. "Whether it's any election, when they can have a voice in the community, in society, hey, go for it." In Monroe County, few people go for it.

Each of the county's 23 fire districts holds elections for commissioners on the second Tuesday of every December, and collectively they draw a fraction of 1 percent of registered voters. In most places, turnout can be counted in double digits. A contested race for a commissioner seat recently in the St. Paul Boulevard Fire District in Irondequoit, for instance, drew 30 voters. In the neighboring Ridge-Culver Fire District, also in Irondequoit, 77 voters cast a ballot for a recent contested commissioner race there. The election in the Mendon Fire District last month for a contested commissioner seat saw 239 voters.

Voters could be forgiven for overlooking a fire district election. The annual races are held by statute during a busy holiday season and are, for the most part, poorly advertised. Notices for some elections are prominently displayed on firehouses' exterior marquees, but most languish on bulletin boards inside firehouses or on district websites that few people visit. The media, too, gives short shrift to fire district commissioner contests, in part because they aren't sexy. Running for a commissioner seat requires a candidate compiling a mere 25 signatures to get on the ballot, and campaigns are typically word-of-mouth affairs. Interviews with voters and commissioners during what could glibly be called the campaign season in December suggested that most people who cast a ballot are either firefighters or family and friends of firefighters.

"It's kind of tough, it doesn't get the publicity," said Bill Lawrence, a veteran firefighter in the North Greece Fire District. "It's important that people know what the real issues are." What is at issue in any given commissioner election is oversight of anywhere from hundreds of thousands to several million tax dollars, depending on the size of the fire district. The tiny Mumford Fire District that services Scottsville, for example, operates on an annual budget of about \$350,000. By contrast, the North Greece district levied \$11.1 million in taxes this year.

WHAT'S A FIRE DISTRICT ANYWAY?

Fire districts are autonomous units of local government, independent of the towns and rural communities they serve. City dwellers might not have ever heard of one. Rochester, like most cities and even some large towns and villages, funds its fire department through its municipal budget. But outside the city limits, fire districts are how small communities get fire services. Districts are run by a board of five commissioners, each elected to serve either two- or five-year terms, that is authorized by state law to levy taxes and set budgets to pay for fire protection.

There are 750 fire districts across New York that together levied \$807 million in property taxes last year, according to state Comptroller's Office records. The 23 districts in Monroe County collectively taxed residents to the tune of \$79.2 million.

A CITY analysis found that the tax burden in Monroe County varies from district to district, in some cases drastically, depending on a variety of factors that include property values, the size of the service area, and whether districts are staffed with paid or volunteer firefighters. For instance, the tax rate for services in the Barnard Fire District, which covers the south side of Greece with a staff of professionals and volunteers, is \$6.57 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, while the rate in the Pittsford Fire District, which is made up entirely of volunteers, is 68 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. That translates to the average homeowner in Barnard paying roughly \$890 per year in fire district taxes compared with \$188 for the average homeowner in Pittsford.

But the number of volunteer firefighters is dwindling here and across the state. John D'Alessandro, secretary of the Firemen's Association of the State of New York, an advocacy group for volunteer firefighters, estimated that the number of volunteers across the state has fallen over the last 20 years to about 85,000 from 120,000. There are a variety of factors driving the decline, from volunteers opting for paid jobs to the dicey proposition of risking one's life for no pay. In the end, D'Alessandro said, the taxpayer feels the difference. "Volunteer departments save taxpayers money," said D'Alessandro, who figured that volunteers save New York residents \$5 billion annually.

TAX CAP? WHAT TAX CAP?

Like other taxing entities in New York, fire districts are by law capped at how much they can raise taxes each year. But commissioners can vote to override the tax cap, and they frequently do. Consider the spike in taxes the Laurelton Fire District in Irondequoit collected last year. The district was limited to levying a little more than \$1.3 million, but commissioners overrode the cap and took almost \$1.7 million — nearly 28 percent in excess of the limit. Commissioners in the Ridge-Culver Fire District have voted to override their cap every year for the last 10 years, according to the state comptroller's records. In 2012, the district's tax levy was \$2.6 million. In 2021, it will be almost \$4.4 million — an increase of 66 percent over the decade.

