



# CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

## BULLETIN

YOUR FIRE DISTRICT NEWS SOURCE  
FEBRUARY 12TH, 2023  
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THE CAPITAL CALENDAR:

[WWW.AFDCA.ORG](http://WWW.AFDCA.ORG)

### 2023 CAPITAL AREA MEETING & TRAINING SCHEDULE

Thursday March 9<sup>th</sup> 7:00pm general membership dinner served at 6PM Clifton Park FD

Saturday, March 11, 2023 6:00 PM Officer Installation Embassy Suites Hotel 86 Congress Street, Saratoga Springs, NY –

**Taking Reservations Now**

Thursday April 6<sup>th</sup> Board of Director’s Meeting 7PM

Thursday May 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the General Membership

Thursday June 8<sup>th</sup> Board of Director’s Meeting 7PM

Thursday July 13<sup>th</sup> Board of Director’s Meeting 7PM

**August, No Meeting**

Thursday September 14<sup>th</sup>, General Membership Meeting 7PM

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

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

**December, No Meeting**

*Printable Calendar – See Last Page*

### Long Way to Travel to Meetings? Zoom In!

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

### Commissioner Training, Register Now and pay at the door!

Averill Park and Clifton Park are filling up. There are seats available at Berkshire Fire District, 320 Steele Ave Extension, Gloversville, NY for any of the Commissioners in the Western portion of the Capital Area or adjacent counties. Whatever is convenient for you!

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

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 320 Steele Ave Ext, Gloversville, NY 12078  
Email [caaofd@gmail.com](mailto:caaofd@gmail.com)

### 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.

IF NOTHING ELSE READ THE ARTICLES PRECEDED BY \*\*

**CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION NEWS:**

**[WWW.AFDCA.ORG](http://WWW.AFDCA.ORG)**

**[You Are Invited to Become a Member of the Capital Area Association!](#)**

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

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

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

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](mailto: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:**

- Today's commissioner training in Averill Park was a very successful inaugural show. The construct of the information fulfilled the OSC requirements but was completed with time to spare. We hope other area commissioners will avail themselves of this training at both Clifton Park and Birkshire.
- The Geneva City Council is hosting a public hearing next week on a proposal to provide 10% property tax exemptions for volunteer firefighters.
- Greene County giving tax breaks to volunteer firefighters to fill depleted ranks. Greene County Legislature Chair Patrick Linger voted for the local law, but was less than exuberant about the situation: "The state could have made this much easier."
- A fire Tuesday morning at Brockton Hospital climbed to 9-alarms as firefighters knocked down the dangerous electrical blaze and evacuated patients from the de-powered hospital. Patients could be seen being wheeled from the hospital to a battalion of waiting ambulances outside. [*Nightmare call that needs a lot of ICS Coordination*] Brockton Fire Chief Brian Nardelli said fire broke out in the electrical utility room of the hospital. He said it may have originated in a transformer in the basement. Fighting the blaze was complicated by the electrical nature of the fire and the danger it presented.
- After FDNY Commissioner Laura Kavanaugh demoted three FDNY chiefs over the weekend, two of the department's top uniformed officials gave up their own positions in protest, the Daily News has learned. The turmoil in the highest levels of the FDNY began when Kavanaugh demoted Assistant Chiefs Fred Schaaf, Michael Gala and Joseph Jardin to deputy chief, and then called other top chiefs on the carpet, multiple source told The News. [*A fire department with a top management problem, let's see where this goes, that didn't take long after the appointment of the new commissioner*]
- Are you interested in becoming a Director to represent our region, Region 1 for the next two years, please contact Tom Rinaldi or any of the Capital Area officers? Directors can still assume the position at the Annual Meeting in May.

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

**2023 Annual Meeting & Leadership Summit Expo**

Wednesday, May 17 - Saturday, May 20

Turning Stone Resort &amp; Casino

5218 Patrick Road

Verona, Ne 13478

**Annual Meeting & Leadership Summit Expo**[Click Here to Register](#)

**A link to reserve your hotel room at the Turning Stone Resort & Casino will be included on your confirmation page and in your confirmation email. No call in reservations will be accepted. 1 room per person**

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

**TRAINING APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR ENTIRE BOARD/SECRETARY/TREASURER****COFFEE WITH COMMISSIONERS FOR 2023**REGISTER AT THIS LINK: [https://webinar.ringcentral.com/webinar/register/WN\\_-RyApNLJQrK-v3xBiNtnAA](https://webinar.ringcentral.com/webinar/register/WN_-RyApNLJQrK-v3xBiNtnAA)

Log on To Previously Recorded Sessions

[https://www.afdsny.org/coffee\\_with\\_commissioners.php](https://www.afdsny.org/coffee_with_commissioners.php)

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

**THE LATEST FROM ALBANY****From the 2024 Executive Budget Briefing Book****Improve Statewide Emergency Response Services.**

- **Allow for Compensation Volunteer Firefighters.** The Executive Budget proposes legislation to allow municipalities and fire companies to pay volunteer firefighters modest compensation based on call response and still retain their volunteer status.
- **Volunteer Firefighter Training Stipend.** The Executive Budget includes \$6.5 million to provide a State-funded stipend to volunteer firefighters who complete foundational training as well as funds for DHSES to administer the program and enhance their training capacity.
- **Create NY Emergency Services IP Network.** The Executive Budget includes \$20 million to assist counties in transitioning to Next Generation 911 via a fiberoptic cable network that would connect to a single Public Service Answering Point in each county
- **Amend Emergency Medical Services** This part would require the State Emergency Medical Services Council to advise the Commissioner of Health on issues related to EMS; establish a statewide comprehensive emergency medical services plan; establish mobile integrated healthcare program for ESM agencies; and establish a new process for the approval of EMS applications.
- **Emergency Medical Services (EMS):** The Executive proposes \$7.6 million to increase the EMS special revenue fund in addition to providing capital equipment resources to enhance the statewide fleet of EMS vehicles including ambulances and non-transport treatment vehicles.
- **Create the Transit-Oriented Development Act of 2023** This part would require local governments to authorize the construction of residential dwelling units within proximity to any non-seasonal rail station.
- **Authorize a Property Tax Exemption for Accessory Dwelling Units** This part would authorize municipalities to adopt a property tax exemption program for residential property owners to create one or more additional residential units on their property.
- **Prohibit Installation of Fossil Fuel Equipment and Building Systems** This part would prohibit the installation of fossil-fuel equipment and building systems in new building construction and establish building benchmarking requirements

The executive budget will be presented to the legislature; they will review it, come up with their budget and then the negotiations begin. The budget is supposed to be in place by April 1st. We'll see.

