



ASSOCIATION OF
FIRE DISTRICTS
★ ★ CAPITAL AREA ★ ★

THE CAPITAL BULLETIN



FIRE DISTRICT NEWS

DECEMBER 17TH, 2022

EDITOR - TOM RINALDI

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

THE CAPITAL CALENDAR:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

2023 CAPITAL AREA MEETING & TRAINING SCHEDULE

Saturday January 7th 9:00am general membership breakfast serviced 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](tel: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. Nominations from the region can still occur.**
- A letter of nomination has been received from the Coeymans Fire District on behalf of Commissioner George June for another two year term as Region 1 Director. The Capital Area is prepared to endorse Commissioner June as a Director.
- 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>
- **Edward "Ned" Carter Memorial Scholarship** The Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York is pleased to offer the Ned Carter Memorial Scholarship Award for High School Seniors. These scholarships are named in honor of Past President Ed 'Ned' Carter', and all deceased past presidents of the Association. In keeping with Ned's lifelong dedication to community service and helping others, four, onetime \$1,500 scholarships will be presented to graduating high school seniors who will be pursuing a career in a community services related discipline. **LINK TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** https://www.afdsny.org/general_information.php
- **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

Log on To Previously Recorded Sessions

https://www.afdsny.org/coffee_with_commissioners.php

You Must Log On to the State AFDSNY web site to access!

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 decision makers 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.

REAL PROPERTY TAX LAW SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR ON 12/09/2022

Now that the bill is signed, we now need to encourage our local government to vote to provide a property tax exemption to our volunteer firefighters, and volunteer EMS providers.

This change in the real property tax law **will 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 change in the law will exempt up to 10% of the assessed value for members who served a minimum of two years. The law would require localities that currently provide the exemption adopt a local law to conform to this provision.

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. **SIGNED GOVERNOR 12/9/22**
- (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. **SIGNED BY GOVERNOR ON 12/8/22** My Question is, who is going to enforce this. Suspect only action will be on complaints or as a result of lawsuits.
- (S8524B) ALLOWS FOR THE USE OF GREEN LIGHTS ON THE VEHICLES OF MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS RESPONDERS. **DELIVERED TO GOVERNOR 12/6/22**

- (S926B) REQUIRES ELECTRIC CORPORATIONS TO PRIORITIZE RESTORING SERVICES TO POLICE DEPARTMENTS, FIRE DEPARTMENTS, AND AMBULANCE SERVICES, WHEN SUCH SERVICES ARE INTERRUPTED. **Delivered to Governor 12/12/22**
- (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. **Delivered to Governor 12/12/22**
- (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. **Delivered to Governor 12/12/22**
- (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!



Managing Cardiac Chaos ESIP WEBINAR SERIES

Join us as we talk about cardiac related emergencies and crew resource management strategies for those “Heart Stopping” emergencies.

Wednesday December 21st at 7PM

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

https://webinar.ringcentral.com/webinar/register/WN_rw8lnNV1S8Wy9TFXfayPvg

NYS AFC 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 – NYS AFC members

\$50 – non-members

Pre-registration encouraged.

Albany Co. 10/23/23, Fulton Co. 9/7/23, Rensselaer Co. 4/3/23, Saratoga Co. 10/24/23, Schenectady Co. 3/6/23

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

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](#)

Hands-On Training at FIRE 2023 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) <https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/fire2023hot>

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:

New technology in Colorado allows 911 callers to give dispatch access to phone camera

VIDEO/PHOTOS: The next time you have an emergency that demands the aid of 911, you may be asked to help dispatchers and first responders by video chatting through your phone. A new software being rolled out throughout parts of Colorado now gives 911 dispatchers the ability to access a caller's cellphone cameras after being given permission by the user. LETA 911, an organization that helps organize and oversee dispatch communications throughout Larimer County in northern Colorado, has partnered with a company named Prepared Live, which allows dispatchers to use the video aspect of 911 calls. Larimer County Sheriff Justin Smith and his office were among the first to sign up to adopt the software in their dispatch center and begin using it with callers. The software has already been used multiple times by the sheriff's office which has saved money, resources and lives on several calls for help.

Maryland Fire Chiefs Now Have Helpers Under New Pilot Program

The Baltimore City Fire Department began a pilot program Monday to assign senior officers to assistants responsible for making numerous fire scene decisions. Dubbed "battalion technicians," the assistants aim to assist firefighters with

tasks that can become overwhelming in an emergency, such as: B. the Stricker Street fire in January, in which several firefighters were trapped when a vacant house collapsed; three people died. In the past 16 years, six department reports have suggested that the department is instituting such a program, but it was only after the Stricker Street fire and the release of a damning investigative report into the incident that the department began providing aides to battalion chiefs. The department has six battalions, each led by a chief who acts as a "deployment commander" at a fire scene.