Keeping fire district taxes in check in a region that already nearly tops the nation in its property tax burden compared to property values is what drives Joe Camiolo to keep running for a commissioner seat in his district of North Greece. A volunteer firefighter there since 1971, and a former commissioner, he lost the race last month but plans to run again next year. North Greece commissioners overrode the cap for this year to bring its tax levy to \$11.1 million. Ten years ago, the levy was \$6.9 million — an increase of 61 percent. "I am very concerned about tax increases," Camiolo said. ***"The governor has a tax cap, and this year it's vastly exceeded, and they won't see it until their tax bill in January."***

WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?

Firefighters and commissioners attributed the voter apathy to a general satisfaction with fire services: when there's a fire, the fire department shows up. But the lack of participation and insular electorate has not gone unnoticed in Albany, where some lawmakers are pushing legislation to modify the way fire district elections are conducted. The elections are governed by the state's Town Law and not subject to the same oversight as general elections, despite districts managing millions of tax dollars. Polling hours typically span from 6 to 9 p.m. in most districts, and commissioners decide how polling sites are staffed and who will count the votes. Districts are permitted, but not required, to use voting systems compliant with state Election Law. Most districts use paper ballots, and while state law bars commissioners from being ballot clerks, there have been instances in the past where relatives of commissioners were reportedly tapped to count ballots. "Right now, we have fire districts running their own elections," said Tom Abinanti, a Democratic member of the Assembly from Westchester County who has proposed legislation to have fire district elections overseen by county boards of elections and to move the date of the elections to coincide with school board elections. "I think the public should rightfully be asking, 'How can the people running for election run their own election?'" Another member of the

Assembly, William Barclay, a Republican from Syracuse, has introduced a bill to hold fire district elections on the same day as general elections.

For Abinati, measures like these are about transparency. As the system stands, the traditional checks and balances of most local government elections are not present in fire districts. Abinati acknowledged that fire commissioner races will likely never draw the same interest as contests for mayors or county executives. But, he said, perhaps they should. ***In the last five years, 126 fire districts were audited by the state Comptroller's Office, and most of them were flagged for having inadequate controls over all matters of finances, from credit card use to purchasing and safeguarding assets.***

One of them was the St. Paul Boulevard Fire District, which auditors found "did not adopt realistic budgets," over-estimated expenditures by nearly \$1 million over four years and bought a new insurance policy from a company that employed a commissioner who sat on the board's insurance committee.

"These people are in this 24 hours a day," Abinati said of firefighters. "They go to the firehouses at night after work, they hang out, they help each other out, they polish the equipment, God bless them, they do a great job." "But," he added, "this is all they see, and there's nobody saying, 'Is there a better way to do this?'"

[EDITORIAL NOTE: As I have said many times, we better clean up our act or Albany is going to do it for us and if they do it won't be easy and it will be even more difficult to get citizens to run for the position, they sure don't do it for the pay!!!]

HEALTH – SAFETY & LODDS – TAKING CARE OF YOUR MEMBERS

IN 2022 WE HAVE SADLY EXPERIENCED 91 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S

According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com

In 2021 we experienced 136 LODDs reported nationally.!

The 2 New Tripoli Firefighters killed in the Line of Duty at last evenings fire are FF Marvin Gruber, 59, and Assistant Chief Zachary Paris, 36, both who died at that dwelling fire on Clamtown Road in West Penn Township, near Tamaqua, NW of Allentown.

Baltimore City Fire Chief Resigns, Report Released on Firefighter LODDs

Baltimore City (MD) Fire Chief Niles Ford has resigned after the department released its internal Board of Inquiry report related to the line-of-duty deaths earlier this year of Lieutenant Paul Butrim, Lieutenant Kelsey Sadler, and EMT/Firefighter Kenny Lacayo. The firefighters were killed in a collapse at the scene of a structure fire at 205 S. Stricker Street.