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**Tentative Date for Fire Service Alliance Lobby Day, Tuesday February 28<sup>th</sup>, more details are pending.**

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**\*\*Some Notes on the Vol FF Tax Incentive Law – hold over from last week also on the web site**

- If they are still operating under the previous law, jurisdictions have until 2025 to adopt new legislation by resolution.
- What is an “enrolled” member, likely an active member who able to be covered by VFBL coverage. Not social, honorary members. Those who respond to calls, fire police etc.
- How many years you need to be active is up to the AHJ or the taxing district giving the tax break.
- The tax break is only for the primary residence and it must be residential. If any part of your residence is used for commercial purposes that portion cannot be covered.
- The tax exemption must be certified by the AHJ. District, village, Town etc.
- It appears that the person seeking the exemption must apply annually with a certification from the AHJ. You should discuss with Assessor how they are implementing the law.
- After 20 years the exemption becomes a lifetime exemption, the spouse of a deceased qualified member may also apply for the exemption.
- The governing body seeking to implement the exemption must hold a public hearing to start the process, the second step is to adopt a local law.
- Up to 10% deduction is the norm.
- There should be a written procedure/policy for certification of members.
- To obtain tax exemption for school tax a form RP—466a must be submitted to the assessor by March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- FASNY is going to have model forms, resolution, entire package on their website for universal use.
- One a jurisdiction opts in to the exemption forms must be submitted.
- FASNY will have in the near future the savings realized by having volunteers within County, Assembly and Senate Districts.
- This will not have any effect on local tax rates or levies, the jurisdiction will collect the same amount of tax money, no fiscal impact.
- If you live in a different jurisdiction from where you volunteer, the jurisdiction that adopts the exemption is where you apply.
- If both husband and wife in same household are volunteers you can combine that exemption. For example 10% for each.
- **\*\*You cannot collect on the property tax exemption and the income tax exemption of \$200, that prohibition is in the income tax law. Its one or the other!!**
- The notice of public hearing has to occur 20 days in advance of adoption of the exemption.
- Its 10% off of the assessed valuation of the residence.
- Just a quick reminder volunteers save the residents of the state \$3.2B annually and that number has gone up since the previous study was done. If the volunteers went away you would need 32,000 paid staff!!
- Look for more good information on the FASNY web site FASNY.com

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**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.

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

#### **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>

It's recommended that the Task Force continue for 2023, but will take legislation to make that happen.

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

**View the final report of the NYS VFF Task Force HERE:**





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

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

**LET YOUR MEMBERS KNOW ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY!**



**When & How To Say Something ESIP WEBINAR SERIES**

We encounter people who may be in crisis and have no means of assistance or who do not understand they need help. We will look at how we can have a positive impact on people by simply getting them access to help when no one else may see a problem.

**Date: 2/15/23 Time: 7:00 PM EST**

<https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=13001bfaf2&e=781e9a2c81>

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

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

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

**Available at any time for your members.**

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**REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR THE NYS AFC 117TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & FIRE 2023 EXPO!**

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

**CLASSROOM EDUCATION**

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

**ATTENDEE REGISTRATION**

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

**ONE DAY TICKETS (EXPO ONLY)**

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

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

**FULL TERM REGISTRATION (EXPO & CLASSES)**

NYS AFC Individual Member: \$100 (per person)

Non-Member: \$175 (per person)

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**NYS AFC 2023 Seminar Series, "Truck Skills Beyond the Textbooks" Local Date Coming Up**

*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>

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## **Beginning Thursday, December 15th, we will be rolling out a new version of VFIS University.**

This change will allow us to clean up organization rosters and offer you a streamlined and efficient experience. During the transition period, please note that the current system will be available through 12/30 (we will have a direct link to the page for this.) **We recommend downloading your organization's course history by 12/30 to ensure the smoothest transition possible, as access to course completions on the current system will NOT be available after that date.**

Some additional things to note:

- The training officer within your organization will approve users and assignments
- New features for your organization will be introduced in Q1 2023
- Only VFIS-authored courses and approved educational material will be available

As part of the registration process for the new system, you will be sent an email from "VFIS Authentication System" (noreply-ss0@vfris.com). You will receive the email automatically, once our staff adds you to the new system. Please follow the instructions in that email to verify your email address and update your password. The password should be at least 8 characters long and contain an uppercase letter, lowercase letter, number and symbol.

All customer service for VFIS University will be provided by VFIS, so if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out via phone at 800.233.1957 Ext. 7228 or via email at [csapps@vfris.com](mailto:csapps@vfris.com), Monday – Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm.

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

You will find:



VFIS University User  
Guide.pdf

[2022 VFISU-Flyer](#)

[2022 VFISU Course Catalog](#)

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

[2022 VFIS-Responder Help Flyer](#)

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## **Hands-On Training at FIRE 2023 in Syracuse Announced**

Registration is open for Hands-On Training at the NYS AFC 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>

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## **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>

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### **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](#).

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## **OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE –CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES!**

### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

#### **NY County to Provide Property Tax Exemption for Volunteer Fire, Ambulance Service Members**

Rensselaer County will recognize the service and dedication of volunteer firefighters and volunteer ambulance company members by offering a 10 percent county property tax exemption, Rensselaer County Executive Steve McLaughlin and members of the County Legislature announced.

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### **CHALLENGES:**

#### **States Strive to Reverse Shortage of Paramedics, EMTs**

Low wages, a lack of work-life balance and burnout are among factors driving emergency medical services personnel around the country to quit ambulance duty. Last year, the turnover rate for full-time emergency medical technicians, known as EMTs, was 36% and for full-time paramedics, it was 27%, according to an American Ambulance Association survey. The turnover rate includes both resignations and firings, but nearly all of the EMTs and paramedics who left did so voluntarily. More than one-third of new hires don't last through their first year, the survey found. A federal study projected a need for 40,000 more full-time emergency medical personnel from 2016 to 2030. "The public doesn't see where there's no one in the station, and volunteer services are trying to muster a crew," said Dia Gainor, executive director of the National Association of State EMS Officials and former director of the Idaho EMS office for 19 years.