It highlighted the problem of "duty overload" experienced by individual fire department commanders who have too many responsibilities during large fires and emergencies. In the panic following the collapse of the burning Stricker Street terraced home, the battalion commander was overloaded with too much information and missed updates on the rescue mission and ongoing efforts to put out the massive blaze.

"The lack of immediate support put the incident commander in a vulnerable position due to missed critical information, observations and actions. This led to a deterioration in the safety of firefighters," said the report, written by a panel requested by Ford. Board members include Baltimore fire officers and fire chiefs from Prince George's County, Howard County and Washington, DC

Chief Roman Clark, a spokesman for the fire department, did not immediately know how long the pilot phase would last. When the program ends, the department plans to hire full-time technician positions for each battalion commander, according to a department memo. But hiring additional staff will "depend on what the pilot program shows us," Clark said. Meanwhile, off-duty fire lieutenants and captains will work overtime and assist the battalion chiefs with administrative and operational duties. A technician would respond to a scene at the same time as a battalion commander and would also assist with accountability reports, counting how many firefighters are present at an incident and exactly what duties they are performing.

CHALLENGES:

A Need To Read Article!!

****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 Abinanti, 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. Abinanti 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," Abinanti 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!!!]

[Subaru Recalls Ascent for Potential Fire Risk](#)

Subaru's latest recall affects nearly every one of its family-hauling Ascent SUV. The issue stems from the electrical system and could lead to a fire. Included in the population are model-year 2019-22 Ascents. The ground bolt that secures the ground terminal of the positive temperature coefficient heater in the wiring under the dashboard may have been improperly fastened, which could result in melting of the ground terminal and surrounding components, increasing the risk of a fire. Owners are advised to park their Ascent away from structures and to avoid leaving it unattended while the engine is running. If you notice or smell smoke coming from the dash or driver footwell area, stop operating the vehicle and turn the ignition switch off. Dealers will replace the PTC heater ground bolts and, if necessary, replace the ground wire and connector holder; all repairs will be done for free.

[Md. VFD Closing After Being Out Of Service For Year](#)

Leila Merrill

The Seat Pleasant Volunteer Fire Company is closing after being out of service for a year, [NBC Washington reported Friday](#). The volunteer company was established in 1915, but could not find and retain enough volunteers to keep its doors open. "Our members are starting to clear out their lockers," said Marcus Jones, a Seat Pleasant Volunteer Fire Company board member. The company's 1995 Eone Cyclone engine was listed for sale several days ago, prompting questions from Facebook users. The fate of the firehouse is unknown, according to the news outlet. Other departments in Prince George's County respond to incidents in the coverage area now.

APPARATUS PURCHASING

[Planning Your Apparatus Fleet Future: A 3-Tier Process Of Support](#)

The U.S. fire service is in the early stages of an emerging challenge – planning for the long-term purchase of fire apparatus fleets.

Several factors are impacting the ability to plan apparatus fleet purchases: price increases from 20 to 30%, manufacturing windows of 26 to 30 months, and organizational budgets that are unable to handle an unexpected increase in both time and money.

The unfortunate reality is that we are living in a volatile and complex post-pandemic world. The solution will ultimately depend on our ability to work together at every level of our organization

THREE LEVELS OF IMPACT

Regardless of the size or type of the department, successful management of long-term fire apparatus purchasing requires an all-hands leadership approach. So, let's start with a general refresher of organizational leadership levels – strategic, organizational and tasks – and how this impacts the purchasing process.

Strategic: The *strategic* level is occupied by the fire chief and command staff and has a more global/national/regional perspective. The primary mission of the group is to formulate strategy. This is where the adaptive challenges are addressed and the overall vision for solving problems is centered. Strategic team members will need to consider the political environment and ensure that the government officials who authorize and allocate the financial resources for apparatus purchases are aware of the challenges that are currently influencing the manufacture of vehicles. Conversely, the strategic group should be listening to those who have an insight into the health of municipal finances, emerging risks that impact a community's ability to fund fire department projects so as to pursue options such as municipal bonds or lease plans. One word of caution for the members of the entire organization: Decision-making time at this top level is on a slower cycle. Be patient when attempting to get purchase approval.

Organizational: In the middle of our hierarchy, the *organizational* level is often known as the home of middle management and will include the direct supervisory staff, such as shift commanders, battalion chiefs and staff officers. This is the point where the strategic team's vision for a long-term apparatus strategy will be communicated to other levels and placed into action. Data analysis, process monitoring and fleet management will be directed by the organizational level. Monitoring the use and condition of fire apparatus is an essential task of this group, as the department will need to get the most value out of the existing fleet when faced with tight finances and two-year manufacturing windows.