According to a statement from the mayor's office, Assistant Chief Charles Svehla, Assistant Chief Chris Caisse, and Assistant Chief Dante Stewart will each serve as Acting Fire Chief for a designated time period until a new chief is found. Chief Ford led the agency for eight years.

The report outlines the events that occurred on January 24, 2022, along with findings and recommendations for changes. The Board of Inquiry was composed of personnel from the Baltimore City Fire Department, Prince George's County Fire and EMS, District of Columbia Fire and EMS, and the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services.

Executive Summary

On January 24, 2022, the Baltimore City Fire Department suffered its most tragic event since the Tru-Fit Fire on February 16, 1955, where six members were killed in a building collapse. At 05:51 hours, Baltimore City 911 dispatchers started receiving numerous calls for a reported dwelling fire. Several addresses were reported, and one caller stated that there were three children trapped inside the home. Baltimore City Fire Communications Bureau dispatched Box Alarm 55-10 at 05:53 hours. The initial alarm consisted of Engine 55, Engine 14, Engine 23, Engine 36, Engine 47, Truck 23, Truck 10, Rescue 1, Battalion Chief 6, Battalion Chief 3, and Medic 21. At 05:55 hours, just two minutes after dispatch, Engine 14 arrived on location and reported a three-story middle of the group with fire showing from the second and third floors. The address of the dwelling involved was 205 S. Stricker Street. The remaining first alarm companies arrived on location as Engine 14 prepared for an interior attack. Truck 23 started raising ground ladders. Engine 36 pulled a second attack line from Engine 14. Engine 23 arrived on location as the Rapid Intervention Team (RIT)1 positioned on Side Alpha. Meanwhile, Engine 55 and Truck 10 were beginning operations on Side Charlie of the dwelling. At 05:57 hours, Battalion Chief 3 arrived on location, assumed Incident Command, and requested a Working Fire. The members of Engine 14 removed the plywood from the front door and encountered fire conditions on the first floor. They began extinguishing

the fire on the first floor and advanced into the dwelling. The Lieutenant of Truck 23 also entered the dwelling to begin a primary search. Engine 36 had their attack line stretched to the front door and were waiting for the line to be charged.

At 06:00 hours, just three minutes after Battalion Chief 3 assumed command, and five minutes after the arrival of Engine 14, there was a catastrophic interior collapse of the original fire building. Three members from Engine 14, one member from Truck 23, and two members from Engine 36 were inside of the dwelling at the time of the collapse and were trapped. The two firefighters from Engine 36 were quickly removed from the building with no injuries. A Mayday was declared, and the Rapid Intervention Team was activated. The other members of the first alarm and Working Fire assignments heroically pushed into the burning building to begin rescue efforts. There was still a large volume of fire surrounding them as they worked to gain access to the trapped firefighters.

Members reported that they could hear bricks and other debris falling as

they made their way further into the building. By that time, fire was extending to 203 S. Stricker Street (3-story vacant dwelling) on Side Bravo and 207 S. Stricker Street (3-story occupied dwelling) on Side Delta. At 06:07 hours, the Incident Commander (Battalion Chief 3) requested a second alarm. At 06:09 hours, members inside of the dwelling reported that they had made contact with Engine 14's pipe firefighter, FF/PM Kenneth Lacayo, who was trapped by multiple layers of heavy debris. Meanwhile at 06:14 hours, Engine 23 (RIT) reported that they were removing Engine 14's lead off firefighter, EMT/FF John McMaster, from the building. EMT/FF McMaster was placed in the care of BCFD EMS personnel and transported to University of Maryland Shock Trauma. For almost ninety minutes, the members worked under adverse conditions, to free FF/PM Lacayo from the debris. At 07:39 hours, Rescue 1 reported that FF/PM Lacayo had been removed from the building. He was placed in a medic unit and transported to University of Maryland Shock Trauma. Once FF/PM Lacayo had been removed, the members worked to remove the officer of Engine 14, Acting Lieutenant Kelsey Sadler. Acting Lieutenant Sadler was trapped under the same type of debris that made FF/PM Lacayo's removal so difficult. At 08:18 hours, the Incident Commander (Car 5-Shift Commander) reported that Acting Lieutenant Sadler had been removed from the building. Acting Lieutenant Sadler was placed in the care of BCFD EMS and transported to University of Maryland Shock Trauma. Due to the unstable conditions of the building, and concerns of a secondary collapse, the Incident Commander (Car 5), evacuated the building and declared that operations would be shifting to a recovery mode at 08:18 hours.

