



CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

YOUR FIRE DISTRICT NEWS SOURCE

JULY 8TH, 2023

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

THE CAPITAL CALENDAR:

WWW.AFDCA.ORG

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

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 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 District Association Members- Mark Your Calendars-More Details to Follow](#)

- **Tentative - Commissioner Training** Dates and locations for 2024 being developed and will be announced shortly.
- **Tentative** – Keep an eye on the Bulletin for all future training available to Fire District Officials and Chief Officers coming in 2024.
- **CAFDA Conference**, Mid-May 2024, Location and details to be announced.

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:

- **STAY COOL, STAY HYDRATED!!**
- CAFDA is planning a **Day at the Races**, stay tuned for more information.
- 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.

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 Verdoy Fire Station on Troy-Schenectady Road. Tentative subjects are Harassment in the Fire Service and Applying Discipline, How to SHOP insurance for your fire district, Expert's Panel.



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.

\$31.5 Million In State Budget For Volunteer Firefighters

New York State's 2023-2024 budget includes significant funding for volunteer firefighters. Of the total, \$25 million was allocated for departments' capital upgrades to equipment and facilities. \$6.5 million has been allotted for firefighter training stipends.

The firefighter training stipends are given out in either \$750, \$1,000 or \$1,250 increments after completion of training. The amount given out is dependent on the status of the volunteer, whether that's firefighter 1, firefighter 2, or fire officer training. This will allow firefighters to be compensated for spending time off work attending classes. We will have to watch OFPC for any developments in rules or regulations.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Waivers of Liability: Helpful or Harmful?

John K. Murphy

We all have them and we all have signed them. Waivers of Liability are supposed to "hold harmless" your fire department from any liability for civilian ride-alongs, internal or external training, and other department activities where there are non-firefighter employees enjoying time learning about the fire service.

Waivers of liability are generally signed by participants related to recognized dangerous activities including skydiving, bungee jumping, mountain climbing, scuba diving, skiing, traveling in outer space rides, flying commercial airlines, and deep sea explorations. Also, when your department is providing joint fire training with other fire departments.

If you are a downhill skier, look at the back of your ticket. (See – Apps v. Grouse Mountain Resorts Ltd., [2020] [i] for your unsigned liability waiver and also purchasing a ticket on a commercial airline—you accept liability for ———.

There are two main reasons a Department will want you to sign a liability waiver: 1) to document in writing that you have been warned of potential risks and 2) to remove their responsibility for injuries that arise from ordinary negligence.

A liability waiver, or release waiver, is a legal document and a contract a Department or organization requires members of the public to sign in order to protect their organization from being sued if they sustain an injury.

Many people, when handed such documents before participating in an activity or even using rideshare services on the application, hastily sign, not understanding the terms or the potential ramifications of waiving a service provider of liability.[ii]

When signing a service provider's liability waiver, you are agreeing not to hold the service provider responsible for any injury you may sustain as a result of ordinary negligence as opposed to gross negligence.

ORDINARY OR GROSS NEGLIGENCE

When you sign a liability waiver, you agree to not hold the service provider liable for any injury you sustain as a result of ordinary negligence.

Ordinary negligence is the failure to act reasonably as it relates to general safety. Typically, if this failure to act reasonably results in an injury, then the person acting negligently can be found liable for injuries. But when you sign a liability waiver, in most cases, you are agreeing to waive your right to sue even if you can prove that ordinary negligence led to your injury.

For instance, if you go to a trampoline park, you will likely be required to sign a liability waiver. Now let's say that, while jumping, you land on a metal spring and sprain your ankle. This metal spring should not have been exposed, but rather covered by a cushion. This may be considered ordinary negligence. The jump park, in their regular maintenance of the trampoline, did not cover the exposed spring. *But because you signed the liability waiver, you are likely out of options and cannot sue.*

In one such case brought before a Texas court, a woman who suffered injuries at a trampoline park sued the park for damages. The Texas court found in favor of the trampoline park and dismissed the plaintiff's case. The court found that the waiver explicitly stated that the signer agreed to release the Department from injury liability and that the waiver was in no way ambiguous. Signing a liability waiver makes it difficult to recover injury compensation. Keep in mind that this case is specific to Texas and Texas law. It is just one instance of an injury claim after a liability waiver was signed. *The law varies on a state-by-state basis, and the outcome of your case depends on the facts surrounding your injury.*

Gross negligence, however, is a different category of conduct than ordinary negligence. This more extreme form of negligence generally involves deliberate or reckless disregard for the treatment of others. This kind of negligence often "shocks the conscience"

and requires a level of outrageous conduct that is not needed to satisfy ordinary negligence. *Courts reason that if parties act with reckless disregard for others, they should not be shielded by liability waivers, and as a result, gross negligence is one situation when liability waivers are unenforceable.*

Gross negligence may make an organization liable, even if you sign a waiver. Gross negligence is more than a simple failure to act reasonably—it is a conscious violation of other people’s right to safety. This often rises above the protections of a liability waiver, giving you the option to sue in case of injury, and is essentially when parties fail to use the level of care and caution of an ordinary person, and as a result, damages resulted. The vast majority of claims involve ordinary negligence, and are thus under the scope of liability waivers, as long as such waivers are applicable to the situation involving the claim.