Tasks: The *task* unit is the frontline firefighting personnel working every day on the apparatus fleet. This is the location where taking care of fire apparatus is an essential portion of the duty shift. One of the most important aspects of the task unit's work is to safely operate and ensure the readiness of fire apparatus. A damaged apparatus can disrupt the entire apparatus purchase strategy and have a cascading impact on other unit purchases. In addition to safe operations, vehicle problems must be addressed immediately, and issues communicated to the upper levels of the organization to ensure that the strategy is on track and that projected apparatus purchases are on track.

Now that we have looked at the roles associated with our organizations, let's look at how the strategic-, organizational- and task-level components work together to form a long-term apparatus purchasing plan.

BUILDING THE PURCHASING PLAN

Every fire department organization has three components associated with the purchase of fire apparatus – finance, fleet management and fire operations. Navigating a rapidly changing fleet environment at its core requires planning. Involving each organizational element in the planning process is the best option for success.

Fleet replacement cycle: The essential first step is to develop the fleet replacement cycle. This is usually the number of service years that a piece of apparatus moves from a frontline to reserve or simply moved out of the fleet.

Determining this magic number is as unique as the fire apparatus themselves. Some departments chose a complex formula based on mileage, age and service history, while others may be able to simply replace apparatus at certain age. For example, seven years might work for a metropolitan department, but a smaller jurisdiction may have a 10-year replacement plan.

Once this number is identified, finance staff, fleet managers and fire operations can look toward a common goal for planning. Today's challenge: How do you plan when the purchase components are so dynamic? The answer is that you simply must do the best you can and adjust as needed. Therefore, a collaborative approach with frequent communications at all levels is essential.

Data collection: Another critical element is data collection. Data on the mileage, pump hours and engine hours is readily available within most modern apparatus computer systems. Fleet management should be downloading this data frequently and reviewing the individual components for the goal of compiling a report of the results to all involved. Overall, strategic planning and purchase projections can be manipulated to remain on schedule. Additionally, emerging fleet technologies will make the planning process more informed and subsequently allow for accurate fleet awareness. Ensuring that your agency has a data guru who can convert the digits into a story is your best path forward.

Apparatus longevity: Vehicle safety is critical for effective fleet management. When finances are limited and timelines are extended, the loss of a vehicle to a preventable accident can cripple any size department. Additionally, daily pre-response checks are also important to ensure fleet longevity. Complacency in the realm of operations occurs when our personnel "believe" that all is well without verification. This is where both task- and organizational-level management play a role in ensuring our fleet stability. Firefighters are ultimately the closest to the fire apparatus, and their task-level work can help identify trends that are impacting the quality of the apparatus and the design elements that impact the work of a firefighter.

Communication: Bi-directional communication is easily facilitated through a department's apparatus committee. This team, comprised of members from across all organizational levels, works to ensure that the fleet is meeting the needs of the department and that design changes are implemented with the sales representatives and manufacturer. Ultimately, it is the focus and communication that is achieved through a shared team that benefits the department in its fleet management planning.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

These broader concepts outlined above are intended to create awareness related to the situation we all face with fire apparatus. Once a firefighter recognizes a problem, or success, at the task level and communicates it upward to benefit a department's overall fleet, the long-term fleet management program improves.

Our fleet is essential to achieve life-saving work, and it takes every member of a department to be involved in their operation, planning and purchasing. This is the reason that conversations are occurring at all levels of the fire service, our existing fleet replacement plans are under constant change, and we are working in a volatile system that we cannot control.

To be successful, we must be strategic in our planning, adherent to processes and listening to our firefighters at the task level. It may seem an illogical approach to long-term apparatus replacement, but until we get these fundamentals in place, we will not be successful in communicating our need, planning for a purchase, and anticipating lengthy delays. Simple situational awareness will help us handle the monumental challenge we face today and tomorrow.

HEALTH - SAFETY & LODDS - TAKING CARE OF YOUR MEMBERS!

IN 2022 WE HAVE SADLY EXPERIENCED 95 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S

According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com

In 2021 we experienced 136 LODDs reported nationally.!

[Leading Cause Of Death Among Firefighters Might Come As A Surprise](#)

Firefighters face risks every time they respond to a call, including possible long-term dangers to their health. But the current leading cause of death among firefighters may come as a surprise. According to the International Association of Firefighters, heart disease was the former leading cause of death among firefighters. But that has now been displaced by occupational cancer, with 74 percent of the deaths added to the IAFF's Memorial Wall each year directly attributed to cancer. "It's not going to be surprising to firefighters," said Chad Davis, the President of the local IAFF with around 350 members across southwest Missouri. "We understand that our job is inherently dangerous, and what we've learned over the years is occupational cancer is now the number one danger."