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#### **Troy Fire Working To Address Staffing Shortage**

The city of Troy is facing a shortage of firefighters, but officials are hopeful that the next firefighter exam will bring them a new wave of department members. Fire Chief Eric McMahon said his firefighters have been working a lot of overtime lately to make sure all shifts are covered. He claims they're down 10 percent of their workforce, or 12 members. Going into the summer months, retirements are expected, which will lead to more vacancies. "We could be down as many as 20 members by the time we start our hiring process, and that's a scary, big number," McMahon said. The chief is hopeful that the big pool of people signed up to take the firefighter exam on Saturday will help fill the empty spots. "Right off the bat we're starting with 144. We're hoping that all 144 show up, we're hoping that they all do well, and we have a large number of candidates to choose from," he explained.

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## **WHY I DISLIKE LI-ION TECHNOLOGY**

### **3 Critical, 1 Serious After Fire Sparked By Lithium-Ion Battery In Manhattan**

**Three members of a family are in critical, but stable condition and a fourth is in serious condition after a fire tore through their Inwood home overnight.** According to the FDNY, **the fire was ignited by a lithium-ion battery that was charging overnight.** The smell of charred wood and chemicals now permeates the apartment building, at 165 Sherman Avenue in Inwood. Inside the affected apartment, it looks like a bomb went off. According to fire officials, there were no working fire detectors in the apartment. "I watched it from my window," said one resident. "Oh, my goodness it's fire. I said to my wife and my daughter, we have to go down, we have to go down!" Most residents evacuated, but **the family inside apartment G, who was charging a lithium-ion battery while they slept, couldn't get out, the flames blocking the doorway.**



## [Lithium-Ion Laptop Battery Fire Forces Plane to Divert in CA; Four Passengers Hospitalized](#)

A United Airlines flight returned to San Diego International Airport after a small fire broke out, sending four people to the hospital, California firefighters reported. The Boeing 737 landed back at the airport around 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 7, after a laptop fire, the Federal Aviation Administration told CBS News. The San Diego Fire Department helped evacuate passengers and crew from the jet, firefighters reported on Twitter. Four people were taken to a hospital. An exterior battery pack powering a laptop caught fire in the cabin, firefighters said. The flight crew prevented the blaze from spreading.

## [An Exploding Problem: Fires Sparked By Lithium Batteries Are Confounding Firefighters](#)

VIDEO: Last July, an electric transit bus in Connecticut burst into flames while parked at a depot. A month later, an electric scooter sparked a fire inside a New York City apartment that killed a 5-year-old girl and 36-year-old woman. And last month, a fire believed to be caused by the batteries in an electric scooter engulfed a multifamily home in Brockton, Massachusetts. Lithium-ion batteries have become a ubiquitous feature in new forms of transportation and common household products. They're also found in residential solar energy systems. **But when those batteries fail or overheat, they release flammable, toxic gasses that can spark a fast-spreading fire that is extremely difficult to extinguish.** "The source of the gasses that are creating the flames is confined within a cell battery that will not allow water in," said Ofodike Ezekoye, a fire scientist and professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Texas at Austin.

Kerber said his team at UL has run tests on lithium-ion batteries in which it took only 15 seconds from the first sign of smoke to the windows being blown out in a house. In a traditional fire, it typically takes about three minutes for a room to be engulfed, he said.

Lithium-ion batteries sparked more than 200 fires in New York City last year alone, killing six people and injuring nearly 150.

**HEALTH – SAFETY & LODDS – TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBERS!**

**IN 2022 WE HAVE SADLY EXPERIENCED \*6 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S**

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com\**

**In 2022 we experienced 101 LODDs reported nationally.!**

## [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...](#)

- A Connecticut State Police trooper and a Cromwell firefighter were taken to the hospital Wednesday morning after they were struck by a vehicle on Route 9, officials said, both sustained non-life-threatening injuries in the incident.
- Three members of Columbus, Ohio Fire Department die within days of each other.
- Firefighter Brandon Norbury died after suffering a medical emergency during training, Gresham Oregon Fire and Emergency Services
- A Maui firefighter who was swept into a storm drain on Jan. 27 while responding to flooding in Kihei died this morning after fighting for his life for a week. In a news release today Maui County announced the death of 24-year-old Tre' Evans-Dumaran.
- FDNY Firefighter Anthony Mauro, 34, will be laid to rest after a years-long battle with cancer,

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

## **Reference Material for Use in a Line of Duty Death**

- VFBL Firefighters Guide to Benefits, [wcb.ny.gov/content/main/vf-vaw/injured-in-lin-of-duty.pdf](http://wcb.ny.gov/content/main/vf-vaw/injured-in-lin-of-duty.pdf)
- Survivors Benefit Guide, [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)
- National Fallen Firefighters Foundation <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	14+00=14
Last fire death Youngstown, Niagara Co. Male 70	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	25+1=26
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	165 + 32=197
Top Three State with the most 1&2 Family Deaths	1 NY & NC = 14
	2 IN & TN = 11
	3 PA = 10
<b>There has been a total of 0335 civilian home fire fatalities in 2023</b>	
There were a total of 2251 residential fire fatalities reported in 2022 in the US media.	
Both the states of Maryland and California require sprinklers in residential dwellings	

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

## **RETENTION & RECRUITMENT**

### **\*\*The Struggle of Full-Time Rural Firefighting**

Jake Hammond

***By now, it is a foregone conclusion that fire service in general is in serious trouble, with no end in sight for the foreseeable future.*** Nationwide staffing shortages are creating struggles with full-time and volunteer firefighters alike. Overtime rotations are spiraling at career establishments and volunteer houses are desperate for new members. This uncovers a much more complex issue for incident commanders than ever before: ***Do you honor the oath you took and dive into the action with the minimal staffing you have? Do you wait for mutual-aid companies with extended travel times to make an interior effort? Or are we going to begin to write off more buildings than ever before?***

**John Wayne Time...?**

In one of the very first scenes of the movie “Backdraft,” Brian McCaffrey gets his first fire. As the engine company makes their move on the interior, the lieutenant asks the engineer outside: “Where’s the second-in companies?” The engineer replies: “Sorry. It’s John Wayne time. You’re on your own, boss.” My crew has adopted that saying here as well. On any given day, there are five to six full-time members covering an area of roughly 300 square miles. Our closest mutual aid department is 15 road miles away, responding with a similar-sized crew, depending on the time of day.

