



CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

YOUR FIRE DISTRICT NEWS SOURCE

JULY 15TH, 2023

EDITOR - TOM RINALDI

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[Information to make you think and to learn from others!!](#)

THE CAPITAL CALENDAR:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

August, No Meeting

Thursday September 14th, General Membership Meeting 7PM, All are invited or to zoom in

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

Thursday November 9th, 7:00pm **General Membership**, dinner served at 6PM/Elections

December, **No Meeting**

Saturday, January 6th **General Membership Breakfast Meeting 9am**, 2024 Organizational Meeting

Printable Calendar – See Last Page

CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOC. NEWS:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

[Secretary and Treasure of CAFDA](#)

Terry Briscoe has been appointed by the Board as the **Secretary** of the Capital Area Association, she can be reached at: caaofd@gmail.com

Tony Hill has been appointed by the Board as **Treasurer** and can be reached at : cafdatreasurer@gmail.com, [CAFDA PO BOX 42, EAST SCHODACK, NY 12063](#)

[Long Way to Travel to General Membership Meetings? Join remotely using Zoom!](#)

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

[CAFDA FALL WORKSHOP: Put it on your calendar](#)

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

SUBJECTS TO BE COVERED:

Harassment Challenges – Discipline as a result of Harassment Charges

How to SHOP for insurance, What Coverage Should We Have?

Removal of Fire Company Members

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

[Training for Fire District Officials Coming to the Capital Area Fire Districts Association Both Members and Non-Members- Mark Your Calendars-More Details to Follow](#)

- [Tentative - Commissioner Training](#) Dates and locations for 2024 being developed and will be announced shortly.
- [COMING IN SEPTEMBER OF 2023:](#)

- **PESH vs. NFPA, Fact vs. Myth** – what fire districts and fire company officers need to know about law vs. standards, more details to follow.
- **Secretary Training for Fire District** secretaries coming in September of 2023, more details to follow.
- **Its Taxpayer's Money, Financial Responsibilities for Fire District Officials**, 12 hour seminar from the Office of the State Comptroller and others, more details to follow.
- **CAFDA Conference**, Late April 2024, Location and details being developed, details to be released when they are available.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IF NOTHING ELSE READ THE ARTICLES PRECEDED BY**

CAPITAL SHORTS:

- **Let's have some fun, A Day At The Races**, in Historic Saratoga. Everyone is invited to attend on **Friday August 11th**. Free Entry Ticket to the Track, \$10.00 Concession voucher, picnic lunch and beverages provided at the paddock picnic tables. (\$15.00 to park) Email Secretary Briscoe if you wish to attend: caaofd@gmail.com.
- Our sincere sympathies to the Whittam family on the passing of Fire News Editor, photographer extraordinaire and Ex-Captain of the Terryville Fire Department, Dennis Whitman, who passed away on July 7th after a 14-year battle with cancer. Many of us knew Dennis from many fire service shows we attended over the years, we were always greeted with a friendly smile. Dennis also published some stunning wildlife photos. Rest easy my friend.
- **Fire District Election Schedule and Budget Schedule on Last Page of Bulletin!**
- 26TH Annual **Halfmoon Fire Co Golf Tournament**, Saturday **August 5th**, for more information email Golf@halfmoonfire.org
- **Fleury Risk Management** (497 Public Management Group VFBL Insurance) is running a charity golf tournament this year for **Operation At-Ease** on **August 14th at the Edison Club in Rexford**. In case you aren't familiar with Operation At-Ease, they are located in Niskayuna and train shelter animals to assist veterans and first responders with PTSD and other lite tasks. 100% of the proceeds for the golf tournament will go to them. Below is a link to register, sponsor, or donate. We appreciate any assistance you can provide to bring attention to the event and Operation at Ease. **REGISTER HERE:** <https://fleury-risk-management-charity-golf-tournament-2023.perfectgolfevent.com/>
- Firefighter Contamination Reduction and Cancer Prevention Training, **July 24th 6:30PM** at Rexford Fire Station.
- The State Comptroller has announced that the property tax levy growth will be capped at 2% for 2024 for local governments. The allowable tax levy growth will be limited to 2% for a third consecutive year. DiNapoli's office calculated the 2024 **inflation factor at 6.26%** for those local governments with a calendar fiscal year, **well above the 2% allowable levy increase, and indicative of the higher costs facing these localities.**

STATE ASSOCIATION NEWS:

WWW.AFDNYS.ORG

State Fire Districts Announces a move back to a Fall Annual Meeting

Another change of venue, the Fall Conference for 2024 will be held at Turning Stone on a Sunday - Wednesday time frame October 20 – 23 in 2024.

TRAINING APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR ENTIRE BOARD/SECRETARY/TREASURER

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



Upcoming Coffee with Commissioners

[Saturday, July 22nd @ 9:00am Firefighter Behavioral Health with Jill Holland](#)

[Thursday, August 31st @ 7:00pm Fire District Budget Process](#)

[Saturday, September 23rd @9:00am Current Trends and Concerns](#)

Click on Each Announced Date to Register

THE LATEST FROM ALBANY

The 2023 legislative session has ended, our friends in government didn’t do much for the fire service this session. The only bone we were thrown was the funding in the budget for infrastructure and to pay out stipends, otherwise they couldn’t even pass legislation on lithium ion batteries, although the bills were defective. Remember that bills introduced for the 2023 session will carry over to the 2024 session when it begins in January.

Consult the Score Card for the status of other fire service related legislation.

THE ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR FIRE DISTRICT ELECTIONS

Fire District Affairs

Fire districts conduct their own elections. The county board of elections does not conduct fire district elections. It provides voter registration records for use by fire districts, and it provides access to voting machines for use at the election. It also provides training for personnel on the use and operation of these machines. The Board of Fire Commissioners is required to appoint a local election board to conduct its annual and special elections. The members of that election board must be registered voters who reside in the fire district. Elected officers of the fire district are not permitted to serve as members of the fire district board of elections. The Fire District Secretary assists the local board of elections by securing voter registration records from the county board of elections, sending out all required notifications for the election, preparing the ballot to be used at the election, acquiring voting machines from the county board of elections when the Board of Fire Commissioners has directed that voting machines be used for the election, and submitting the canvass or report of election to the election board for signature at the conclusion of the election to certify the result. The Secretary then files the report with the town clerks of all towns within which the district is situated. The election board conducts the election based upon provision in the Town Law. The Town Law provides very limited rules for the procedure to be followed by the election board in conducting the election, The Election Law provides very extensive rules to guide the county boards of election when they conduct the elections assigned to them. The Election Law by its terms does not pertain to the conduct of fire district elections other than to provide access to fire districts to voter registration records and election machines. To address this lack of guidance we have recommended that fire districts consider a adopting a set of local rules and regulations to govern how their elections will be conducted by their election boards. We have placed a draft of a policy providing election procedures and a policy for challenged voters on our website [<https://afdsny.org/>] at the Sample Forms and Policies tab in the Member Center for your consideration. You must be logged in to access that tab. We would suggest that you carefully review these model documents and consider them for your district. Please read the model documents and make necessary changes with the assistance of your local counsel to conform them to the needs of your district. If you adopt a new policy to govern the conduct of your elections, you should post the policy at the election site and make certain to review the policy with your election board. If there is a local policy that governs some aspects of your election, your election board needs to be trained on it and have a working understanding of the policy.

For information only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. The opinions expressed are the opinions of the individual author at the time the facts were presented and based on the law then applicable. The information contained in these opinions is not guaranteed to be up to date. The information provided is not

legal advice. Since legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case, and laws are constantly changing, nothing on this site should be used as a substitute for the advice of competent legal counsel. The authors assume no responsibility to any person who relies on information contained herein and disclaim all liability in respect to such information. You should not act upon information in this publication without seeking professional counsel from an attorney admitted to practice in your jurisdiction.

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE:

*****The 10 Commandments of Being a Good Fire Chief***

William Beck

Looking back at my first years after my previous promotions (medical officer, lieutenant, battalion chief), I could see the natural progression from optimism and excitement to normalcy and routine. Normalcy and routine aren't bad things. They are a natural transition that comes from hands-on experience and education.

That said, there is something very special to that "new" feeling of optimism and excitement in the first days and weeks of a new position, and we should hold on to it as long as we can.