[National Vol Fire Council FIRST RESPONDER HELPLINE AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES](#)

Firefighting and emergency response are stressful, and the holidays can bring added pressures. The [NVFC First Responder Helpline](#) is here for you. NVFC members and their household families can call for assistance with work-life-volunteer challenges, including stress management, relationships, financial concerns, addiction, and more. [Register for this webinar](#) to learn more about the Helpline. If you are unable to purchase an NVFC membership for yourself or someone else who needs the Helpline, use [this form](#) to receive a complimentary membership.

YOU JUST NEVER KNOW...

- Three Riverdale, GA firefighters were taken to the hospital Thursday morning after they were injured in a fire engine crash, ***including one who was ejected.***
 - 47-year-old William Moon II a member of FDNY fell approximately 20 feet and suffered a serious head injury while preparing for a drill inside his firehouse, Rescue Company 2 in Brooklyn. Despite being immediately treated he will not survive his injuries.
 - 39-year-old firefighter paramedic died after suffering a medical emergency, he was from the Washington Township in Dublin, Ohio. Charles served in Iraq and Afghanistan with the US Army's 82 Airborne where he earned a Bronze Star. Firefighter Swank is survived by his wife Alaina and his five children
 - The chief of Clear Spring Maryland Volunteer Fire Company was killed morning in a single-vehicle accident on U.S. Route 40 when a rollback vehicle he was driving left the road and hit a utility pole.
 - A Cache County Fire District firefighter was injured when a Ford pickup hit a blocking fire engine amid heavy fog and icy roads.
 - 66-year-old Mapleton, PA firefighter was killed after being hit by a vehicle while working at the scene of a precious crash.
 - A Pine Haven Firefighter died in the Line of Duty during an attempted ice rescue. Pine Haven is in Crook County in northern Wyoming.
 - A Baton Rouge (Louisiana) Fire Captain has died in the Line of Duty. Captain Walker Hill suffered a medical emergency while on duty this week.
 - at: <https://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/>
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[Reference Material for Use in a Line of Duty Death](#)

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

BUILDING & FIRE CODE ISSUES – WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

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.

WEEKLY FIRE FATALITY DATA AS REPORTED BY THE MEDIA

Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	74+0=74(Exceeded 2021)
Last fire death Seaford, Nassau Co., female 80	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	128+0=128
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	1250+ 41=1291
Top Three State with the most 1&2 Family Deaths	1 PA -- 116
	2 TX -- 84
	3 OH -- 81
There has been a total of 2101 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

Out Of State Members Serving In Fire Department And Fire Company Offices

Fire District Affairs Dec/Jan Edition

There have been inquiries on the rules that pertain to volunteer firefighters that are members of New York volunteer fire departments, but reside in other states such as Vermont and Massachusetts. This is a common situation in fire districts and volunteer fire departments other than fire districts which are located close to borders with other states. Our laws *permit* non-residents of the state to be accepted into membership by fire districts which adjoin another state particularly Town Law § 176-b.

Living in the vicinity rationale *could not* be used to accept or continue the active membership of a volunteer firefighter who resides in another state which does not adjoin NYS, it only applies to adjoining states. Note that the New York fire district *must* share a border with that other state.

There is no limitation placed on a non-resident in an adjacent state on the right to serve as an officer of his or her department or company, but there are limitations placed on his or her coverage while out of state.

Over the years some confusion has developed over this right of a non-resident of the state member to hold office because prior to the year 2000 this right was not provided for. Chapter 351 of the Laws of 2000 amended Town Law §176 to remove a restriction that prevented non-residents of the state from serving as chief officers and a restriction in Town Law §176-b subparagraph 9 that prevented non-residents of the state from serving in other fire department and company offices was also removed. To the extent that this matter came up in the past and people were advised based upon the prior law they may continue to hold that belief because they are unaware of the 2000 amendment.

Please also keep in mind that under applicable law a **Board of Fire Commissioners still has the power by resolution to restrict chief officer positions to members who are residents of the fire district** and based upon that power could restrict non-residents of the state from serving as chief officers of their fire department. (NY Town Law § 176).

Is Firefighter Competency A Discipline Issue?

Curt Varone

Question: Is competency a disciplinary issue?

Answer: That is a great question. Competency and discipline are distinct issues, but they often become intertwined for a number of reasons. First and most obviously, either may result in a person’s removal from a job. Second, both require

a fair and unbiased investigation into the factual circumstances associated with employee behavior. Third, while theoretically distinct, distinguishing between them in real life can be a lot easier said than done.