National Fire Protection Association 1710, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*, states that **minimum staffing for a low-hazard, single-family residential home with a working fire should initially include a minimum of 15**

**firefighters on the initial dispatch.** On our best days when we are fully staffed, we can muster 12 firefighters between *both* first-alarm companies combined. This is with the assumption that there are no other active calls or interfacility medical transports happening simultaneously. For example, if we have one transfer on the road, our staffing drops to four firefighters with our closest mutual aid a minimum of 20 minutes away, depending on the geographical location of the incident. This is not a cry for help, but it does bring up a rather new and intriguing question as far as initial company operations with short staffing.

#### Decision Making and Staffing

For the sake of this scenario, let's say that there are four firefighters on the initial dispatch from the closest department. The decisions start before dispatch is even finished dropping tones: Do I drop engine staffing to send the ladder? Do I drop an automatic second- or third-alarm due to decreased staffing? How many people are coming on the mutual aid truck? Five? Three? Two? It's all done by the skin of our teeth. Even when we are at our top staffing levels, we fail to meet the recommended initial dispatch requirements set forth by years of science, research, and data collection. The thought process then turns to crew safety vs. the oath we all took.

Typically, for a residential fire with this level of decreased staffing, we do not staff the tower ladder unless there are reports of people trapped or we're responding to a commercial building. Given this scenario, the initial dispatch will likely include two crew members in the lead engine assigned to fire attack/search; one member in the pumper tanker for water supply (whether it's a pressurized water source or drafting from a static source); and one member in the ambulance. *Even with the initial dispatch of four members, you cannot meet criteria for two-in/two-out, due to the fact that our policy is to pump our hydrants with the second-due engine or that the operator of that truck will be setting up a folding tank and leaving the scene to refill and shuttle water to and from the scene.* You also cannot count the mutual aid companies responding that are not on scene yet. Thus we are already down to three people working on the fireground. So what now?

#### **Making the Case to Go 'John Wayne'**

For better or for worse, this is what happens more often than not. Crews are trained and eager to go get it. They want to go make a difference immediately, if not sooner. In this case, you're going against the science, the research, the facts, and the data. ***You're rolling the dice knowing that if anything goes wrong, any hope you have for getting yourself out of this mess and anything remotely resembling a respectable rapid intervention team is 15-20 minutes away if the weather is perfect.*** In essence, it's up to us because if we don't do something, who else will? We all want to go make things happen, but at what cost? We're all taught from day one that "the first five minutes of an incident dictate what that next five hours look like." But again, I'll ask: at what cost? There is always a risk-benefit analysis done at every call, and obviously, if there is entrapment, we will make every effort and then some. ***But without entrapment, at what point do we go defensive?*** With three people on attack/search and one person handling water supply responsibilities, the understanding is you are dead-manning the attack engine and abandoning the command structure of the first-arriving units. This is a textbook definition of pushing all of your chips to the middle. The moments following initial knock down, assuming all things go well, are then focused on regaining control of a scene that has already evolved. By this time, mutual aid is rolling in. Mass chaos and freelancing is taking place, and now the task becomes taking charge, delegating, and playing catch up. Hoping that everything goes well should not be a routine game plan, but when it's our citizen's only hope at the preservation of life and property, hope is all we have initially.

#### **Making the Case to Go Defensive**

**Given the persistence of lightweight construction in the built environment, homes these days are built to burn.**

Firefighters are already faced with furniture that is made of solidified petroleum products and flimsy construction. Every line-of-duty death in this country is a stark reminder to company officers everywhere. We all have families, wives, babies, parents, and lives to return to after the incident. Not going inside goes against every fiber of my being, but if we have a confirmed all-clear of the building, are we essentially adding an unneeded risk or are we just doing our job? This question isn't as easy to answer as it used to be. My department used to have two 30-person call crews that alternated days they were allowed to respond to calls unless there was a large-scale incident that dictated both crews being called out. Now? Anywhere from one to six guys show up that are full-time members and zero to three call members. That is all. *Expectations are at an all-time high, and we are defying the odds at a lot of these calls, but it will catch up with us eventually.* The last thing anyone needs is to have their town and department under an international microscope because

of a few guys who are just trying their best. The odds of success are stacked against us. Does the fact that we're still making these stops make us a great group of firefighters, or are we insane? Both may be acceptable answers.

### High Standards

The public obviously has a certain level of expectation from a full-time department that their taxes are paying for. How good of a service can we provide, though? And at what cost? We're already burnt out, stretched too thin, and you could make a comparable wage flipping a burger or two at a local restaurant. These days it would seem very few are ready and willing to do this job. **No one wants the responsibility or the liability anymore**, but the public expectation is unwavering and unchanged. Recruiting campaigns are falling sort, retention and longevity bonuses aren't attractive enough, and the divorce and suicide odds are stacked against us. It feels like we're treading water at this point. The ship is sinking, the lifeboats are gone, and there's no other form of help coming.

There's no one who wants to provide that quality service to our citizens more than those of us who have stuck with it thus far. We are the ones who are still here, willing, and able to do the job are getting older, or burnt out, or at the very least compassion fatigued when one person is routinely handling the workload of four. The scariest part of the job these days to me is not the risk we take day in and day out, not the new construction, nor the random inspections, policy changes, or new expectations. **It's the simple fact that there is no one coming to help**. There is no backup for 15-20 minutes for us, and in the bigger picture, there is no sustainable "new" generation coming in unless something changes and people become interested in this job again.

### Who Has the Answers?

**There is not and never will be an overnight solution to the state of the fire service; this is true of any problem that persists from within, whether is large or small.** It takes committees, and campaigning, and voting, and persuasion to do something as simple as changing the way the hose is packed on the truck, let alone solving a generational problem that we are faced with. Magazines and articles have a way of exposing common problems of the fire service, but rarely are people throwing out the solutions to the problems. They either cannot come up with answers themselves, or they've come up with some sort of system that works so well for them that they're not willing to share in an attempt to keep their cards to their chest, if you will.

These are the things that keep me up all night. Do we have to plead with our employers for tax breaks? Will we have to implement some sort of civil service draft? Will the fire service and its traditions change as we know it completely? And would that ultimately just drive more people out of it entirely? As long as man will walk the earth, there will be fire. There will be sick people, and accidents, and emergencies to respond to. But will there be enough staffing to meet the demand? It remains to be seen.