Similar to this is the career bell curve. It starts with the first third of a firefighter's career, in need of experience and education, and it must be spent learning from everyone. Even bad examples can teach good lessons. The bell curve should be as sharp as the firefighter can make it, becoming a sponge in learning the job.

The second third of a firefighter's career sits at the top of the curve and should be the firefighter's most productive years. The individual must still ask questions, but now he or she starts to answer questions of others, too. Firefighters who are in the second third of the process become a critical learning tool for new firefighters. Because they just got done asking the questions themselves, they are the closest peers to be able to answer the questions of the new members.

The final third of the bell curve is represented by the senior members — the "been there, done that" members. These members answer more questions than they ask and have the most understanding of the department's policies, procedures and culture. Supposedly, they have all of the answers and experience, too. This simply isn't the case. Furthermore, personally, I like asking questions, and I like doing the work, so I'm not ready to be pushed down the curve completely.

This motivated me to write these 10 "commandments" to be a good fire chief. I won't be a new battalion chief for long.

1. Thou shalt be honest

This seems so easy on first consideration. Guess what, it's easy on second and third consideration as well. As a new fire chief, you must put all information in one of three categories when the line starts to ask questions.

Category 1 is "I know the answer. Here it is." Direct information, from the horse's mouth, stops, or at least slows, the gossip that's going around the kitchen table.

Category 2 is "I know, but I can't talk about it." With this one, you have to set the boundary, so that once you say it, the conversation must change.

Category 3 is "I have no idea." This is the most difficult one for the line to believe, but over time, they will learn to believe you, particularly if you are diligent with Categories 1 and 2.

2. Thou shalt remember your engine days

Riding the seat as a company officer probably is/was the dream job of "rookie you." On that seat, you probably got your first taste of crew integrity and understood that the company was your responsibility, and you learned to trust some of the stuff that you read in all of those books. You also began to see that, as great as your job, your crew and your department are, you could make them better. That optimism has a tendency to fade. Don't let it.

3. Thou shalt remember to train and to be seen struggling at it

Confession time: I always thought of myself as a boat guy. Part of being a boat guy is being a "trailer guy." I can back up a boat trailer at the ramp like a champ, unless I can't. During a recent training, I couldn't. Three engine companies, a medic unit and the department training officer watched me take three attempts to successfully get the trailer in the water. I finally got it. With the boat loaded, I pulled the boat out and opened the door of my vehicle to a rousing round of applause. I accepted the aforementioned applause, a little embarrassed, but human. Remember, as a new chief, you still are human.

4. Thou shalt show them when possible, tell them when necessary

As a chief, not every day requires a white shirt. Hopefully, you learned a lot of techniques when you were riding that engine. Show the line how to do it. After that 3 a.m., fully involved house fire, when you have two hours of reports to

complete, go out and help to wash the dirty hose. Get up on the hosebed to load it. Those crews have a chance to salvage some sleep, you don't. Lean into it, and watch a spark reignite in that crew.

5. Thou shalt keep an open ear with subordinates

Be honest, you have sat at the kitchen table and listened to the senior blue shirts solve every problem that the fire service ever had, real or imaginary. You even might have added to the solutions. What we learn after getting the gold badge, though, is that those black-and-white answers conveniently gloss over all of the gray areas. That said, we still can learn from these sessions. As a chief, sometimes we are bogged down in the gray areas and lose focus of what is most important. Listen to those conversations and remember that, sometimes, the most important action that a chief can take is to simply acknowledge the effort in brainstorming for ideas.

6. Thou shalt not always be the smartest person in the room

Diversity is a strength, and it comes with many different experiences. Listen to those experiences. As a second-in engine to a house fire with reports of people inside, I once witnessed the first-in officer walk right past an obviously distraught woman in a bathroom, covered in soot, crying for his attention. Do you believe that she could be considered an expert in the field of that house and the people who are inside of it? We run into more subtle examples of this every day in the fire service. Maybe that new recruit used to be a utility line person and probably has some firsthand insight that the entire department could learn from. Maybe the firefighter who left an accounting job to be a firefighter can assist with some budget issues. Find your experts and use them.

7. Thou shalt cultivate your management skills, supervision skills and leadership skills

These are three distinct skills, and as a new chief, you will be lucky to be good at two of them. That isn't good enough. You must be good at all three.

Use of good management skills at the start of the shift allows you to at least set an outline for your day. It addresses the most important jobs of the day and prioritizes them.

Some of the best supervision skills that you will learn are what I call "ninja supervision." Simply put, it's listening actively to radio traffic, it's observing personnel interactions from a distance and it's critiquing reports. News flash: It's human nature to be on your best behavior when you know the boss is watching. It also is human nature to be nervous when the boss is watching, so don't appear to be watching.

Here is the beauty of your position: You can delegate while you learn the first two skills, but you can't do that when it comes to leadership. Leadership is learned through everything that you did to get where you are right now.

8. Thou shalt know when the white helmet can come off

If members ask you to play golf with them, do it, but not every time.

This chief gig is special. There must be a division somewhere between the staff and the line. You must keep that in mind, as do they. However, it doesn't have to be an impenetrable line. You must find the balance. Too stiff, and you appear cold and uncaring. Too loose, and you lose the credibility of the position.

9. Thou shalt expect more but acknowledge enough

I had a childhood friend who was super intelligent and another one who struggled. One would get yelled at for bringing home a B on his report card. The other got ice cream for Cs.

Was the fire extinguished? Did the victim survive the extrication without need for amputation? Did every responder go home after the shift? These all are very good things that must be acknowledged as successful calls. If you believe that it could have gone better, training on it soon afterward is critical. It's important that crews realize that you aren't happy with C work but aren't scolding a B.

10. Thou shalt remember that if you fail the line, you fail

If you only remember one of these commandments, let it be this one. Let the line know that you work for them, that you work with them, that you work because of them. Watch them do more because of you.

MAKING IT WORK...WITH FEWER STAFF

Two NY Fire Departments, Two Apparatus, One Purchase

Fire Apparatus & Emergency Equipment

Matching Enforcer 107' Ascendant Ladders are headed to neighboring departments: Fayetteville Fire Department and Manlius Fire Department, in Onondaga County. The two villages collaborated to increase unity and to better their responses to their communities. ***These departments frequently respond together, have matching turnouts, equipment***

and policies so it was fitting to have identical apparatus. Due to the many long driveways and extended setbacks in both Fayetteville NY and Manlius NY, the single-axle was a critical feature on each Aerial Ladder.

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES.....ITS TAXPAYER'S MONEY!!

2024 Tax Cap At 2%, While The Inflation Factor Is At 6.26%...We Are Falling Behind!!!

The State Comptroller has announced that the property tax levy growth will be capped at 2% for 2024 for local governments. The allowable tax levy growth will be limited to 2% for a third consecutive year. DiNapoli's office calculated the 2024 ***inflation factor at 6.26%*** for those local governments with a calendar fiscal year, **well above the 2% allowable levy increase, and indicative of the higher costs facing these localities.**

The tax cap, which first applied to local governments and school districts in 2012, limits annual tax levy increases to the lesser of the rate of inflation or 2% with certain exceptions including a provision that allows municipalities to override the tax cap.

FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING AND BUDGET PROCESS

Fire District Affairs

The Annual Fire District Budget Hearing provided for by statute must be held this year on a day selected by the Board of Fire Commissioners in the third week of October of 2023. For purposes of setting a schedule we have selected Tuesday, October 17, 2023 as the date for the Budget Hearing held in 2023 to present the Annual Fire District Budget for 2024. However, if your Board of Fire Commissioners selects a day other than Tuesday in the third week of October to hold your Budget Hearing, you will need to set a schedule based upon that date. Many of the dates on the scheduled are set by counting backward from the date selected for the Budget Hearing. As the summer heats up the Fire District Treasurer and the Board of Fire Commissioners should start taking a hard look at the state of fire district finances and budget activity in the various budget categories year to date. They should start considering the requests submitted by the Chief of the fire department and fire district administrators for 2023 and 2024. They should look to the Office of the State Comptroller for the announcement of what the real property tax levy cap will be for 2024. That information is usually announced in mid-July. If the Board has or intends to implement ambulance billing in 2023 or 2024 it should consider ambulance service costs and projected revenue as a factor in the development of the 2024 Budget.

OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE -CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES!

OPPORTUNITIES:

*****Shared Structures: A Case Study In The Impact Of Automatic Mutual Aid***

Robert Rielage

At one point in the recent history of the American fire service, there was a push for consolidations of departments into a single department, primarily due to budgetary concerns, not service delivery. In some cases, it meant that several smaller departments might be integrated into one large department, perhaps on the county level.

It should be noted that in countless areas of this country, there are strong ties between their fire department and the community or communities they serve. In many cases, a community's independent identity is directly linked to the fire department of the same name. So how might those departments survive and maintain credible service levels?

One answer could be automatic aid – not just response into another's jurisdiction, but an agreement among several departments to use a common dispatch center; consistent training standards, including a credible Incident Command System; and an agreement to respond into one another's area on the initial dispatch. Such an agreement came together recently to pay dividends.

COMMON SOPS

Hamilton County, Ohio, surrounds the City of Cincinnati and has 29 additional cities, villages or townships covered by 20 fire departments or fire districts of all shape and sizes, from large multi-station departments to those with one station and a few square miles of response area.

While these are separate entities, the Hamilton County fire chiefs representing most of these departments have agreed to a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs), training standards and an automatic-aid agreement for response into other surrounding jurisdictions on a first-alarm assignment. These agreements cross both county and even state borders, with the understanding that the closest response to a fire may be from a neighboring department.

Here is an example of how the agreement worked on a recent call.

COMPLEX FIRE OPERATIONS

Early in June, the Forest Park (Ohio) Fire Department, along with three neighboring departments, were dispatched for a structure fire in the northwest area of the city. The initial report from a neighbor was that they had heard a loud boom and then could see flames coming from a neighbor's home.

The dispatch by the Hamilton County Communications Center (HCCC) included five engines, two ladders, a medic unit and two battalion chiefs.

Shortly after dispatch, the Communications Center relayed that a second caller thought there were still occupants in the structure, which showed heavy smoke and fire from the exterior. Still en route to the scene, Forest Park's Ladder 42 notified the other responding units on the fireground channel that they saw a heavy column of smoke from the area.

Colerain Township's Engine 109, with Lt. Steve May as the OIC, arrived first on the scene, and his initial size-up included these points:

- The residential structure was fully involved;
- All occupants were out of the structure;
- Active fire was not only in the initial structure but also on the Bravo and Delta side residential exposures;
- They were initiating command;
- They declared the incident a defensive fire and ordered a second-alarm assignment to be dispatched.

To add to these issues, the houses involved were located on a cul-de-sac, allowing only one way in or out for street access.

HCCC monitoring the fireground traffic, then began dispatching an additional five engines, two ladders, a second medic unit as well as several chief officers on their primary dispatch channel.

Engine 109 established a water supply and began controlling the main body of fire with its deluge nozzle. Engine 109's officer assigned the arriving Forest Park units (two engines and a ladder) to the Delta side exposure, adding that they needed to ensure that the residents were out of that structure.

At this point, a pole-to-house electrical power line failed between the residence of origin and the Bravo exposure, requiring a hazard zone to be set up in an already confined area of operation.

Colerain's Captain Shaun Stacy, acting as a battalion chief, assumed command from Engine 109 and re-emphasized that operations were in the defensive mode. He then assigned the remaining first-alarm assignment, Springdale and Fairfield's engines as well as North College Hill's quint, to the Bravo side exposure, then requested a Conditions, Actions, Needs (CAN) report from both the Alpha and Delta divisions.

Subsequent arriving chief officers were assigned to take over the Bravo and Delta divisions, as well as establishing a Charlie division to determine the fire conditions in the rear of all three of the involved structures.

The responding second-alarm assignment was staged on an adjacent street, and crews were assigned "on deck" and rotated with the initial-alarm assignment as needed.

It was quickly determined that the structure of origin had suffered some type of natural gas explosion and resulting fire, so command informed the HCCC that they needed both Duke Energy gas and electrical assistance to the scene. Duke response quickly handled the downed power line, eliminating that as a hazard for those operating on all three structures. Once the fires in the Bravo and Delta exposures were controlled, the Alpha residence gas fire was allowed to continue until the gas to that residence was shut off by a separate Duke Energy crew.

During these operations, the residents of the Bravo exposure repeatedly began to approach close to their residence trying to re-enter their home. A firefighter was assigned to ascertain what they needed, and then firefighters went inside, later telling the occupants that everything was fine. In their haste to leave, the residents had left their oven and stove on while cooking their evening dinner. The firefighters found a pan on the stove that had begun to fill the kitchen with smoke and quickly averted a potential kitchen fire.

Companies remained on the scene for several hours checking for any extension throughout the three structures.

POST-INCIDENT DEBRIEF

In the hot wash meeting afterwards, representatives from the departments involved voiced that the operation could only have been this successful because of their shared SOPs, a universally adopted Incident Command System, and a dedicated fire dispatcher assigned to the fireground channel to handle the additional requests or needs from command.

This incident was a prime example of how SOPs, coupled with an automatic-aid agreement, may become one method to help maintain a community's and fire department's identity while providing the benefits similar to that of a single amalgamated department.

[Gates Fire District Prepares Training For Amazon Warehouse](#)

VIDEO: As progress continues on the years-long construction of an Amazon warehouse facility in the Town of Gates, the fire department is preparing for how to best respond in the event of an emergency. Gates Fire District Assistant Chief Timothy Goole tells News 8 it's standard training for how to handle a call for various types of building structures, such as apartment complexes or offices. The Amazon fulfillment center, on the other hand, is a bit different. "The hazards that are unique to that is just the sheer size of the building and the footprint along with the influx of personnel that's going to be coming in and out of the building," Goole says. Once up and running, the site is expected to 'flex' in the number of employees in-house, anywhere from 1,500 to 2,000.

[N.Y. City, Town Officials Discuss Shared Fire Department](#)

Craig Fox

The town of Watertown is asking the city for help fighting fires. And the city council is willing to talk about the potential of sharing some services with the town.

On Monday night, council members informally agreed to begin a conversation with the town about the proposal. City Manager Kenneth A. Mix wanted to know whether it was something council members would be willing to pursue.

It's unclear exactly how the city fire department would provide the service and how much it would cost the town.

"Big questions need to be answered," Councilman Patrick J. Hickey said.

Some of those questions involve whether the city would be liable if a city firefighter was ever injured or died at a town fire scene, whether the firefighters union would agree to it and all the costs to the city.

"I'm not necessarily opposed to it but all the costs would have to be covered," Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith said.

The city now provides mutual aid on all calls in the town. They went out on 693 calls in 2022 and 357 so far this year, Hickey said.

The town department is looking to become a combination department that would include some paid firefighters supplemented by volunteers.

Having the city respond to fires would buy the town department time to get the positions filled.

The town department now has 35 firefighters, which is down from 39 in 2022, and the trend is going down. In 2017, the department had 68 firefighters.

The city would be dispatched to any major calls such as alarms, explosions and structure fires. The city would not be dispatched to every medical call.

[How One North Carolina Fire Department's Underwater Drone Is Changing Recovery Searches](#)

VIDEO: When someone goes missing at one of the Triangle's many lakes, the search process can be long and put first responders at risk as well, but the Wake Forest Fire Department is using the help of an underwater drone to get the job done faster. Firefighter Korey Floyd said the department has been using the technology for two years and has assisted in searches across the state. "Without this, you have to wait for a dive team to come and with a dive team, you're limited on personnel and also the capability of what they can do," Floyd said. Earlier this week, the underwater drone helped recover the body of a man who went missing after an accident during a severe thunderstorm on Falls Lake. Floyd said the drone allows for longer searches, in deeper water and more extreme temperatures.

[CHALLENGES:](#)

[Poor Reimbursement Drives Jeannette \(PA\) EMS to Shut Down After 63 Years](#)

Haley Daugherty-The Tribune Review

Jeannette EMS announced that the ambulance service will be shutting down Monday night after 63 years.

The department will cease operations at 7 p.m., citing poor reimbursement rates from insurance companies, according to a Facebook post on the service's page. The post added that Jeannette EMS is "sadly not the first service to have this happen to us and we will unfortunately not be the last."