Heavy construction equipment was moved into position and utilized to remove the front wall of the building and large amounts of debris inside. After several hours, members were allowed back in the building to finish digging by hand to search for Lieutenant Paul Butrim, Officer of Truck 23.

At 16:08 hours, Incident Command (Car 5) reported that the final member, Truck 23 Lieutenant Paul Butrim had been removed from the building. EMT/FF John McMaster was treated for his injuries at Shock Trauma and on January 27, 2022, he was released. Several days later, EMT/FF McMaster was admitted into the Johns Hopkins Adult Burn Center for further treatment of his burns. EMT/FF McMaster has been released from Johns Hopkins and continues to recover from his injuries. Tragically, Lieutenant Paul Butrim of Truck Company 23, Acting Lieutenant Kelsey Sadler of Engine Company 14, and FF/PM Kenneth Lacayo of Engine Company 14 did not survive and were all killed in the line of duty serving the citizens of Baltimore City. On February 7, 2022, the Board of Inquiry (BOI) met with representatives from the National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH) at the Under Armour Headquarters in Baltimore City. For two weeks, the BOI and NIOSH performed interviews, collected, and reviewed data, as well as examined pictures and videos. Over the course of the next eight months, the BOI continued to meet and communicate with NIOSH representatives to collect information on the incident. The BOI also worked with the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and other agencies to gather additional evidence. The BOI began the difficult task of writing the report. This effort required extensive research and constant review. The data and evidence collected was used to create findings and recommendations that are shared in the main body of the report.

FULL REPORT CAN BE FOUND AT THIS LINK:

https://cityservices.baltimorecity.gov/resources/LineofDutyDeathReport_205S_Stricker_Street.pdf

YOU JUST NEVER KNOW!!

- at: <https://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/>
-

Reference Material for Use in a Line of Duty Death

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

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.

****Ghost Ship: A Tragedy Rooted In Deceit And Missed Opportunity**

Bruce Hensler

The negligence in the enforcement of safety codes betrayed the public trust. Dec. 2, 2021, marks the fifth anniversary of the devastating blaze that tore through an artist collective with living spaces in Oakland, California, killing 36 individuals trapped inside the cluttered, mazelike building.

The building was wildly unsafe for its tenants and visitors alike, having evaded inspections and foregoing even basic safety practices. And in the end, when fire ignited during a concert at the warehouse, flames moved so quickly that many of the individuals inside were unable to escape and ultimately died of smoke inhalation.

It was the deadliest fire in Oakland history and worst mass-casualty incident in the city since the 6.9 Loma Prieta earthquake that rocked the Bay Area in 1989.

The fire sent shock waves through the community, with the city and fire department both thrust under the spotlight related to their responsibilities in the process of code enforcement and building inspections.

BUILDING DETAILS AND HAZARDS

Built in 1930, the structure itself featured two stories of concrete block with a steel truss roof and a floor area of 9,880 square feet. By 2016, the former warehouse, located in the Fruitvale section of Oakland, had been essentially repurposed as a living and entertainment space dubbed the “Ghost Ship.”

The building was owned by Chor Ng, who leased it to Derick Almerna, who managed the property as an artist collective and residence for his family. At various times, 20 to 30 artists held sub-leases, in violation of the lease agreement with Ng and the city’s zoning regulations.