For example, in California, the law states that gross negligence is:

The lack of any care, or an extreme departure from what a reasonably careful person would do in the same situation to prevent harm to oneself or to others.

To illustrate gross negligence, consider sending an untrained observing civilian into a burning building or acquired structure to “experience” firefighting, and if they were injured or killed, the participant or their heirs will most likely have legal recourse to sue, even though a liability waiver was signed. Because the department failed to warn you of the extreme danger of a burning building, the department’s negligence put you in immediate danger. This may rise to the level of gross negligence. [iii]

CREATING A LIABILITY WAIVER – THE DEPARTMENTS RESPONSIBILITY

As a fire department and before creating another liability waiver, the document must be unambiguous in its purpose and clear in its writing and intent. “Fine print”, is not the rule of the day, especially when you are representing a large governmental entity attempting to limit your liabilities.

Do not depend on the participant to read the document as ignorance on the part of the participant is not a solid basis for defending against a lawsuit – as in “they did not actually read the document before signing”.

Make sure that you fully explain the reason for the waiver, make the document “readable” and no fine print and point out the possible hazards the participant may face during the time spent in your department.

SIGNING THE LIABILITY WAIVER

Before signing the liability waiver, there are some things you should know.

First, understand why a Department would require that you sign a liability waiver. ***The two main purposes of a release of liability for a Department are to:***

- ***Document in writing that you have been warned of potential risks.***
- ***Remove their responsibility for injuries that arise from ordinary negligence.***

Second, always read the agreement carefully before signing. This seems like common sense, but often, liability waivers are presented at the very moment you are about to enter a fire station, participate in an event, or use a service. In this situation, many people simply sign the waiver without reading or understanding the terms.

Third, in most states, liability waivers are frequently found to be legally binding, protecting the department, so as a participant you can’t count on the courts overturning the agreement in your favor.

Waivers that meet the following criteria may leave you with no recourse if you sign:

- Clear language – The waiver clearly states that you absolve the service provider of all liability, including in cases of negligence.
- Format – The release of liability is easily identifiable and not hidden in a larger document or included in too small a font to be reasonable.
- Precise list – A waiver that lists specific risks or types of injuries for which you are releasing a service provider from liability is likely to be upheld if you suffer a stated injury.
- Signature – Your signature is a major part of validating an agreement. Note that with rideshare or other service apps including skiing or flying commercially, your use of the app often enters you into the agreement automatically.
- Legality – The waiver does not violate state law or public policy in terms of wording or content.

In general, when a liability waiver is signed, the participant is waiving their right to sue in the event of an injury. **If you signed a liability waiver and were subsequently injured, do you have any legal recourse?**

The attorney’s answer is “It depends”.

It is possible that you can sue to recover damages even if you signed a release of liability. These cases are often complex, but there are a few general instances in which the waiver could be found invalid or you may have grounds to sue a negligent third party. For example:

- Defective Products – If you were injured due to a defective product provided by the Department or organization, you may be able to sue the manufacturer under product liability.

- Gross Negligence – Even if a waiver states that you agree not to hold the Department responsible for injury, the courts may hold a Department liable for injuries arising out of gross negligence in the case of extreme recklessness or disregard for safety.
- Misrepresentation – If a service provider misrepresents the service or activity, you may have a fraud case against the service provider, and the waiver may not be found to be enforceable.

READ THE DOCUMENT AND CREATE THE DOCUMENT TO PROTECT THE DEPARTMENT’S LIABILITIES.

The author of the liability waiver must create and actually read the document from the participant’s viewpoint.

Though it is a legal document, most people do not take the time to actually read liability waivers. However, it is important for them to read the waiver carefully and not rush to sign on the dotted line.

One reason you want to read the document carefully is to understand the potential risks you face. If the risks are specifically outlined in the waiver, chances are you will experience them. If nothing else, reading the waiver will prepare you for the activity, which may help you avoid injuries.

The document will also state that signing the waiver releases the Department of any injury liability. How this information is presented to you is important.

In all states, a liability waiver must be clear, unambiguous, and explicit. In other words, waivers cannot be printed in faded ink, in small font, on the back of a paper, or in an otherwise ambiguous form. If the waiver that you sign is not represented clearly, it may not hold up in the event of a lawsuit.

STATUTORY PROTECTIONS

In some jurisdictions, statutes provide for situations when liability waivers are unenforceable. Some states have deemed it against public policy for liability waivers to shield against litigation in certain situations, and have legislation in place that makes it difficult to shield oneself with a liability waiver in certain circumstances.

For instance, some states prevent certain amusement establishments from taking advantage of liability waivers. This is likely because policymakers believe that places of amusement owe a high duty to customers to ensure that they are protected by rides and other attractions. Furthermore, some jurisdictions restrict gyms, fitness studios, and other similar establishments from being shielded by liability waivers as well. This is likely because policymakers want to ensure that such establishments have a heightened sense of responsibility when it comes to safeguarding the people who enter the premises.