THE DIFFERENCES

Let's start with the clearest point of distinction: Competency in its purest sense is about whether a person can meet the [minimum requirements of a job](#). While our legal system has developed a number of fanciful expressions to identify the minimum requirements for a job—including terms like essential functions, principal activities, and bona fide occupational qualifications—we will use the more pedestrian term “minimum requirements” to embody all the legally justifiable requirements for a position.

With this in mind, a competency-based evaluation can be distinguished from a [disciplinary investigation](#) because a disciplinary investigation is focused on determining whether a workplace rule has been violated. A competency evaluation looks at the ability of a person to meet the minimum requirements of a job. As such, a person who is incompetent is currently (or perhaps enduringly) unable to meet the minimum requirements in a way that can be objectively verified. It does not depend upon whether a workplace rule was violated.

In this regard, a disciplinary investigation generally looks into an act that has already occurred, although it is possible some investigations may involve ongoing violations. A competency evaluation generally looks into an employee's current and ongoing ability to meet job requirements, understanding that a past act may have triggered the need for the evaluation.

THE SIMILARITIES

Discipline and competence share a number of similarities. First, both processes benefit greatly from clarity. Clear rules and regulations make enforcement of discipline easier. In a similar way, clear performance requirements make the enforcement of minimum requirements easier.

Unfortunately, many fire departments have put little thought into their disciplinary rules, and even less thought into their minimum job requirements. Of even more concern, some departments have not clearly distinguished between disciplinary rules and minimum job requirements. This lack of clarity opens the door to confusion, which in turn makes dealing with real-life cases unnecessarily difficult. In a world where fire department leaders have their plates full, ensuring clarity is often viewed as being “nice-to-have” until a problem arises, at which point we realize it was actually “need-to-have.”

This explains why fire departments often have to rely upon vague disciplinary grounds like “conduct unbecoming” or “improper conduct” to address problem behavior, while competency-wise struggling to apply the requirements fairly. The lack of clear rules and minimum job requirements can also lead to subjective application, or the perception of subjectiveness, opening the door to allegations of bias. Both suffer from a related paradox: No matter how many clear rules or requirements we establish, there will always be something we failed to address.

A concrete example will hopefully help make this point. An officer complains that one of her firefighters is overweight and unable to meet the physical demands of the job. He is so out of shape that he stands back while other crew members do the physically demanding tasks. He cannot keep up with other crew members while climbing stairs or even walking on flat ground, slowing the crew down. The crew is frustrated and concerned that he will not be able to rescue them should the need arise, and they question whether they will be able to rescue him. The firefighter denies these allegations and contends the officer is picking on him. He claims she is singling him out despite others who are overweight, and creating a hostile work environment. He also claims the other crew members have been harassing him for months and the officer does nothing to stop it.

This example demonstrates just how intertwined discipline and competency can be. Is the firefighter unable to meet the minimum requirements of the job? Has the fire department defined minimum requirements? If the firefighter can meet the minimum requirements, the question becomes is he being lazy and intentionally shirking his duties? If so, it's a

disciplinary matter (assuming the department has a rule that prohibits shirking duties). We also have counter allegations about a hostile work environment and harassment, both disciplinary matters. As should be apparent, competency-related allegations can involve disciplinary concerns, and vice versa.

Another similarity between competency and discipline is that both are inherently about behavior, and as a general rule behavior can be changed. As such, both competency evaluations and disciplinary investigations can lead to performance improvement plans. With competency evaluations, knowledge of the requirements and intent to violate work requirements are not a concern. Rather, we are concerned with the objective ability of the person to meet the specified job requirements. When it comes to discipline, however, we must consider the person's knowledge, motivation and intent to violate or ignore the rules. This often requires a more [subjective inquiry](#) that at some point may involve a credibility determination of those with different recollections of a past event.

Let's apply this to another example: an allegation of carelessness. A recent lawsuit included an allegation that a probationary firefighter failed a training evolution because she dropped an axe twice while on a ladder. Supervisors must determine whether dropping the axe was intentional (a rule violation); due to carelessness (a rule violation); the result of a competency-based reason such as lack of stamina or grip-strength; or due to some other factor (ill-fitting gloves). If the department intends to wash the probationary firefighter out of the academy for competency reasons, we are not concerned with her knowledge, motivation or intent. The question is, does she have the stamina and/or grip strength to complete the task? On the other hand, if she dropped the axe intending to strike another member with whom she had a disagreement previously, we most certainly are concerned with intent. Proving that intent may be a separate challenge, but intent is relevant to whether a rule violation occurred. If the issue is carelessness, the investigation will need to rule out other possible causes for the behavior.