### Parting Thoughts

As firefighters, our sole purpose is to be here for our neighbors in their time of need: a real-life, human insurance policy that the public can lean on during their worst days. We swore to protect their lives and property under oath and we will continue to uphold that promise—sometimes to our own detriment. As long as there is a life to save or property that can be salvaged, it is our job to do so. The fact that we cannot scrounge up enough staffing or even enough willing participants to make the act of doing so relatively safe, effective, and efficient is not fair. The fact that this conversation needs to be had is not fair on so many fronts; it is not fair to members of the public who have nigh-impossible expectations of those three guys stepping off that truck. It is not fair to those three guys to have to choose between being an aggressive and all-around good firefighter or returning to their families. And it is not fair to our families to have to surround their home lives with fear and worry every time they hear a siren in the distance when their spouse is at work. **The jobs is getting more dangerous, more demanding, and less appealing to newcomers with every day that passes.** I hope everyone is comfortable with being uncomfortable, because we're digging in for the long haul, by the sounds of it. It's worth mentioning that John Wayne's character died in nine out of 76 of his movies.

Stay safe and be smart out there. You and your crew are more irreplaceable now than ever.

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## **Social Media And The Gen Z Junior Firefighter**

Ellen Yarborough

In one manner or another, your fire department engages teenagers. But what do you know about teens, other than having been one yourself, once upon a time? Do you lament that they seem more interested in their phones than engaged in “real life”?

In their defense, teens’ lives have been saturated by social media. Near-constant visual inputs impact their sense of self, expectations of future experiences, attention span and, most importantly to your firehouse, interpretation of who YOU are and how they may or may not fit in to your department’s culture.

A basic understanding of Gen Z – those born roughly between 1997 and 2012 – may help you design or edit your own social media to attract the members you want. It will also enable you to consider your department’s social media policy so that you can present the best version of the department to your audience.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION**

Like every generation, our youngest members and recruits are impacted by political, economic and cultural trends of the era, but today’s adolescents are the first to come of age in a society with 24-hour news cycle. Their phones hum with news from the four corners of the world, all of it primed for their immediate attention. As one of my students lamented a couple of years ago, “I wasn’t born thinking that I would become reliant on this rectangle of metal,” noting instead that it was adults who placed those devices in teens’ hands, and created the algorithms to ensure that Gen Z became addicted to excitatory content. Much like a cigarette is to nicotine, the cell phone is a delivery device for boundless brain candy content, and teens are taking every hit.

In 2022, the non-partisan think tank Pew Research Center quantified that Gen Zs spends more than six hours a day online, with over 40% of those teens online most of any given day. That leaves teens NOT doing what most of us spent our teen years doing – engaging others face to face and going out in friend groups to, as my father called it, “ram around town.” According to psychologist Erik Erikson, the psycho-social model of human development assigns defining an identity of self, normally within the context of others, as the critical task for the teen years. The pandemic is the culprit in the corner that exacerbated Gen Z’s tendency to participate in life via social media, rather than in the company of others. What that resulted in, according to any high school teacher you chance to ask, is delayed life skills, like resiliency, self-advocacy and problem-solving. Further, for many adults, particularly the introverts among us, distancing might have been exactly what we needed to simplify our busy lives, if only for a moment. But when teens emerged from their bedrooms where most of them chose to isolate, they did so with an even greater reliance on social media influencers to navigate their world. Perhaps, they even spent some time navigating to your social media, or at least accounts of some of your members – yes, including those accounts that may make the chief’s eyes roll into the back of his head.

### **READY TO CONTRIBUTE**

Interestingly, and importantly, Gen Z teens show strong interest in the well-being of others. Some departments found recruitment through school districts to be the best way to assist students in demonstrating their altruistic nature. As Dr. Mary Jo Yannacone, superintendent of Springfield Township Schools in Pennsylvania, shared: “In my experience, students are always willing to put aside personal interests, such as their phones and social media contacts, for a purpose that is meaningful and serves others. Just this year, we have students volunteering at Oreland Firehouse, and several students are serving on a Township Planning Committee to develop walking, running and biking trails in Springfield Township.”

During the pandemic, when many volunteer organizations were shuttering doors, forward-thinking departments found themselves running introductory training in open parking lots and other social-distance-friendly venues to more teens than they had ever had. Now that opportunities have opened up again, and teens have a full menu of service options from which to choose and in order to set their resume apart in college, service academy, trade and employment post-graduation, department recruiters are likely trying to catch their attention on social media as the dominant recruitment and retention strategy. Gen Z won’t be visiting your department website or scrolling Facebook and Twitter. Rather, they’ll be on YouTube, TikTok and SnapChat, at least until the next great app catches their attention.

Fortunately for us, much of what our teens in the firehouse are researching is fire related. Recently, Aston Township Fire Department (Delaware County, Pennsylvania) Firefighter Tyler Pelligrino shared that while he’s often deep into social media, he’s most likely to be influenced by content from “FDIC, Nick Martin, and Live Rescue.” That’s solid research! Keep scrolling!

Additionally, ATFD Firefighter and Department President Sean Joyce commented that he was initially frustrated by one group of teens in the station, only to be surprised by their response. “All three of them standing in silence on their

phones. I told them they should spend time going over the apparatus and learning where everything is," he said. "I was quickly corrected and shown that they had made a Quizlet study guide on their phones that listed each compartment on our engine and what was stored inside."

Social media aside, brain development is not complete until the frontal lobe matures when a person is in their mid-20s. This prefrontal cortex is commonly referred to as the "area of sober second thoughts" and is the part of the brain responsible for executive functioning skills like sustaining attention, interpreting information, and contextualizing emotions. Lacking that, adolescents rely heavily on their limbic system, a part of the brain responsible for emotions and memory. What does this mean? They have an emotional memory for everything, and a maturing ability to think things through logically. Plus, they are more likely to be impulsive, reactive, easily excited, and hard to keep focused.

Whatever is presented online is experienced by that adolescent brain with the tools at disposal. In some ways, this is ideal. They are ready for a challenge, looking for a rush of adrenaline, the chance to be a hero, and an opportunity to prove themselves as belonging, deserving of a seat at the kitchen table. Despite any assumptions we may have of Gen Z, at heart they are like those that came before them – ready to work.

As Montanan author Norman Maclean accounts in his text "Young Men and Fire," about the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire that claimed the lives of 13 young smokejumpers, "they referred affectionately to all fires they jumped as 'ten o'clock fires' as if they already had them under control before they jumped. They were still so young they hadn't learned to count the odds and to sense they might owe the universe a tragedy." What teens are not always capable of considering are outcomes and consequences of their behavior.