Almerna made no application to the city of Oakland for his collective and living space. No change of use permit, no residential dwelling permit, no construction permit, no occupancy permit, no electrical permit, no entertainment permit. No permits whatsoever.

Plans review, inspections, permitting and licensing are the checks and balances essential to successful building safety regulation. **But public records show that city building inspectors had never been inside the converted warehouse.**

Although zoned only for commercial use, Almerna rented living spaces at the warehouse and held parties on the second floor. The first floor was a maze of old pianos, travel-trailers intended as sleeping pods, and was decorated with combustible materials to an extreme. Wood pallets were stacked to form steps for access to the second floor.

Electricity was distributed with extension cords, fed from a sub-panel located in an adjoining auto body shop. Access to the panel was through a hole in the wall. The power frequently went out.

How a building is used determines its occupancy classification and the specific safety codes that apply. Use dictates construction type, building materials and fixed fire protection features. Changing the use of a building, for example when ownership changes, should trigger a review by building and fire code officials of the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

A building owner seeking a change of occupancy might be denied a permit due to local zoning regulations or the inability to bring a building into required compliance. Such a review depends upon the building owner acting responsibly.

Of course, code administrators sometimes face a lack of cooperation by building owners. There may also be a lack of communication between departments of government. An example of the latter might involve the building/zoning codes department and the fire marshal’s office not sharing information.

When a building owner or property manager avoids complying with building and fire codes, there must be a system to discover, identify and correct violations. Code enforcers do this by conducting regular inspections and requiring the filing of official applications for plans review, zoning, occupancy changes and/or construction.

When regular inspections are neglected, when information is not shared or when building owners avoid following the rules, serious problems eventually surface. Such was the case with the Ghost Ship.

Some of the artists living there recognized the inherent safety hazards, and at least two had their own fire extinguishers. Critical life safety features – means of egress and emergency lighting – were basically nonexistent. A single battery-operated smoke detector was found in the debris.

NEGLIGENCE LEADS TO TRAGEDY

Looking back, what stands out to me about Almena is his lack of responsibility and his deceit. This fire and the resulting tragedy could have been prevented, and yet, he showed no real remorse for his actions.

Oakland firefighters did their duty fighting the Ghost Ship fire. That is in stark contrast to the city’s administration and enforcement of building and fire codes, which, in practice, was ineffectual, if not outright incompetent. The negligence in the enforcement of safety codes betrayed the public trust.

The exact cause of the fire was never determined, but it is thought to be electrical in nature. The city of Oakland eventually settled a civil lawsuit with victims for \$33 million. The electric company, Pacific Gas & Electric, also settled out of court.

On Jan. 22, 2021, Almena pleaded guilty to 36 charges of involuntary manslaughter as part of a second plea deal under which he would serve between 9 and 12 years in prison.

City of Oakland zoning regulations prohibited residential and entertainment uses in the industrial zone where the fire building was located. If a zoning variance was even possible for the intended uses, the warehouse would have required major work to bring it into compliance.

At the least, applying for a variance would have required making application to the city of Oakland. That act would have brought the building and Almena to the attention of city building and fire inspectors and any other similar uses within the city.

WEEKLY FIRE FATALITY DATA AS REPORTED BY THE MEDIA

Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	73+1=74(Exceeded 2021)
Latest fire death Seaford, Nassau Co., female 80	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	127+1=128
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	1214+ 36=1250
Top Three State with the most 1&2 Family Deaths	1 PA -- 106
	2 OH -- 81
	3 TX -- 77
There has been a total of 2043 civilian home fire fatalities in 2022	
There were a total of 2248 residential fire fatalities reported in 2021 in the US media.	
Both the states of Maryland and California require sprinklers in residential dwellings	

In 2021 in New York State 68 residents perished in fires in 1 & 2 family occupancies.

THE ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

Jonesville (MI) Fire Apparatus Suffers Critical Failures During Incident

The Jonesville (MI) Fire Department’s pumper/tanker multi-purpose apparatus, capable of hauling 3,000 gallons of water to any fire incident, is out of service, [Hillsdale.net reported](https://www.hillsdale.net/news/2022/09/11/jonesville-mi-fire-apparatus-suffers-critical-failures-during-incident) recently.