So to wrap up this discussion, competency and discipline are separate concepts that share a number of similarities. However, they must be distinguished in order to be addressed properly. Both can create litigation problems for fire departments that can be avoided through the development of proper disciplinary policies and legally justifiable job requirements. Fire officers should be trained to distinguish between the two, and fire departments must have the capability of investigating both fairly and in an unbiased manner.

HUMAN RESOURCES

****Reader Response: 'Why Do You Bash Volunteer Firefighters?'**

Chief Billy Goldfeder

Chief Billy,

I recently read your article on ["Hot potatoes, dispatchers and volunteer fire departments."](#)

Why do you bash volunteer firefighters so much? Yes, volunteer departments are usually poorly staffed, poorly trained and poorly equipped, but it's not their fault; they don't have the funds to hire people, train them and equip them. Go bash the taxpayers who complain about a few dollars on their property taxes and then complain that their local fire department can't meet their expectations! Go bash on the U.S. system of assigning fire departments to townships instead of funding them as an essential national service (also related to taxpayers' willingness to pay). Go bash the policy of distributing limited resources by political boundary instead of by need, population and geography (also closely related to taxpayers' willingness to pay for essential services).

Instead of bashing volunteers, how about giving us useful tips on recruiting, training and retention? That would be helpful.

— A volunteer firefighter proudly serving however I can and whenever I can

Dear Volunteer,

Thanks for your email. I sincerely appreciate your thoughts.

Before I respond, I just want to state that in this country, if you've seen one fire department, you've only seen one fire department. Two seemingly identical communities can have two very different fire services, so keep that in mind. Also, since I don't know where your VFD is, I'll generalize with comments that apply to all VFDs.

First, I don't bash volunteer firefighters. Ever. As someone who has volunteered since 1973, I am well aware of how it was, how it is, and am very concerned about the future. I do, however, criticize volunteers (or any fire departments) that fail to focus on the mission – taking care of the people needing help.

Several recent fires prompted me to write the FireRescue1 [“Hot potatoes, dispatchers and volunteer fire departments”](#) column, and the three VFDs I was focused on have million-dollar-plus budgets and still fail to ensure a response. When a company, department or district accepts funds from the public, that is in exchange for service. If they cannot guarantee the service, they need to be transparent and say so. Then the public can decide what level of service they want. If the public won't provide funding to an otherwise good VFD, then they get what they pay for. Unfortunately, some VFDs accept the funding but do not provide the service. The term “good stewards of the taxpayers' dollar” applies.

There is way too much emotion tied to our VFD traditions versus the genuine emotional needs experienced by the public on their worst day. VFDs should not be poorly staffed, poorly trained or poorly equipped. Most of that is an excuse, perhaps except for the funding. Show me an enthusiastic, well lead, public-focused VFD, and I will show you the funding opportunities locally, local support or through grants.

It's when leadership fails at the VFD to encourage people to join (we are a really good place to spend your little free time; we will treat you as family), train (we schedule good, relatable training with respect to your available time) and provide the tools to do the job (we will secure equipment that matches the response area we cover) that we find ourselves without the support we need. It's when the reputation of the local VFD is cliquish, closed door and self-focused that the public gets a negative impression. It's when the local VFD pretends that it's a secret club and no one is entitled to know what they do with their funds that we end up in trouble.

As far as our country's system of funding VFDs, I am not a fan of federal funding. Local communities should determine what is needed – and fund it. The problem is we are not always honest with the public. They think their VFDs provide a great service, but the stats tell a different story.

VFDs were formed to selflessly help people in trouble. That model has never changed. However, many VFDs have abandoned that simple focus and fail to ask, “What's the best we can do with what we have to serve the public?” and “If we need more, are we willing to be 100% transparent on how we operate and what we do with every dollar provided?”

As far as tips for recruitment and retention, I've written about those many times, but it's pretty basic:

RECRUITMENT TIPS

Recruit honestly, tell people up front what the requirements are-and then hold everyone to that standard(s). Everyone. Evaluate the model of service and adjust it so it meets the public's need-not the volunteers' needs.

Accept that there are some services a VFD may not be able to provide....but make sure that the public is well aware (I.E: No EMS? Exterior only FD?).

Determine what training is needed-(based upon the defined services to be provided) and what is a waste of time-the training should match what's being protected-and have total focus on that with laser focused respect on the time volunteers have.

RETENTION TIPS

Treat everyone equally and fairly-one policy-one standard. In writing.

Re-think the model...can the VFD provide excellent service by setting off tones and seeing who shows up? Maybe it is time for assigned duty crews with defined turnout/response times.