They urged people to speak with their government representatives about formulating a better plan for EMS services. A plan is in place for neighboring services to provide ambulance coverage for the time being until a more solidified plan is put in place, the department said.

According to Bud Mertz, Westmoreland County director of public safety, surrounding municipalities are aware of the situation.

"We just want to reassure everybody that if an emergency call comes in, the nearest ambulance service will be alerted," Mertz said. "The City of Jeannette wants the nearest available ambulance to answer the call and that's what we're trying to make happen. We're working closely with the municipalities to make sure that this happens."

Different ambulance services may respond, depending on where an emergency call comes from, Mertz said.

"On one side of the city we have Penn Township and Mutual Aid is on the other side," Mertz said. "It will just depend on who is closest to the call and who is available."

Amy Highlands, Jeannette EMS station manager said that they do not have further comment.

****I'm a Volunteer Firefighter. We're Not Ready for What's Coming.**

Mike Cole

This week's floods were yet another wake-up call.

My fire-rescue pager went off at 5:45 p.m. Monday, summoning me to respond to a flooded residence. As soon as we'd finished pumping that out, we were "toned" to another storm-related rescue call, power lines down and sparking in the rain. I worked all night, only to wake to the news that flash flooding had devastated not only the Hudson Valley where I volunteer as a fire-rescue operator, resulting in one death, but also much of New England. In Vermont, floods swamped the capital and forced responders to rescue at least 117 people from their homes and vehicles.

This natural disaster is the type we can expect more frequently as climate change advances, and it's not alone. As of June 2, insurance giants State Farm and Allstate announced they would no longer issue home insurance policies in California. The main reason? Increasing threat of wildfires, brought on by climate change.

The majority of those responding to these climate disasters, from floods to hurricanes, to fires, are volunteers. Volunteers provide more than 70 percent of the fire and rescue service in this country. In New York state, outside of urban areas, that number jumps to 93 percent. When you remove the "hybrid" departments that mix both paid personnel (usually in the more technically demanding positions, like drivers for the rigs who can also operate the complex pumps) and volunteers, less than 10 percent of fire services in America are provided by "career" firefighters—paid personnel who dedicate themselves to this critical discipline full-time.

If you live in a city, where firefighters tend to be salaried, this may seem strange, but you notice the rarity of paid firefighters as soon as you leave town. I serve in a volunteer department within commuter distance of New York City. I previously worked as a volunteer in Metairie, Louisiana, just outside the New Orleans city limits.

For most firefighters and rescue operators, it's a part-time gig, squeezed into the rare free hours in our wildly busy lives. We carry pagers or do shift work, turning from our demanding jobs and family obligations at a moment's notice to wrestle into our gear, remember our training, and go to work. Fire-rescue work is intensely technical, complex, and intricate. To do it well, you need to know everything from fluid dynamics to chemistry, details of building construction and the mechanics of airflow, how to operate a huge range of gear from hoses to lights to pumps to a bewildering array of hand tools. You have to remember how to cut, pry, patch wounds, calm and transport victims, use proper radio protocol, tie knots (yes, we use knots like Boy Scouts), direct traffic, and tap into a wide array of other skills from small engine repair to decontamination techniques. ***You have to utilize all of these skills under intense pressure, sometimes after being wakened out of a deep sleep in the wee hours of the night, and knowing that lives (including yours) are on the line. Most of the time, if you mess any of this up, it's more or less fine. Some of the time, if you mess it up, people die.***

This system serves so well that most people don't even notice. Pretty much everyone I know expresses shock when they read that "more than 70 percent volunteer" statistic. On its face, we're doing great. "Structural" fire incidents, fires in any kind of building, trended down 5 percent over the previous decade, as of 2021. This shows that our volunteer system

is working to prevent and contain fires. ***But there are four main developments that warn of glaring holes in the volunteer system's ability to keep up.***

CLIMATE CHANGE or ILL-CONCEIVED FOREST MANAGEMENT:

State Farm and Allstate's decision is unsurprising, given climate change's undeniable impact on the accelerating pace of wildland fire incidents in America, which have been increasing steadily in frequency and size of burned area. Fire seasons are starting earlier and lasting longer. The State Farm decision shows that wildland fires don't stop in the woods. They jump what we call the "wildland urban interface," threatening homes and businesses to an increasing degree. The sluggish global response to climate change doesn't provide a lot of hope that this trend will reverse anytime soon.

[Editor's Note: Even if you are a non-believer in "climate change" it doesn't change the statistics even though the cause is really poor forest management practices stemming from faulty reasoning.]

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION:

Overall fire incidents in structures may be down, but the increasing use of "lightweight" synthetic materials as well as increasing energy efficiency in construction means that fires are burning hotter and faster, releasing greater volumes of toxic gases, and making buildings or portions of buildings such as roofs and floors more likely to collapse. All of this makes it more difficult and more dangerous to fight fires.

Most people picture firefighters standing as we operate hose lines, squinting through gray smoke. In reality, we often crawl on our bellies trying to avoid rising heat, working entirely blind in clouds of black smoke produced by burning plastics and synthetic textiles, sucking air from our bottles to avoid inhaling superheated gases, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and hydrogen cyanide. Roofs supported by increasingly common laminated wooden I-beams held together by glue fail terrifyingly quickly when exposed to fire, vastly reducing the time available to get victims and firefighters out of the collapse zone.

(It's worth noting that the same study showing structural fire incidents declining 5 percent showed dollar losses increasing 11 percent, and deaths increasing 8 percent. These percentages may indicate that new construction methods and materials are causing hotter and faster-burning fires, as well as more rapid structural failure. This means more of the building and its contents are consumed more quickly, resulting in greater damage and greater risk of death.)

THE RISE OF ALTERNATIVE FUEL VEHICLES:

My work related to the flash floods is a reminder that firefighters don't just fight fires. We're usually the first responders on scene to respond to motor vehicle accidents and perform "extrication," cutting victims out of crumpled cars so trained emergency medical responders can get to them to perform their lifesaving work. Sometimes, we're the trained emergency medical responders ourselves.

The proliferation of electric and other alternative-fueled vehicles on the road vastly complicates this work, adding yet another layer of technical skills to the bevy we already have to memorize and practice in our spare time. "Taking utilities" (disabling the car battery and securing leaking fuel) is one of the first things we do on scene. But how do you disconnect the battery on a Tesla? On a Prius? What do you do when there are two batteries? What do you do when there are six? Did you get them all? Cutting the battery lead on a 2010 Nissan Sentra might throw a small spark. Cutting the high voltage power cable on a Tesla could kill you. Rescue operations are tense affairs where seconds could make the difference between saving and losing a victim. It's the kind of pressure that increases the risk that a part-time volunteer might make a mistake.

THE DECLINE OF VOLUNTEERISM:

An already downward-trending pattern in American volunteerism, driven partly by declining religious affiliation, changes in family demographics, and the aging of baby boomers, was exacerbated by the pandemic and the recent crisis of faith in civic institutions. This has decimated volunteering, hitting the fire and rescue service particularly hard, with a **32 percent decline in personnel from 1998 to 2021 in New York alone**, leading to the formation of a special task force to address the problem. ***[EDITOR'S NOTE: what are the results of the Task Force that you have seen so far?]***

The tight relationship between firefighters and police makes matters even more challenging. Every fire-rescue station I've been in displays a "thin blue line" flag, and almost every personal vehicle in every fire station lot sports a bumper sticker expressing messages of support for "our brothers and sisters in blue." This necessarily drops volunteer firefighters into the post-George Floyd great American debate on police abuse of power, and this partisanship may not be helping, given the variety of political leanings in young people we need to recruit to take up this physically demanding job.

Any one of these factors would be concerning. Taken together, they point to a gathering storm. The vast majority of fire responses I run are what we affectionally call “bullshit calls”: automatic alarms set off by harmless steam or paint fumes, or minor car accidents where the unhurt driver and their dinged bumper are safely on their way before we get to the station, leaving us “canceled on the apron”—dismounting the truck and stowing our gear before we even have a chance to hit the sirens. But every once in a while, we “catch a real job,” a structure or wildland fire where lives and property are at stake. These jobs are increasing in complexity and difficulty at the very moment when our numbers are dwindling, increasing the pressure on those of us who actually show up.