The truck suffered multiple critical failures that were only discovered during a fire in Litchfield Township on September 11, when firefighters noticed water gushing from the rear of the truck, the report said.

The incident was a car fire inside a garage with some damage to the garage itself and the water on board the truck was not needed on the scene, according to the report.

A fire official said the truck’s baffles failed because they were too thin, the welds on the tank were not sufficient and overall, the tank itself was poorly designed, the report said.

The company that made the tank is no longer in business, the fire official said. The city could have opted to repair the tank at a cost of \$32,000 but that would have come with no warranty, the report said.

It is unlikely the truck will be back in service before the end of the year so the department is looking to borrow a tanker to ensure fire protection services go uninterrupted until their truck is back in service, the report said.

FIRE DEPARTMENT FINANCIALS

**Message from OSC to all Fire District Treasurers in the State

Dear Fire District Treasurer:

Local governments are required to file an Annual Update Document (AUD) with the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) after the close of their fiscal year (General Municipal Law §30). This reporting serves as an important source of financial information for the public, our staff and other data users and stakeholders.

The software, tools and prior-year data file that you will need to prepare your AUD will be available on our website after your December 31, 2022 fiscal-year end. The filing is due within 60-120 days. Our website has your local government's [filing deadline](#) – Please submit your information accordingly.

Additionally, our office is transitioning to the new Annual Financial Reporting ([AFR](#)) application, and ***the current reporting website will be decommissioned in September of 2023. All reports not submitted by August 30, 2023 are required to be completed in the new application. To avoid losing your progress, you must complete and submit reports for fiscal years ending prior to 2023 by August 30, 2023.***

Getting started

- Visit OSC's [Annual Update Document \(AUD\) Filing website](#).
- Log in using the **User ID** and **PIN/Password** provided above. You will also need this PIN/Password to complete your certification later in the process.
- In the **Reporting Options** section, click on **Annual Financial Reporting**. Review the instructions on the steps involved.

If you need assistance with filing, contact our Help Desk at 866-321-8503.

For questions relating to accounting or financial reporting issues, contact your OSC [Regional Office](#).

Fire Department Treasurer Allegedly Steals Over \$300K Of Funds

Vivian Muniz

The White Deer Township Fire Department treasurer is being accused of stealing over \$300,000 worth of funds from the department over the course of nearly four years.

According to Pennsylvania State Police, in July 2022, members of the White Deer Township Fire Department reported to troopers the theft and unauthorized use of \$197,000 of funds.

The fire department noticed an issue after reviewing bank statements dating back to December 2018 and saw transactions that seemed to be unauthorized.

Through an investigation, it was learned that the fire department treasurer Leann Fisher, 48, was the alleged suspect in the disappearance of the funds, PSP stated.

Officials believe Fisher is responsible for the loss of funds totaling around \$351,978 from December 2018 to July 2022.

On Thursday charges were filed against Fisher through the district court. Police are continuing to determine a more precise amount of funds lost and whether the time frame extends beyond December 2018.

Former Fire Chief In Sampson County Embezzled Money From Department

Kathryn Hubbard & Joe Journey

A former fire chief in Sampson County, North Carolina has been charged with embezzling money from the fire department he led, according to the Sampson County Sheriff's Office.

Around May this year, the sheriff's office received a complaint from the Turkey Fire Department about money that appeared to be missing or misused by former Chief Tommy Keith Smith, 51, of Salemburg, which is about 12 miles west of Clinton.

The funds exceeded \$38,000 and the fire department asked law enforcement to investigate. The fire department was also able to provide documentation to help aid investigators, the sheriff's office said.

Through multiple search warrants and with information provided by the fire department, it was determined money was embezzled and misappropriated by the former fire chief, the release stated.

Smith, 51 was arrested and charged on Tuesday with four counts of embezzlement, 16 counts of forgery of an instrument and 16 counts of uttering a forged endorsement. He received a \$175,000 secured bond.