Don't treat people like shit-their pay must be pride in membership. Gone are the days of hazing and bullying. Like it or not.

Delete unneeded "traditional" policies such as "you can't drive the trucks unless you have FF, 1, 2, 3, EMT etc"-rethink about having people perform specialized services with only that required training.

Provide supervision and leadership through qualifications-a mix of popularity AND qualifications

Ensure everyone understand their role and responsibilities.

Provide rewards: Jackets, shirts, meal cards, recognitions-but insure it's fairly distributed based upon previously stated goals.

Repair or replace the jerks, the morale killers and the malcontents in the department.

Respect their time. If training starts at 1900 hours, that's when it starts.

Ensure locals pay for the needed equipment (needed-no waste) so volunteers don't have to fundraise. If locals refuse to pay taxes and there is no funding for minimal equipment and members aren't showing up-it's time to discuss shutting down.

LET'S GET REAL ABOUT EXPECTATIONS

Volunteers do just that – volunteer – but they volunteer to operate in a manner defined by the leadership. They cannot be allowed to volunteer if that means doing what they want when they want. If leadership defines and enforces what's expected (and sets the example), a good outcome is usually predictable.

I don't bash volunteers, but I do take on any FD that fails to respond to a promised and expected level of service, one that fails to be open and honest about how funding is spent, fails to require everyone to be equally dedicated, and fails to treat members as they should be treated. When those failures are resolved, it will almost always work. But there are times when the growth of an area, the run volume and/or required standards simply outgrow a VFD, and then, again, the leadership must be honest with the public about what the VFD can (and cannot) do for them, as it very well may be time to consider a different delivery model – one that when the tones are activated, the caller hears fire apparatus responding moments later.

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](#).

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:

What Firefighters Want In 2022: The State Of Fireground Leadership

Darryl Jones

There is a natural progression in levels of rank and responsibilities in the fire service. Consider how we see this in the riding positions within a standard fire apparatus. With a four-person crew, there are two positions in the back of the cab facing backward. Then there is the operator's position on the front left side of the cab and the company officer's (CO) position on the front right side of the cab. It is a given that most fire service members begin their careers riding backward in the rear of the cab. Eventually, an opportunity is provided to ride in the officer's seat.

For the motivated individual who earns the privilege of riding in the officer's seat, the promotion creates a plethora of changes, including the power of significant additional responsibility.

A STANDARD NEW CO SCENARIO

Imagine this scenario. A brand-new CO is at the station with a group of highly motivated, well-trained and well-intentioned firefighters. The tones drop and the dispatcher's voice comes across the radio and announces the report of a structural fire at 2121 Acme Dr.

Everyone scrambles to don the appropriate PPE and assume their designated positions on the rig. The new CO makes sure everyone is appropriately seated with seatbelts fastened and gives the nod to the operator to proceed.

Keying up the microphone, the CO says, "Dispatch from Engine 1, we are enroute to 2121 Acme Dr. for a reported structural fire." This transmission by the CO to dispatch is routine and most likely in accordance with department policy. However simple, this communication is a pivotal point for this incident. The reply from dispatch can be a catalyst that changes the dynamic of the incident. It can change the environment in the cab and the mindset of everyone on the crew. If dispatch replies, "Engine 1, you are enroute at 2204, again the address is 2121 Acme Dr. for a reported structural fire," the dynamic does not change. There is little expectation of smoke or fire. The atmosphere in the cab is relatively benign. The crew is calm.

Contrast this with the following reply from dispatch: "Engine 1, you are enroute at 2204, again the address is 2121 Acme Dr. *Be advised, we are receiving multiple calls on this.*" This creates a new paradigm for the incident. Everything from this point forward has a higher level of urgency. The atmosphere in the cab changes, as does the mindset of the crew. The metaphysical effect on the CO is documented through research – a discussion for another time.

Does this sound familiar? I am sure many of you have been in this situation. The two firefighters in the back get so hyper-excited that they unfasten their seatbelts to don their SCBA out of the seats. This causes the seatbelt warning alarm to activate in the cab. The operator appears to go through a physical metamorphosis. First, the operator's right leg increases in size and weight, forcing the accelerator to the floor. Second, the operator turns into a multi-tasking machine. Not only are they driving the rig, but they are also operating the Q-siren and air horns while attempting to maintain situational awareness and control of the vehicle.

Amid all of this, the new CO is suffering from information overload. The seatbelt alarm is ringing in their ears, the two people in the back are arguing over who is going to hit the hydrant and who is going to grab the nozzle, the Q-siren is wound up so high only dogs can hear it, the air horn sounds like a runaway freight train, and the entire crew is resisting the g-forces as the rig swings around bends and corners. It is as if the CO is trying to get a sip of water from the steamer connection on a fire hydrant.