BECAUSE SOMETIMES WE DON'T SHOW UP

What most folks don't understand is that volunteer firefighters don't *have* to come to work. We can blow off our shifts. We can ignore our pagers. In any volunteer department, there is a small core of dedicated idealists who take the work seriously, showing up consistently to fight fires, attending drills and administrative meetings, pursuing training. But many volunteers are “social members” who get the T-shirt and don't do the work. ***As volunteerism declines, the strain on the small, working core grows.*** Worse, the personnel who are certified in the truly complex skills—like driving a half-million-dollar fire truck or operating its intricate pump panel, where a faulty estimate on water pressure could get someone killed—are declining. I have lost count of the number of times in my volunteer career when a full crew of firefighters responded in time to an alarm, only to stand idly in our truck bay because no certified drivers answered the call.

There is an obvious solution to this problem—follow the example of many other countries and professionalize the fire service nationwide, investing in paid, full-time personnel who can truly be held accountable for their performance, and don't have to split their attention between their income-earning profession and the demands of the fire service. This isn't cheap. ***The cost of professionalizing New York state alone would run around \$4.7 billion dollars.*** At a minimum, part-time pay and increased benefits for current volunteers could help create accountability and also incentivize greater dedication to the work. Indeed, New York is currently investigating just such measures.

Such costs may seem like a high price now, but the trends I highlight above aren't going away. I wonder if our refusal to pay might not seem penny-wise, but pound-foolish, in the years to come.

[Indiana Fire Department Sparks Conversations After Allowing Staff To Use CBD Products Including Delta-8](#)

VIDEO: A local fire department has become the unintentional catalyst of conversation after changing their drug policy and allowing its firefighters to use CBD products. Despite CBD being legal in Indiana since March of 2018, the decision for White River Township Fire Department to change their policy to allow its staff to use CBD products has turned out to be quite controversial among Indiana's firefighting industry. The White River Township Fire Department runs like any other firehouse. Firefighters spend their time training, working on equipment around the firehouse and responding to emergencies. But when they go home, these firefighters are able to unwind from their long shift or treat side effects from their demanding job with CBD products.

[132-Year-Old VA Fire Department Searches for New Home After City Boots it Out of Firehouse](#)

The City of Harrisonburg has told Hose Company No. 4 to get out of the Rock Street station that's been its home for decades.

The company, started in 1890, is the oldest in Rockingham County, and it currently shares space with the Harrisonburg Fire Department in the same firehouse, which is owned by the city. But over the years, the volunteer department's focus has become calls outside the city in the surrounding area.

Now the city is telling the volunteers to relocate by September. The department can operate out of the Rockingham County station, but there is not enough room for its apparatus in that facility. In addition, Hose Company 4 says that the move would leave areas in some parts of the county with a longer response time.

So now it's looking for temporary quarters while it tries to pull together funds for a new facility.

“We've been through World Wars we've been through pandemics; we've been through a lot of things that businesses and people in Harrisonburg have and we'll be there, hopefully, for another 133 years,” said Training Chief Bill Purcell.

Five Steps to Simplify PPE Checks for NFPA 1851 Compliance

July 27, 2023 | 1 PM EDT

A certificate of attendance will be offered.

Free to Attend – Save My Seat!

A firefighter's exposure to carcinogens and other hazardous materials doesn't end when the fire is put out. Members face risk if PPE isn't thoroughly inspected, cleaned, or functioning properly.

The NFPA established the 1851 standard to increase focus on decontamination of PPE to reduce cancer risks and minimize fireground exposure. Join us for this upcoming webcast to see how Vector Check It and its mobile app can help your department set forth an effective PPE inspection program to assure continued performance of essential equipment and achieve NFPA 1851 compliance.

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: https://www.cfmediaview.com/lp1.aspx?v=31_195428588_13374_5



Lithium-Ion Battery Problems for First Responders, ESIP WEBINAR SERIES

In this session, we look at the emerging issue of Li-Ion battery fires and discuss where we are at risk in the fire and EMS services. We will also present best practices and strategies for avoiding becoming the next battery fire statistic.

Wednesday 7/19/2023 at 7PM

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: <https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=49124da58f&e=781e9a2c81>



Roundtable Talk: Roadway Survival - What Your Department Can Do to Keep Everyone Safe

Thursday July 20 at 2pm

Presenters: Doug Dehaven, T.J. Nedrow, Jack Sullivan, and Joe Tebo

Every year, first responders and their family members are impacted by the aftermath of difficult calls. Departments spend time and effort to ensure that members return home safely after working to protect the public from imminent danger. A very important variable in keeping everyone safe is roadway safety. Taking the necessary steps during every call to ensure that the risks and hazards are reduced requires diligence and training on a regular basis. Join the NVFC and a panel of subject matter experts during this Roundtable Talk to learn more about how proper traffic incident management training at your department can help save the lives of emergency personnel and the public. Join on [Facebook](#) or register on Zoom.

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001XQpEwclzSQgqCOqKUNCijLSDoCf4Aa8qS51r1lsBDqPlyhRPCKCdSQn-Ky_ZszVC0JZQ5q12wVMbSTcsJif5Kc1ajKDPFNV8f1QrLk_jgTllG0w4nnmHHRd8VqgGIFygVgysylR5I09KglwtoXx-sZXgEB7-Zd_VK-AtV3eUsfAn9-CB16LwKo4zfyr8_Gy2hETR8oyfwrzNEih8SvvEHZLilyb4-lxK78SIM-JvTo=&c=rwM-VKg9qyK-R6mgy-6Et-v3ilZGylZGKMB24_wU8jE8rtOdYGXmsw==&ch=3jGltXKlfwUZSsYxqw8laQpEuTlid0-BR1TFanIFYIHgQ1d2ff1MQ==

NationalGrid First Responder Utility Safety Training Program

What's that smell? Is it a natural gas leak?

This interactive self-study program starts with the basic properties, characteristics and behaviors of natural gas. Once you're familiar with the basic principles you'll learn about specific response tactics to the most common utility-related incidents.

The course is modular, and can be done a step at a time, as your busy schedule permits.

Get started today!

1. Register at firstresponder.ngridsafety.com. Once you create your user ID and password, you'll be able to access all the e-learning modules and resources.
2. Complete all e-learning modules and receive a certificate of completion that may serve to satisfy your department's utility safety training requirements.

REGISTER NOW AT THIS LINK: https://www.cfmediaview.com/lp1.aspx?v=31_192123919_13259_5

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 – NYSAFC members

\$50 – non-members

Pre-registration encouraged.

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

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

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

VFIS TRAINING AND RESOURCE CATALOG 2023

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

VFIS UNIVERSITY – USERS GUIDE

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

VFIS TRAINING OFFICER USERS GUIDE

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

VFIS RESPONDER HELP FLYER

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

THE SAFETY OFFICER – TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBERS!

IN 2023 WE HAVE SADLY EXPERIENCED 43 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com**

In 2022 we experienced 101 LODDs reported nationally.!

You Just Never Know!

- Three Atlanta, Georgia firefighters were injured when a tractor-trailer slammed into a fire apparatus while members were operating at a vehicle fire on Interstate 285 early Wednesday. The injured were transported and expected to recover.
- A Louisa County Department of Fire/EMS firefighter was ejected from the fire truck she was riding in after it struck a tree. The ejected firefighter was airlifted to the University of Virginia hospital with life-threatening injuries. Both firefighters were wearing their seatbelts at the time of the crash.
- Chicago Fire Department pumper collided with an auto at an intersection and flipped on its side, 5 firefighters were injured but none life threatening.
- Two Birmingham firefighters were shot Wednesday morning at a fire station in the city's Norwood community. There is an indication that this was a targeted attack for an unknown reason. Both firefighters are in serious condition.

- An 18-year-old member of the Bramwell West Virginia Volunteer Fire Department was killed when an ATV rolled into him, dragged him over a hill and rolled several times. Unfortunately, his father was also injured in the accident and since discharged from the hospital.