“It’s concerning to know that a trusted public official would take advantage of a volunteer service funded by the taxpayers. I commend the courage of the Turkey Fire Department for their help in this matter,” said Sheriff Jimmy Thornton. The investigation also concluded that Smith acted alone, the sheriff’s office said. Once the department was aware of Smith’s misconduct, he was terminated and was reported to law enforcement officers.

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:

Learn To ‘Lead Small’ Before You Can Rise Through The Ranks

Davis Douget

There’s beauty in watching a fire officer’s orders turn chaos into a symphony, as the once hectic fireground becomes a coordinated rhythm of water supply, victim rescues and fire extinguishment.

But for some newer, perhaps younger or just less experienced firefighters, a critical question will naturally come to mind: How did the officer manage to bring calm to the chaos? The answer is not simply that someone established incident command; it is that a true leader with experience took control.

One additional question every firefighter must ask themselves: Am I ready? It’s a vital question to ask throughout a career, with every challenge or change, like when moving from riding the engine to rescue or promoting to operator. Most importantly, this question must be asked when we transition to an officer-level rank. Are you ready for what comes with being an officer?

MANAGEMENT VS. LEADERSHIP

Being an officer isn’t easy and should not be taken lightly. This applies to company and chief officers alike. Assuming your first leadership position is on the company officer level as a lieutenant or captain, you will normally be leading small groups and have limited responsibility.

As a career company officer, you have the advantage of being with your crew for 24 to 48 hours at a time, which gives you the unique advantage of really learning your crew’s behavior, mannerisms and skill sets. You really get to see their true strengths and weaknesses. However, the downside is that you are with the people for 24 to 48 hours at a time, which means that a crew with built-up animosity will lead to miserable shifts.

As a volunteer company officer, you face unique challenges, as you probably only staff your stations for select events of trainings, and are limited to one or two nights a week for four hours at a time to develop your crews and skill sets. This limited timeframe can make it difficult to hone skills and fix problems before responding to the next emergency.

No matter paid or volunteer, anyone can pin some bugles on their collar and call themselves an officer, but only true leaders will earn the respect of their crews and be successful in their positions.

A lot of the attitudes inside our stations come from the attitude of the person in charge – and whether that person is a *manager* or a *leader*.

A manager is someone who goes through the day-to-day items, such as personnel timesheets for payroll, resource accountability like equipment checks and fuel, and operation endeavors from scheduled training or fire prevention talks. All company officers must manage their crews. But do they go beyond management and lead?

Leaders get people to understand and believe in the vision while working with you to achieve your goals. A leader will set a direction for the group and inspire you to follow. For example, as a company officer, are your crews developing positive attitudes toward the job? Do they embrace the “fringe” duties of the job (preplans, station tours, public outreach opportunities like festivals and family days), or are they just checking off the daily duty boxes to avoid a write up?

As a fellow firefighter said to me once:

“To be a leader, you need followers. If no one is going to you for advice or knowledge, then you’re not leading anyone. You can’t self-proclaim to be a leader of anything if no one is following you. Sit back and think ‘When is the last time a new firefighter or anyone for that matter, confided in me, asked for advice, or questions about the fire service?’ If the answer is never or it’s been a while, then you don’t have followers, therefore you are not a leader.”

I WAS NOT READY

Every fire department has at least one member who thinks that they could do a better job than one of the officers. Some might be right. Others are dead wrong.

I was one of those firefighters who thought I had the skills to lead better than my superiors. It took an honest captain to look at my background and explain to me that I didn't have enough experience (yet) to attempt to lead. While it was a blow to a young firefighter's ego, that captain was right.

After realizing that I was not ready, it became my mission to educate myself toward my goal of becoming an officer, prepare myself for leadership roles, take on challenges that were outside my comfort zone, and develop skills to deal with and manage stress. During this time, I was able to observe other members with natural leadership abilities, as well as individuals who wanted to be in charge but were never able to do so successfully. There was much to learn from both groups.