## **WELCOME GEN Z**

So, what should fire department leadership understand about their youngest recruits and members? First, attention should be paid to the simple fact that they are susceptible to influence, both positive and negative. To center teens, and keep them engaged in learning skills, they need face-to-face interaction with adults and peers as much to learn the skills as to learn about themselves and their competencies. Noting that they come to the firehouse with the expectation that training will be meaningful and relevant, it is imperative that leadership holds their attention through dynamic activities that provide them opportunity to work directly and in partnership with others; verbalize their knowledge and ask questions both one on one and in larger group settings; and receive feedback that is constructive and guided so that they are able to grow in order to meet your expectations and earn that spot on the truck.

Remember, they are at the key stage in life for developing that sense of self. Why shouldn't it be within the context of the fire service? If Gen Z shows up at the firehouse doors, consider your department fortunate. They have elected to fight their social media addiction in pursuit of something bigger than themselves. Let them in and, to keep them there, commit to meeting teens where they are. There is simply no video game or Reel that adequately replicates the feel of the pure power of spreaders in your hands, the smell of a saw at work, or the touch of a victim rescued. Better yet, post their work on your social media, as you will certainly attract who your department is, and who it wants to be.

## **THE STUFF WE BUY FOR OUR FIREFIGHTERS**

### ***The Traffic Safety Cone Has Been In Use For Decades – Here's How It Got Reinvented***

Laura Neitzel



The original rubber traffic cone was invented by Charles D. Scanlon, a painter in the street painting department of the City of Los Angeles. He identified problems with the large wooden barricades then in use to identify "dangerous spots in the highway such as those caused by repairs, etc."

He noted that the large wooden barriers could cause hazard to automobiles that accidentally struck them. Scanlon's safety marker, granted a patent in 1943, was designed to return to an upright position when struck by a glancing blow.



Advantages of Scanlon's rubber safety markers were higher visibility, resilience when struck, ease of deployment and ability to be stacked for storage. But even some 80 years after Scanlon's patent, there was still room for improvement, especially in the area of public safety, where traffic cones are deployed to create a protected workspace for emergency personnel responding to roadway or roadside incidents.

### **THE IMPORTANT ROLE TRAFFIC CONES PLAY IN PUBLIC SAFETY**

According to the Emergency Responder Safety Institute, 11 fire and EMS workers were struck and killed by vehicles while working roadway incidents in 2022. Law enforcement officers, tow operators, road service technicians and transportation workers accounted for an additional 39 fatalities.

While there is an entire genre of materials dedicated to educating the public to "move over and slow down" when emergency personnel (and road workers) are present, inattentive or speeding drivers and lack of visibility still contribute to accidents and fatalities. Just ask Rachel Carcell, a captain in the Geneva-on-the-Lake Fire Department in Ohio.

The population of the town on the shores of Lake Erie, dubbed "Ohio's first summer resort," balloons in summer with tourists and a motorcycle rally.

When an accident occurs, it's likely at least one of the town's narrow two lanes of travel needs to be channelized to make the scene safer for EMS responders working with patients, says Carcell. "But people don't always pay attention, which means you have to pay more attention to yourself."

EMS workers need to be able to focus on the patient – not on roadway safety – which is why they deserve every tool at their disposal to get drivers' attention and make roadway emergency scenes more visible.

This is where traffic cones come back into the story.

### **RUBBER TRAFFIC CONES ARE GREAT, BUT...**

Traffic channelizing devices are critical to making a safe space for emergency personnel to respond to a roadway incident. While the ubiquitous rubber traffic cone is a vast improvement over the wooden barricade, the same challenges Scanlon's design partially overcame with respect to wooden barriers – portability, resilience, visibility and storage space – still persist, especially in emergency response operations.

A key shortcoming for emergency responders is the amount of room a stack of cones takes up in an already-cramped ambulance or apparatus. They also are heavy and cumbersome to deploy when you have a whole stack of them, especially because sometimes they stick together, says Carcell.

Another shortcoming with traditional rubber cones is the cost of replacement. While rubber cones can pop back upright after a glancing blow, a direct hit renders them unusable and unrepairable. Just look at any highway construction zone and you're likely to see at least one fallen, mangled cone.

Traffic cones are essential for emergency responder safety, so replacing them (despite unexpected and unwelcome costs) is important.

### **BUILDING A BETTER TRAFFIC SAFETY CONE**

The old saying, "Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door," speaks to both the power of innovation and the challenge of improving on an existing product widely in use.

PSS, an Ohio-based company whose mission is to make travel safer, took on the mousetrap challenge of improving the safety marker with a new design.

"The design was actually conceived by a Florida law enforcement officer," explained David McKee, director of marketing and government relations for PSS. "He found a new way to store cones in his vehicle that would be quick to deploy as well as trunk friendly where you could actually carry them without sacrificing a lot of space."

PSS worked with the officer for over two years to fine-tune the FirstGard foldable traffic safety cone. The resulting product solves some of the annoyances inherent in rubber traffic cones – like bulkiness and irreparability – while improving emergency scene visibility.

At 34 inches in diameter and a height of 28.75 inches, FirstGard's tripod-shaped design has a larger footprint than traditional cones. This not only commands more conspicuous road surface area, but the vivid, safety-orange base along with highly-reflective white bands – made with industry-leading 3M retroreflective sheeting – enhances visibility in a range of lighting conditions day and night.

FirstGard is the first cone on the market with a large amount of space dedicated to reflective white bands, a U.S. Department of Transportation requirement to increase night-time visibility.

Despite its larger footprint and larger surface area for 3M reflective sheeting, FirstGard is both lightweight and durable. Folding down to just 1 ½ inches in thickness, FirstGard cones use minimal storage space. A carrying bag holds five FirstGard cones for easy storage and deployment.

Another design improvement (and improvement for department budgets) is that the connecting hinge and pins are replaceable components. With a simple repair kit, FirstGard can be repaired if damaged, getting cones back in service quickly while saving money for cash-strapped departments.

### **PUTTING FIRSTGARD TO THE TEST**

Geneva-on-the-Lake FD was one of the first agencies to start using FirstGard cones.

"They were so easy to use," said Carcell. "You pull them out, unfold them, set them down and go to the next one. Pick up is also very easy. Just pick it up, fold it and stick it in the bag and it's done."

Another advantage is that the tripod design can serve a dual purpose: to protect emergency response crews and extend protection to water supply lines – another frequent casualty of inattentive or aggressive drivers.

Emergency responders need effective but easy-to-deploy tools that take away the often-difficult task of gaining a driver's attention so they can focus on providing care and recovery, clearing highway scenes quickly and getting traffic moving again. FirstGard is a valuable tool for doing just that, while keeping responders safe on the scene.