Don't Ignore Your Member's Behavioral Health – Help is Available

Courses Offered Jill M. Holland, MS OTR/L, CTP

914-799-5024

jillhollandotr@gmail.com

Please contact for a quote (prices dependent on travel, lodging and materials)

- **It Starts At The Top: The Importance of Supporting Behavioral Health in the Fire Service** (2 Hours) ○ This course discusses the importance of leadership's role in supporting behavioral health and wellness.
 - **QPR: Question, Persuade, Refer Gatekeeper** ~ (1.5- 2 Hours) ○ QPR is a suicide prevention training for participants to be able to recognize the warning signs of suicide and question, persuade, and refer people at risk for suicide for help. ○ I can do this training with any population but I have designed a specific, QPR Institute approved, course for Fire, EMS, 911
 - **Adult Mental Health First Aid:** (Mental Health First Aid Classes are 6-8 hrs depending on the format) ○ Pre/Post Course Work plus 6 hour training ○ In addition to general population, I have my certification for the following MHFA Courses:
 - Fire & EMS
 - Veterans
 - Rural Communities
 - Universities
 - **Youth Mental Health First Aid:** Pre/Post Course Work plus 6 hour training (Mental Health First Aid Classes are 6-8 hrs depending on the format)
 - **Getting your ZZZ's: The importance of sleep for first responders** (2 hours)~This course is designed to educate first responders on the impact sleep has in their daily lives and overall health. Strategies to help improve sleep are discussed.
 - **Helping Those That Help Others: Understand the Culture of First Responders**~ Designed to increase cultural competence and understanding for those in health care who work with first responders
 - **QPR Trainer Training**~ For those who would like to be QPR Trainers-Pre/Post-course work plus 6 hour training ○ \$495 per person plus \$14.95 for materials ○ Minimum 10 people ○ There are no discounts for additional people ○ Travel expenses (Ex. \$509.95 x 10= \$5,099.50 plus any travel expenses)
- ***Course scheduling and contracts for the QPR Trainer Training would be done through the QPR Institute. I would be reimbursed for the course and travel through the QPR Institute. Contact information will be provided.

How To Introduce New Members To Mayday Training

Drew Neal

Getting a job as a firefighter is a daunting process. From the fire academy and medical certifications to the application process, interviews and physical agility testing, prospective members must work to prove their mettle. And when they are hired on, they face the intimidating reality of being on their game 24/7, all while chomping at the bit to get that first fire.

For some new firefighters, there may also be that little bit of fear or hesitation. They have heard about firefighter fatalities and injuries, and of course the infamous mayday. There is nothing better than quality training and mentorship to alleviate the worries that a new hire might have regarding getting injured, or worse, while on the job.

While a mayday situation might seem like a far-fetched nightmare for some, the truth of the matter is that there is a very real risk of being in a situation that necessitates calling a mayday, and it is up to the senior staff to prepare their newest members. While we need to equip all of our members to respond to our citizens on the worst day of their lives, we must also prepare our members to be able to take care of themselves and each other on their worst day.

STEP 1: LAY THE GROUNDWORK

What is the best way for us, as leaders and instructors, to convey the importance of self-survival, mayday and RIT operations to our newest members? In reality, this messaging should start before they are ever hired. It starts with department culture.

Every department should have a culture of safety that allows members to be aggressive to an acceptable degree. The notion that aggressive means freelancing is simply inaccurate. There is a difference between a tactician with sound decision-making and a cowboy operating on the fireground like it is the wild west. An aggressive, methodical and well-trained firefighter is safer than a timid (or overly confident), unmotivated recliner-riding firefighter.

Bottom line: If we establish that culture and mentality from the get-go, then we are bringing new members into a well-thought-out and defined environment where the risks have already been calculated, and we know how to maneuver them.

STEP 2: START IN THE TRAINING ROOM

Many fire academies spend limited time on mayday operations and self-survival, or they hit on only textbook solutions. While there is nothing wrong with that textbook learning, coupling this learning with on-the-job training is the best way to instill the lessons. It is the job of the senior members to introduce new members to as many forms of learning as possible, including means of survival.

This introduction starts in the training room. This environment offers the perfect setting to captivate new members and establish the seriousness of what you are teaching them. By reviewing the policies and procedures, worksheets, equipment and historical data, such as NIOSH reports, this is your opportunity to tee-up the practical, hands-on training that comes next. This is a great place to teach them that most mayday situations are resolved not by a rapid-intervention team, but rather by another crew or member that is working in proximity to the downed firefighter.

Use data and studies from other incidents to show new members several factors:

1. These events are avoidable.
2. We must learn from these events.
3. Maydays are not specific to geographical location.
4. These events *can* happen to them, and your fire department is not special or exempt from tragedy and disaster.

Bottom line: New members must understand that complacency does not discriminate, and this one action has been linked to a large number of firefighter fatalities and injuries. The training room is the place to underscore this essential lesson.

3. SIMULATE THE REAL WORLD IN TRAINING

Once we have the classroom portion under our belts, we must put the lessons into practical application. How does that work? Teach new members that realistic problems need realistic solutions, and train on your realistic scenarios.

The town that my organization covers is approximately 63 square miles with a population approaching 50,000. Our tallest building is four stories in height, a mid-rise. We do not train on high-rise fire tactics regularly, nor do we train on operating a mayday in that setting. It is just not realistic for us because we do not respond to high-rise fires. Sure, we learn techniques and will take in any nugget of knowledge we can get, but our focus is on the majority of what is within our response district – warehouses, residential dwellings and strip malls.

One of our lieutenants, Lt. Carrasco (aka “Dak”), is always training and doing his best to make it real. Station #1 includes “Dak’s Fun House,” which can be almost anything you want it to be. The 12x50 room can be easily transformed into a variety of mazes and scenarios. Carrasco created the area so that walls can be moved, doorways can be added or taken away, floors can collapse, and you more than likely will become entangled in something. When the room is filled with artificial smoke, there are lights that mimic the glow of a flame.

While we cannot put our members in real-life structure fires for training (burn buildings aside), we can still make the environment one that will be useful when working on a real-life fireground, complete with the low visibility and loud, interrupting noises that can impede communications, plus the cumbersome task of removing a downed firefighter in a setting where space is limited.

In our new hire academy, individuals run these drills over and over and over. Different layouts, different situations, all following our policies and procedures, making sure that they understand the exact steps of calling out a mayday as a victim, as well as responding to a mayday as a fellow firefighter. The instructors begin with the lights on, allowing the students to see what they are feeling, where they are going, and to understand the dynamics of the situation. Then the room may be changed up, setting them up for a scenario they have not yet seen just as if responding to a house fire.

Once the repetitions are maxed out and the members are exhausted, we debrief. What went well? What didn’t go well? What did you learn? What is a scenario that you think would be worth trying out?

Bottom line: Real-world scenarios are where the rubber meets the road. Teams are best built in moments of exhaustion, after putting in serious work as a crew, and building upon one another. This is important for not only new hires, but current members as well.

4. FOCUS MEMBERS ON CONTINUED LEARNING

We hired them, they finished the recruit class and graduated the probie year. Now what?

We know that any training done once isn't enough. Their skills will atrophy. It's vital to keep members focused on the importance of items like maydays, self-survival and RIT operations, and we do this with step 1: laying the groundwork. Your department culture should provide the atmosphere and mindset for constant honing of skills.

Bottom line: Furthering knowledge is not only an expectation, but a privilege and tool used to continue to build your team. With that kind of culture and mentality in place members are more likely to maintain the skills necessary to work in this profession.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While firefighters cover myriad disciplines, and our responsibilities grow day by day, we must always maintain the most important skill – taking care of ourselves and our brothers and sisters. After all, if we do not take care of ourselves, we cannot take care of our customers.

Remember to stay humble, be aggressive and maintain the skills of your profession. Whether it's your first day or your 30th year, someone is counting on you.

FOR DISTRICT OFFICIALS WHO AREN'T FIREFIGHTERS...

****'It Is Time To Demand Adherence To NIMS/ICS And Accountability For Failure To Implement'**

Joe Dixon

To better protect and serve our communities, all first responders must be prepared to establish and execute a plan at a moment's notice, particularly when faced with a major incident. Carrying out such plans often requires resources that extend beyond a single agency, underscoring the importance of coordination, before, during and after incidents.

No matter the scale of such plans or the depth of resources, failures can occur. In small incidents, shortcomings often go unnoticed (Faith et al., 2011). But when the incident complexity leads to casualties or major property loss, investigations and reports are certain to follow.