GO/NO-GO DECISION-MAKING

It is the responsibility of the CO to make a critical decision that will determine the goals and objectives of the incident action plan (IAP). This decision is the most important decision of their career, if not their life, every time they are the first on scene of an incident and assume command. That decision is the *go/no-go decision*.

The *go/no-go* decision could mean life or death for victims and crewmembers alike. The CO must make a rational decision based on present conditions, a risk/benefit analysis, training and experience. Emotions and adrenaline should not play a part in the decision-making process. We will risk a lot to save a lot, we will risk nothing to save nothing. Most important, the CO must live with their decision, right or wrong, good or bad, for the rest of their lives.

The actions taken by the CO within the first 10 minutes of their arrival will dictate how this incident will end. The CO's actions, if appropriate, will allow subsequent incident commanders to continue with the IAP. If the initial IAP is flawed, subsequent incident commanders will be forced to stop operations, reset and begin again. This is a huge waste of time and resources.

For the CO to initiate a proper and effective IAP, they must be prepared for the power of this role. This will include the proper training and experience to meet the responsibilities of the position. In addition, there are specific tasks the officer can perform upon arrival to assist in achieving the goal of an effective IAP. A well-prepared CO will have information within their database to assist them with this scenario, no matter if it is their first structural fire or 100th structural fire. Research, along with the experience and writings of fire service leaders before us, have provided company officers with the tasks, strategies and tactics to manage these situations:

- Remember that life safety begins with the lives of the responders.
- Weigh the risks versus the benefits.
- Provide a brief yet thorough initial size-up, which includes a 360.
- Possess a strong command presence.

PREPARING TO LEAD

So, how does one prepare to be a fireground leader? It begins with mindset, followed by training and experience. Success requires all three, much like a chemical compound.

A good leader in the fire service must have a growth mindset. They must be open to new and developing theories and ideas. They must believe in the doctrine that there is always more to learn, and as a believer in this doctrine, they must continue to seek knowledge on the subject.

If you cannot stand up to the challenge, you will fall to your highest level of training. If the CO's training is at the level of a firefighter, there will exist a gap between training and responsibilities. This gap will be more pronounced if a chief officer's training is at the firefighter level. The fall can be significant. There is no arguing that a good company officer will require strong technical skills, but leadership skills and communication skills are also required.

Finally, there is experience. Nothing can replace experience, and experience comes with time. However, training can supplement the lack of experience if the training is realistic and challenges the CO by presenting problems outside of the COs comfort zone. An example of this type of training is realistic simulations that are controlled, timed and capable of providing injects, or unexpected twists that will cause the CO to think on their feet.

STRONG SCORES, CONTINUED WORK

The What Firefighters Want special coverage gives us critical insights into the realities of fireground leadership responsibility, from the foundational training to the tactical competencies and the tools to manage worst-case scenarios – and so much more.

What we see at the highest level is fireground leaders performing their essential tasks on a routine basis with competence and support. Respondents report strong fireground leadership, particularly in key areas like performing a 360 size-up and following department policies. However, the data shows room for improvement, for example, in areas related to freelancing and leaders exhibiting myopic focus, not seeing the bigger incident picture.

So much of these areas of improvement are rooted in our foundational training. Approximately 40% of respondents who had served as incident commanders strongly agreed that they had received the training necessary to perform the duties of an IC. Why only 40%? Considering the responsibility heaped upon ICs, isn't this one position for which training confidence is essential? Further, the 16% of respondents who disagree or had no opinion create much cause for concern. What's more, ongoing IC training is dismal, with only 5% of respondents reporting more than 73 hours of training in 2021. Approximately 69% reported zero or fewer than 24 hours of IC training in the previous year.

The fireground is stressful enough. Imagine what happens when fireground leaders face a mayday under their command. One-third of survey respondents reported a lack of confidence in an IC's ability to manage the incident – a significant percentage. But looked at from another angle, considering what we know about the lack of ongoing IC training, perhaps the 25% who reported extreme confidence in the IC's mayday-management abilities are unaware of the reality of the situation – a dangerous scenario rooted in overconfidence.

The good news: Fireground leadership scores are still strong across the board, and responders report generally positive experiences with company officers and supervisors at all levels. This sets the stage for improvement – open communications, training buy-in and continuous skill development. It's vital that we now harness this feedback to level up our fireground leadership knowledge, skills and abilities.

CLASSIFIED

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

Do not drink and wrap presents. If anyone gets a remote control from me, I'll need that back!

OFFICERS OF THE CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS

2023 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President: Tom Rinaldi, Commissioner Stillwater/Saratoga
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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.

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