For more information on [FirstGard](#) and other traffic channelizing solutions, visit [PSS](#). At <https://pss-innovations.com/>

## **THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

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## **STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE:**

### **\*\*Leadership Principles for the Fire Service**

Justin Powers

Leadership for some individuals is a daunting task that often can fill a person with anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. Many individuals have failed to be good leaders because of this fact, which results in a stunt in personal growth and the organization's growth. It can be hard to be a good leader, which is why a good leader's legacy will live on for years after they have completed their tenure.

Leadership is not for the faint of heart. It comes with massive responsibility, and when things go right, it is gratifying; when things go wrong, it can lead one to complete isolation. No matter the organization or industry, all leaders are viewed by their members through a microscope, sometimes with good intentions and sometimes with harmful intentions. Leadership is unique in that there will always be some form of criticism, and there will always be people who will think that they can do a better job and dissect your every move, but this is to be expected.

### **What Leadership Is**

For years, I have believed that leadership is the act of getting others to move in one direction for one common purpose to accomplish one common goal. This definition isn't entirely incorrect but doesn't capture leadership's true meaning. If leaders commit to this mindset, they will see success, but it won't be a long-lasting success and, in time, the efforts of the organization to accomplish its goal will lead to exhausted members. Leaders need to adjust their mindset from this way of thinking and instead commit to the true meaning of leadership, which is to inspire the men and women in their command to be the best version of themselves both on and off duty.

I believe that the ultimate reason for the fire service is to protect life and property from hazards and to serve its community members. This is why many brave men and women are attracted to this job. Still, years of committing themselves to this mission and constantly grinding themselves down while serving the community can lead to tired and burnt-out members who may lose the direction of the task, and rightfully so. This happens when leaders only focus on the finite details of the department.

When a fire department's overall performance is the only focus, its members can easily be lost in the shuffle. In turn, leaders must invest some of that focus on their members on a more personal level. Authentic leadership will convince those they are leading to believe in themselves and bring out their untapped potential.

Having someone in your corner who believes in you can be one of the most powerful motivational tools ever used. This is only magnified when that person who believes in you is a leader in your fire department. So, leadership is more than motivating a group to accomplish a task in a certain amount of time. Instead, leadership is the ability to encourage individuals to believe in themselves and lead them down a path of growing into someone they never thought possible.

Another critical aspect of leadership that not everyone follows is that leaders must lead by example. This little rule has been taught to us since an early age and has stayed true throughout the years. While this concept is not hard to comprehend, it's probably one of the most challenging concepts to implement in one's life. But to influence growth or change in a fire department, you will need the trust and support of its members, and the fastest way to accomplish this is by showing them and not telling them that you are committed as their leader—emphasis on showing and not telling.

Often leaders believe that they need to start barking orders to influence others, but this is far from the truth. Leaders must influence the people around them by their behavior and not by orders. If a leader commits to be better and, in turn, inspire others to do the same, then the fire department will become a great organization. I will admit that this seems impossible at times because we are all humans, including our leaders, but this should be the goal every leader should strive for. As I said, leaders are human too, and they are allowed to mess up, but when these times happen, it is much easier to get their members' forgiveness and grace when the leader has gained their trust.

Implementing the following principles into your life will allow you to build a relationship of trust and confidence among your members and, in turn, begin inspiring them to become the best they can be.

### **Six Principles**

During my schooling in fire science and my short time working in the fire service in a civilian position, I have been fascinated by how fire department leadership works. While I do not hold a senior leadership role in the fire department, I have been lucky enough to be surrounded by phenomenal leaders I have watched closely and from whom I gained crucial leadership knowledge. This also included leaders from past military experience and, most importantly, my personal life. There are six principles that I define as crucial parts of good leadership. These principles are invaluable tools that I try to use in my personal and professional life.

#### ***#1: To be a good leader, you must first be a good follower.***

Look back at your career as a first responder and even before then. Ask yourself, was I good at following? I'm not talking about following the crowd or trends within the department but rather following orders, rules, and regulations set forth by your organization. Being told what to do or how to do it can be difficult at times, and the difficulty is only amplified when the orders are coming from a leader who is not respected. Nonetheless, it is still an order that must be followed.

Often, especially in today's society, we believe that it is appropriate to speak our minds when assigned orders or tasks that don't make sense to us. But the reality of the situation is that it doesn't need to make sense to us, and it is our responsibility to carry out and complete these assignments in a timely manner. If you are being told to do something that violates the rules and regulations or is unsafe, then, by all means, speak up, but outside of this, there should be no reason for arguing or excuses on why you can't deliver.

Some can easily follow, and the following can be pretty difficult for others. Individuals in every fire department struggle with loosening the reigns of control, partly because they don't trust their leaders and, in more severe cases, they don't trust anyone else. This attitude is cancer to team development and can lead to several issues, but a good way of curing this disease is to set an example of how to be good followers. For example, good leaders can delegate responsibilities and decision-making roles from time to time. But, great leaders can trust those they placed in leadership roles and follow them once decisions have been made.

#### ***#2: Leadership isn't about ability but rather responsibility and accountability.***

How often have you heard someone described as a "natural born leader"? I hate this saying. I hate it because it gives an excuse to the ones who don't want to lead. Instead of putting in the work and effort to become good leaders within their department, they hide behind this saying and make the easy excuse that they weren't born to lead. Don't get me wrong, some individuals are charismatic and outgoing and may find it easier to get people to follow them, but that isn't the mark

of leadership. The essential characteristics of outstanding leadership are responsibility and accountability. True leaders believe in responsibility and accountability for others, most notably themselves.

Taking ownership of bad situations is terrifying at times. When you stand up and say that the mission's failure was because of your actions, it feels like you are putting yourself in the hot seat. We don't know how others will react, depending on how big the failure is. We don't know if it will cost us our reputation, job, or career. So, when things go south and a mission fails, it's much easier to point fingers and blame others.

This principle separates the true leader from the ones who are just playing a part. As a leader, one of your main objectives is to convince the men and women under you to follow you in completing a mission. As we all know, this doesn't always happen. Sometimes, details will get missed, tasks will not get completed, and the mission as a whole will fail miserably. When this happens, you must take 100% responsibility and accountability for your team's actions. It's simply on you. As a leader, you failed to inspire your team to be great.