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the lack of coordination and communication was identified as a critical problem in after-action reviews (9/11 Report, p. 397). The failures were extensive and costly.

To address these failures and other shortcomings, President George W. Bush directed the establishment of a common approach for managing all types of incidents. The resulting National Response Plan (NRP) provided guidance for governmental and non-governmental resources. Most assuredly, the establishment of the NRP and NIMS/ICS would ensure that fire and law enforcement – the two groups often first on the scene of incidents – would operate from the same playbook. If you know better, you should do better, right?

Instead, what we have seen is continued failures of command and coordination at major incidents. Let's consider how such failures have been identified in other major incident investigations and reports.

POST-INCIDENT FINDINGS

The following major incidents received extraordinary attention and scrutiny, highlighting common themes in response failures – incident command and communications.

Columbine shooting: April 20, 1999; 15 killed, 24 injured (Columbine Review Commission, 2000)

- Law enforcement commanders should be trained to take command and communicate incident objectives (p. 79).
- Law enforcement agencies should facilitate communication plans with agencies with whom they might reasonably be expected to interface with (p. 84).

Virginia Tech shooting: April 16, 2007; 32 killed, 17 wounded (TriData Division, 2009)

- Failure to open an EOC immediately led to communications and coordination issues during the incident (p. 122).
- There was little evidence of a unified command structure (p. 119-120).

Aurora theater shooting: July 20, 2012; 12 killed, 70 shot (TriData Division, 2014)

- Better use of ICS would have led to better incident management (p. 110).
- LE was unable to communicate with fire despite interoperability (p. 23).
- There was no unified command (p. 24).

Sandy Hook shooting: Dec. 14, 2012; 26 killed, 28 shot (Connecticut State Police, 2018)

- Multiple Command Posts and EOCs were activated (p. 43).
- There was insufficient communication (p. 41).

Boston Marathon bombing: April 15, 2013; 3 killed, 264 injured (Project Management Team, 2014)

- No command and accountability for incoming resources (p. 113).
- Report of superfluous radio traffic and unwanted chatter (p. 119).

Orlando, Florida, Pulse nightclub shooting: June 12, 2016; 49 killed, 53 injured (Straub et al, 2017)

- No established staging with self-deployment of approximately 300 area LEA personnel (p. 59)
- Orlando Fire was not included in the UCP (p. 59)
- OFD paging system failed (p. 65)

It is clear that 9/11 was not the first or last major incident wherein communication contributed to loss of life. Columbine occurred two years prior, with the report published in 2000.

More recently, the management of the scene at the Uvalde School District shooting has come under scrutiny. The Texas House of Representatives Interim Report describes the scene as chaotic and uncoordinated. It further suggests that the personnel on scene were devoid of leadership skills and basic communications.

A CALL TO ACTION

Why is it that more than two decades after 9/11, some agencies continue to resist implementation of NIMS/ICS? Homeland Security Presidential Directive -5 (HSPD-5), the National Response Plan (NRP), and NIMS/ICS plotted a path to improved preparation, planning, response, mitigation and recovery to/from major disasters and event/incidents of all sizes. Why is it acceptable to read report after report identifying the same mistakes? Is it not the definition of insanity to do the same thing over and over and expect a different result? Why aren't we doing better?

If we don't owe it to the many lost souls on 9/11, what about subsequent losses that may have been prevented with improved incident management? Are local, state, tribal and territorial jurisdictions required to adopt NIMS to receive federal preparedness grants? The NIMS Implementation Objectives for Local, State, Tribal, and Territorial Jurisdictions provide clarity for NIMS implementation requirements. As recipients and subrecipients of federal preparedness (non-disaster) grant awards, jurisdictions and organizations must achieve, or be actively working to achieve, all of the NIMS Implementation Objectives. It seems adoption (on paper) has not translated to implementation and practice.

It is time to demand both adherence to NIMS/ICS and accountability for failure(s) to implement. But where do we begin? As is so often the case, the first step is acknowledging that there is a problem.

LAW ENFORCEMENT IN FOCUS

Some law enforcement agencies tasked with scene management at many of our nation's deadliest active shooter/mass casualty events have come under scrutiny for poor coordination.

In a 2019 Police1 article marking 20 years since the Columbine shooting, Lt. Col. (ret.), Mike Wood shared his insight on this topic:

We need to do a better job of integrating fire, EMS and police resources, particularly at the senior leadership levels, to ensure a coordinated response to mass violence. Comprehensive deployment doctrine must be drafted, agreed to and trained. Senior leaders need better training to fulfill their roles as on-scene commanders. Responders from all public safety disciplines need more opportunities to train together and develop an appreciation for how they fit into a collaborative response.

I could not agree more and hope we are not talking about how the first responder community could be communicating better in another 20 years. We know better and therefore should do better.

LEARNING FROM CRISES

Capturing lessons learned from crises is a widespread practice that allows first responders to share both what went right and what went wrong from past experiences in order to improve future responses. The strategies/tactics, procedures, guidelines, etc., that are developed are often shared at conferences and in professional forums. Theoretically, this system of sharing should increase the level of preparedness amongst responders, so why aren't we doing better?

What hasn't happened is not as important as what must happen – NOW – and we all have an impact:

Civilians: Civilians have been conditioned and educated on the importance of saying something whenever something seems out of place, and they have demonstrated the ability to incorporate run, hide and fight when needed. Once they activate the emergency response system, they expect a coordinated effort to save lives and property.

Fire service: The fire service has embraced the value of lessons learned and mutual aid. We openly share our close calls, near misses, and after-action reviews to alert our colleagues to potential threats. We seek meaningful training with other agencies. When a NIOSH report is released, it becomes training material for departments across the industry.

Law enforcement: I am a fire chief and have served as an executive-level chief in three fire departments. The struggle to coordinate is real. If I have heard "OPS PLAN" once, I have heard it a thousand times. Whereas an Incident Action Plan (IAP) would be appropriate for coordinating resources ahead of a large event, law enforcement prefers to use OPS PLANS. An OPS PLAN serves a similar purpose to an IAP but is based off independently developed LE plans and orders. The key for law enforcement: NIMS/ICS calls for practitioners to use common terminology and forms. This is critical to ensuring efficient and clear communication.

On the positive side, there is a Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Near Miss website. While access to most of the information is deemed both restricted and sensitive in nature, I am glad to see the concept adopted.

A PATH FORWARD

The focus of the 9/11 Report was to generate both common protocols and language for multi-discipline/agency crisis responses. In late 2020, the All Hazards Incident Management Teams Association (AHIMTA) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) collaborated in an attempt to better understand the failure of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to fully embrace ICS. The areas identified included:

- Development of a cadre of law enforcement practitioner as instructors to deliver NIMS/ICS training;
- Executive support;
- Acceptance/implementation of Incident Action Plans versus operational and event plans;
- ICS mentorship and development; and
- Increased partnerships with emergency management.

The topic areas identified in the report provide a path forward while allowing LEAs to maintain jurisdictional priorities and policies. However, the message is clear: For the LEAs still using the term Ops Plans as an institutionalized local approach should adopt IAP terminology to avoid confusion going forward.

Further, C3 Pathways has developed an Active Shooter Incident Management Checklist that is being used by hundreds of law enforcement, fire and EMS agencies across the country. The document has been validated for design, content, format and usability, and it is subjected to ongoing testing and improvement. C3 Pathways grants free copyright usage permission to first responders.

- The Active Shooter Incident Management Checklist does the following:
 - Sequences key items to save time;
 - Identifies key communication paths;
 - Clearly distinguishes tasks and roles;
 - Pinpoints needed delegated decision-making; and
 - Integrates the response across disciplines.

Like any other tool you use, the checklist is enhanced with training and familiarity.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Those we serve across this great nation expect trained first responders working together to mitigate hazards. The stakes are too high to continuously show up at critical scenes and miss the mark because of poor communication and coordination among our teams. We need to employ the appropriate levels of coordination and communication to combat negative outcomes. In other words, teams should play from the same playbook using common language to achieve maximum impact. We can do better and must do better...or be prepared to talk about how common failures associated with incident command and communications shortcomings continue to plague us decades from now.