HOW TO 'LEAD SMALL'

The phrase "lead small" came to me when I noticed members aspiring to become battalion chiefs or fire chiefs before they had even served as captains of a company, or firefighters wanting to take the captain's test so they could promote, despite not having the attitude of a leader but rather acting as though anything besides spraying a nozzle was beneath them. But you can't be an effective captain if you are a lousy firefighter. If you are the one who goes missing every time the trucks need washing or the floors need mopping, then how can you expect to give orders that those duties need to be done?

The same goes for someone wanting to be a chief officer. How can you expect your membership to respect and follow your orders and decisions when you have never been in a leadership role? What experience do you have to lead 45-100 people when you weren't a successful captain of three?

Leading small means can be simple. Show up and choose to be present. This starts with reflecting on our knowledge, skills and abilities, being honest about our capabilities and where we need to grow as leaders and individuals.

A critical step is building trust. Our fire companies become a close-knit family; mixed with activities and traditions, it becomes a community. You can't lead a small group or build a community without trust, and the biggest step in gaining the trust of a few people is instilling trust that you will BE there for them. Consistency is critical in this. Becoming dependable for mundane everyday tasks as well as ensuring dedication for growth in yourself and others goes a long way toward building trust for the betterment of the group.

Always show up mentally ready. We may always show up physically ready to perform, but are we showing up and engaging in meaningful discussions and listening to the others in the group? Are we really listening to what our colleagues have to say? We must put the phones aside, leave Facebook and Instagram at the door, and be prepared to make our members our focus. For example, if you are training one day, know the content ahead of time and be able to coach your members through it. Know the inspection and prevention schedules before they start, and ensure that you are ready to preform walkthroughs or give the class a great presentation in fire prevention.

Lastly, do not be afraid to show up in those seemingly random moments. I am talking about engaging outside of the department. This can be a phone call, text messages, a birthday post on social media, or any invitation to interact with your people and their families. While these may seem insignificant, by choosing to be present to your people in an unexpected way outside of your scheduled time, you create a better connection to the family and community you're trying to build.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If we are serious in advancing our fire service career, then we must be willing to take on the small jobs as well as the big ones. We must take ownership of our departments and realize that every person and job matters. We must understand that we are all doing our part. Being an effective leader in the station and on a fireground comes from training, experience, and the respect of the men and women under your command. Successful fire chiefs don't lose the respect of their departments, and members don't lose respect for their fire chiefs if those chiefs are true leaders and mentors.

CLASSIFIED

Opening for Greenfield Houseman!

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 Sunday, December 11, 2022.**

Full Time Stationkeeper Position Announcement West Crescent Fire District

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 wcfdsec@nycap.rr.com

Please send application, cover letter & resume to Arthur Hunsinger via email at wcfdsec@nycap.rr.com

Position Announcement Station Keeper/Maintenance Person

Full Time (40 hours/week) at a rate of up to \$18.00 an hour. 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. & Drug Testing
- 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

THE LIGHTER SIDE!

Life is like a jar of jalapeno peppers. What you do today may be a burning issue tomorrow!!

OFFICERS OF THE CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS

2023 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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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.

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.

Get a copy of the 2022 ELECTION SCHEDULE HERE: <https://afdca.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2022-Election-Schedule-1.pdf>

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

PLEASE SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US!!

NOTE: BST & Co. CPAs Has Moved to 10 British American Blvd, Latham NY 12110

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.AFDCA.ORG

[Welcome Back all of our Business Partners for 2022](#)

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.

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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
Saturday, January 7, 2023	9:00 AM	Organizational Meeting	Clifton Park
Thursday, February 9, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Saturday, February 11, 2023	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Averill Park
Saturday, March 4, 2023	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Clifton Park
Thursday, March 9, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Saturday, March 11, 2023	6:00 PM	Officer Installation & Reception Dinner	Embassy Suites, Saratoga
Saturday, March 25, 2023	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Berkshire
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