### ***#3: Leaders will believe in structure and discipline.***

Structure and discipline shouldn't be foreign concepts to fire service members. The importance of following orders and performing one's duties within the limits of department regulations is taught at the lowest level while cadets attend the academy. Being disciplined and following the structure of one's department increase the chances of survival in a hazardous industry.

Leaders must ensure that they foster an environment of compliance among their members regarding the department's structure and discipline. The only authentic way this can be done is by the leaders submitting themselves to the exact requirements. The quickest way for structure and discipline to collapse in an organization is by its leadership not holding itself to the same standards it sets for its members.

But one must understand that when they build an environment of structure and discipline, they must also create a personal relationship with their members. An authoritarian management style will not foster an environment of inclusion and respect. The frontline worker will feel taken advantage of, and productivity and attitudes will suffer negatively. I once heard a presenter about family dynamics say one true statement, "Rules without relationships with result in rebellion." Your fire department is your family; just like any family, the individuals below you will carry on your legacy, good or bad. To have a strong and committed family who is united and working together to accomplish a mission, you, the leaders, must have a personal relationship with them.

Don't challenge your department members with authority but rather challenge them with affirmation, challenge them with growth, and challenge them with expectations. The only way to challenge them is by developing a relationship of trust and value between them and your leadership.

### ***#4: Authentic leadership begins when you are alone.***

What type of person are you when no one is looking? Do you stick to the morals and principles you claim are essential when no one else is present? Do you believe what you teach should be in practice alone or in private? Often, we think of leadership as just another aspect of our job. When the shift is over, we usually hang up the leadership traits of our job with our equipment, only to return to it on our next shift. We must correct this mindset and ensure that if you work in public service, you have a leadership responsibility during working hours and, most importantly, outside of the firehouse as well.

To take the concept one step further, you are not only a leader within your community while off duty but you are also still the leader when you are alone. True leaders don't simply check out but rather instill the principles of leadership into their life to ensure that mindset is the authentic way of life vs. just playing a part. I understand that there will be times individuals will slip up and violate their principles, but the intent or attitude that one holds is the crucial aspect of it all. So, what is your attitude toward being a leader? We can all act the part, some better than others, but the mark of the true leader will live to be the core principles while no one is looking and when there are no accolades connected to one's actions.

### ***#5: Good leaders operate by a code of loyalty.***

Loyalty is an excellent trait within a fire department, but it can sometimes be a two-edged sword. If balanced correctly and equally applied to all department members, loyalty will create an environment of trust and inclusion. Still, if it is out of balance and only granted to a few, it will do the opposite and create a toxic working environment. But the essential

part of loyalty that all fire departments must be taught and understand is that loyalty doesn't just apply to its members but, more importantly, to the ones it serves.

The best advice I have heard regarding operating and organization is to "treat others how you want to be treated." In the business world, that means the leaders in the business need to treat the customers the way they want to be treated, and then they need to treat their employees the way they want to be treated, and then their supplies and so on. We often forget that concept, especially in today's society, and when many fire department members are treated with disrespect or detestation.

I have witnessed multiple occasions when citizens have cursed and yelled hateful things and displayed vulgar gestures at department vehicles responding to calls. This type of behavior is sad and something that most civilians, including myself, wouldn't think would happen to our first responders, but it does. We must understand that just because this hatred occurs doesn't mean it is shared among all citizens.

It is the leader's job to tune out and help its member tune this white noise to remind the department and focus on what is truly important, and that is to treat our patients and community the way that we would want to be treated and, most importantly, to stay loyal to our community members and ensure them that during their times of emergency or tragedy, the fire department is there to help.

#### ***#6: There are different levels of leadership.***

Leadership roles don't only exist at the fire administration level but are present throughout the entire rank system of the fire department. I understand that the leadership role of a fire chief will look different than the leadership role of a firefighter, but they are both leadership positions and both should be treated as such. Never underestimate the power of influence you have while working around others; attitude is contagious. It can be positive or negative; ultimately, it is up to you in how you choose to affect others.

I am sure probationary firefighters don't feel like leaders when they are newly assigned to the firehouse, but the truth is that this is their first test of leadership in a career within the fire service. A good probie will do the job, won't argue, won't make excuses, and will go the extra mile to ensure responsibilities are met. These traits that make an excellent probie firefighter are the same traits that make an excellent leader. And when this type of personality is exposed to others, it can influence many others around them in a positive way. Hence, no matter your job or title, always look at yourself as a leader in your department and start building these leadership traits into yourselves and the other younger members early on in their careers.

Leadership is not easy. These principles and traits don't come to us naturally, and it takes effort and commitment to instill them into one's life. Although this can be daunting, it is essential to remember that it is not impossible. I'm sure many fire department leaders are not well-liked or don't have the support of their members. If you fall into this category, ask yourself if you are being the change you want to see.

Outstanding leadership starts with the individual, and the result will influence those around them to do the same. Positively impact those around you, teach, encourage, and mentor the ones you have been charged with leading. Build a legacy that will outlast you and pass down the wisdom and leadership principles you have learned throughout your career. The mark of a true leader is to make those around them become the best version of themselves.

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### ***\*\*The 2020 NVFC Retention Research Report***

Both chiefs and commissioners need to take a few minutes to page through this report and listen to what members of volunteer departments are saying, what we are doing WRONG, what we are doing RIGHT and thus painting a clear picture of what we need to START doing and what we need to STOP doing. Please take the time to read this and think about it in terms of YOUR department.



NVFC-Retention-Research-Report-FINAL





# **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](http://www.westcrescentfire.com) or by emailing Fire District Secretary Arthur Hunsinger at [wcfdsec@nycap.rr.com](mailto:wcfdsec@nycap.rr.com)

**Please send application, cover letter & resume to Arthur Hunsinger via email at [wcfdsec@nycap.rr.com](mailto: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!

You drop something when you were younger, you just picked it up. When you're older and you drop something, you stare at it for a bit contemplating if you actually need it anymore.

## OFFICERS OF THE CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS

### 2023 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

**President:** Tom Rinaldi, Commissioner Stillwater/Saratoga

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**Chaplain:** Fred Richards

**Legal Council:** Greg Serio

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

*Fire District Officials include Commissioners, Treasurers, Secretaries and Chief*

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

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

## 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](http://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: New Contact for Penflex, Nicole Meeker**

**We want to welcome LaBella Engineering to our list of business partners.**

Business Partner Applications Available At: [WWW.AFDCA.ORG](http://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](mailto: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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*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](mailto: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, 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