LIVING WITH LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES! HOT TOPIC!

Two Lithium-Ion Battery Site Fires Continue to Smolder in NY State

Jessica Jones-Gorman, Staten Island Advance

Fires at two lithium-ion battery energy storage sites (BESS) in Warwick, N.Y., have been smoldering for more than a week, after officials say a storm-related issue caused the newly installed units to ignite and burn in two separate incidents on June 26.

Located in residential areas — one near three schools, a bus garage and some athletic fields — the sites were constructed and developed by Convergent Energy, a provider of energy storage solutions that was awarded an opportunity to build similar storage sites on Staten Island in 2021.

“We are thrilled to acquire this unique development opportunity in Convergent Energy + Power’s hometown of New York City, where battery storage will play an increasingly significant role in the clean energy transition,” Frank Genova, Convergent’s chief operating and financial officer, noted in a press release when the company acquired a 5 MW / 20 MWh BESS contract on the borough.

According to that same press release, the Staten Island Convergent project was scheduled to be completed by 2022. A project summary submitted by Convergent to the New York City Industrial Development Agency in January of that year noted that the proposed BESS was to be located at 707 Richmond Rd. on Grymes Hill. But no plans have been filed with the Department of Buildings at that address, and the property, located next to a gas station, still seems to be in use as a car lot. Convergent did not respond to inquiries from the Advance/[SILive.com](https://www.silive.com) about its dealings on the borough.

And now, the company’s Warwick facilities, one of which was put into operation in May, are being dubbed a significant health concern for the Orange County community.

“Residents in town reported a burning glue-like smell on Wednesday, which is now gone as the fire at the school complex smolders,” News 12 Westchester reported. “Authorities said they had to let it burn out on its own, because water would make it worse. Fire officials said Thursday that the smell was likely the odor of the batteries’ plastic covers burning.”

Michael Contaxis, chief of the Warwick Fire Department, addressed community safety concerns during a Warwick Village Board meeting on July 3. According to the Warwick Advertiser, Contaxis said that while the local fire department took action to mitigate the risk to the community, it was provided no formal training on these systems by Powin, the manufacturer of the energy storage systems housed in the Convergent Energy facilities. He also explained how battery fires cannot be handled with water and need to burn out on their own.

Both Convergent and Powin declined an invitation to speak at the same meeting due to the ongoing investigation.

In a statement to MidHudson News, Convergent said it is “following the industry’s best practice of maintaining a safe distance and letting combustible material deteriorate.”

Convergent also noted that hazmat crews conducted air quality testing that showed an air quality index “within non-alarming levels.”

“Although there is no present cause for concern regarding air quality, it is advisable to keep a distance and close windows if you are in the vicinity,” the statement said, noting testing of air quality will continue over the next few days.

The company built the sites to supply energy to Orange and Rockland’s power grid. Emergency management officials told News 12 Westchester that one of the facilities is located in close proximity to a 1,000-gallon propane tank and fuel pumps for the district bus garage.

And as similar BESS units continue to crop up across Staten Island, the fires and resulting poor air quality sparked concerns for borough residents.

“This is exactly what we were afraid of, this is what they wanted to put in our parking lot,” one Bulls Head resident said when discussing the Warwick incident, referring to the proposed construction of a BESS facility in a vacant portion of Our Lady of Pity church parking lot that was thwarted by community opposition in January.

But still others rise. A lithium-ion battery storage unit is currently being built on Giffords Lane in Great Kills. Its developer, NineDot Energy, said it should be operational and ready to harvest energy later this year. Another, located at the corner of Hylan Boulevard and Littlefield Avenue in Eltingville, directly across the street from a Shell gas station, is now complete. Most recently, a similar facility broke ground on Nelson Avenue in Great Kills, sandwiched between a residential home and a Citgo gas station.

“If you put a deck on your house, it is scrutinized from every angle,” Borough President Vito Fossella previously told the Advance/[SILive.com](https://www.silive.com). “But we have residents who are quite literally waking up with these battery systems in their backyards.”

On June 28, Con Edison connected NYC’s largest Battery Energy Storage System, announcing plans to take stress off the city’s power grid before the summer heat drives up electricity demand. The lithium-ion facility — which will hold enough electricity to charge 1.5 million cellphones — is located at a substation in the Fox Hills section of Clifton.

“That will take stress off Con Edison’s electric delivery system in the area when the demand for power is high, which occurs in the late afternoon and evening hours during the summer,” Con Ed noted in a press release. “The system and other similar systems that Con Edison is planning will be able to store and discharge electricity from renewable sources such as offshore wind turbines. That will become important as the state adds more clean energy to its portfolio.”

The Fox Hills location, which includes 11 Tesla Megapacks, each housing 19 battery modules with an inverter, is the only Staten Island system that the utility has authorized and certified. Another, located on a customer property at 1515 Richmond Terrace, is currently being operated by the utility under a “demonstration project.”

According to the release, both systems underwent a rigorous safety review by the FDNY.

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

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

HOME FIRE FATALITIES REPORTED BY THE MEDIA FROM THE US FIRE ADMINISTRATION	
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	47+4 = 51
Last fire death 7/8, New Scotland, Albany Co, 35 & 64yo male, 5 & 40yo female	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	94+5 = 99
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	740 + 27 = 767
Top Three State with the most 1&2 Family Deaths	1 NY = 51
	2 PA = 46
	3 OH = 44
There has been a total of 1244 civilian home fire fatalities in 2023	
There were a total of 2251 residential fire fatalities reported in 2022 in the US media.	
Both the states of Maryland and California require sprinklers in residential dwellings	

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

GRANTS THAT MAY HELP!

USDA Community Facility Grants for Rural Development

GRANT WEB SITE: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>

GRANT GUIDELINES: <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=us&agency=rd>

Grant Deadline: This program accepts applications on an ongoing basis.

For Rural Areas and Small Towns up to 20,000 in Population

Community Programs provide grants to assist in the development of essential community facilities in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population. Grants are authorized on a graduated scale.

Grant funds may be used to:

- Assist in the development of essential community facilities.
- Construct, enlarge, or improve community facilities for health care, public safety, and community and public services.

- This can include the purchase of equipment required for a facility's operation.

WHAT THIS GRANT DOES FOR YOUR AGENCY

Applicants located in small communities with low populations and low incomes will receive a higher percentage of grants. Grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments. In addition, applicants must have the legal authority necessary for construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed facility and also be unable to obtain needed funds from commercial sources at reasonable rates and terms.

Only a limited number of grants will be awarded.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

These grant funds are for rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population.

THE LIGHTER SIDE!

Why do eggs come in a flimsy Styrofoam carton and batteries come in a package you need a chainsaw to open??

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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, and Deputy Treasurers

Secretaries and Chiefs are also invited to participate!

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

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

AFDCA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063

EMAIL SECRETARY: CAAOFD@GMAIL.COM

EMAIL TREASURER: CFDATREASURER@GMAIL.COM

518-407-5020

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

What are the duties and responsibilities of a Commissioner?

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

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

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

PLEASE SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US!!

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.AFDCA.ORG

[Welcome Back all of our Business Partners for 2023](#)

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

Write me at tom@rinaldi1.com

Please Support Those Who Support Us!!

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

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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 for comments or content contributions are always welcome.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION (CAFDA)

Would you like to join Capital Area Fire Districts Association along with 75 members in 8 counties? Individuals, fire district associations, fire protection districts and Village departments are all eligible for membership.

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

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

Individuals \$50.00 and Other Associations \$300 annually.

Business Partners: \$100.00 annual member fee



2023 Events Calendar

Date	Time	Type	Location
August 2023	NO MEETING		
Thursday, Sept 14, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Thursday, October 12, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
Saturday, November 4, 2023	8:00 AM	Fall Workshop	Verdoy Fire Dept
Thursday, November 9, 2023	7:00 PM	General Membership	Clifton Park
December 2023	NO MEETING		
Saturday, January 6, 2024	9:00 AM	Organizational Meeting	TBD

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

[CLICK ON PDF TO OPEN FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET SCHEDULE](#)



Fire District Budget
Schedule.pdf

[CLICK ON PDF TO OPEN FIRE DISTRICT ELECTION SCHEDULE](#)



Fire District
Elections Schedule 2