CONTRACT DEFENSES

Remember liability waivers are contracts between the department and participant. Liability waivers are unenforceable when basic contract defenses bar the enforceability of contracts are at issue in a matter.

Contracts may not be enforced by courts for a variety of reasons. For instance, if a liability waiver was signed by a minor without the assent of that minor’s parent or legal guardian, that waiver may not be enforceable. Also, if the person signing the waiver could not read or understand English, this could be another situation in which a waiver will not be enforced. In certain extreme examples, waivers may not be enforceable because they are unconscionable. Determining if contract law defenses apply to a given liability waiver is an extremely fact-sensitive inquiry since this often depends on the background of the person signing the waiver and the circumstances surrounding the execution.

SCOPE OF THE WAIVER: HOW BROAD OR ENCOMPASSING SHOULD IT BE?

Another consideration that influences when liability waivers are unenforceable is the scope of the waiver. The scope of the waiver is typically determined by the text of the waiver itself, which usually lists all of the situations to which the liability waiver applies. Some liability waivers explicitly say that they apply to all claims known or unknown, but courts are more likely to enforce a waiver if the situation involved in a claim is explicitly covered by the waiver.

DRAFTING THE WAIVER

Departments drafting waivers should include all situations and injuries that might plausibly involve the parties to have the best chance of having the waiver enforced.

Oftentimes, claims involve situations that were not explicitly discussed in a waiver and may only tangentially relate to situations contemplated in the waiver.

For instance, if a liability waiver only covers personal injuries, it might be difficult for a party to use that waiver to protect the party from defamation claims or other causes of action that do not involve personal injuries. Moreover, if a waiver does not explicitly release claims by dependents or others related to the person signing the waiver, it might be possible for these other parties to pursue claims notwithstanding the fact that a waiver was signed. Since the scope of the waiver is so important to determining when liability waivers are unenforceable, it is important that this part of the waiver be carefully negotiated between the parties. [\[iv\]](#)

Let’s go back to the recent Ocean Gate submarine disaster where the liability waiver, according to some sources indicated **death** at least three times on the first page in addition to participants may experience physical injury, disability, and emotional trauma. As the bubbles have not yet settled on this disaster, there are a number of marine experts and attorneys that opine that it would be a

fruitless pursuit for the survivor families and others to file a lawsuit against the Company. However, remembering our term Gross Negligence, if there were aspects of the design or construction of this vessel that was kept from the passengers, one Texas Maritime attorney postulates, knowingly operating despite information that it was not suitable for this dive would absolutely go against the validity of the waiver. One additional factor related to potential litigation is the director of marine operations at Ocean Gate, was fired after raising concerns about its first-of-a-kind carbon fiber hull and other systems before its maiden voyage. This is according to a court filing in a 2018 lawsuit that the submersible could be subject to failure.

LESSON LEARNED

The lesson here in creating a waiver for your department operations must be clear and unambiguous language to protect your organization from Ordinary and Gross Liability. Make sure that you create a safe environment for those in your care observing department operations. Consult with your departmental/district attorney!!

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STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE:

From 'Span Of Control' And 'Chain Of Command' To 'Span Of Information' And 'Chain Of Communication'

Jim Spell

We all are familiar with the concepts of span of control and chain of command. These concepts came out of the Incident Command System (ICS) and are included in every leadership class. The idea of controlling the amount of responsibility and the sequence of authority in any given situation makes perfect sense, especially for the fire service.

Experience shows that there are good and measurable reasons for these concepts. There are limits to the number of people, groups, divisions and equipment that can be logistically managed effectively. Hence the two models.

Given the effectiveness of the span of control and chain of command models, let's apply them to a different set of circumstances and see if they are applicable and, most importantly, effective in creating a more streamlined fireground experience.

SPAN OF INFORMATION

Let's call the first new model "span of information." ***Imagine measurable data spread equally among your team members. This develops a unified understanding. Those who don't quite comprehend the data are helped by those who do.*** This sense of equality creates buy-in and promotes greater participation at all levels. The collective consciousness reflects equally throughout the team, generating the same approach to every action item. Unity of purpose follows, as will an increase in continuity and efficiency. The breadth of information shared by teammates solidifies tasks and reduces ineffective behavior.

The bottom line: Span of information depends on the amount of material and the number of individuals dealing with it. Sound familiar?

For any amount of information to be effective within a group, there cannot be too much stress on either side of the equation – in other words, the amount of material relative to the number of people. Failure to heed this axiom within our newly formed span of information principle results in conclusions that can be inaccurate. Conversely, success in such a process allows for the increased opportunity to make dependable assessments and better judgments.

An effective span of information ensures continuity of performance with minimal feedback. This, in turn, promotes more precise and timely decisions higher up, such as at the command level. The increased probability of task completion supports advancing team tactics and the overall command strategy.

CHAIN OF COMMUNICATION

This brings us to our second new model: "chain of communication." ***This model suggests that for a message to be effectively interpreted, it must be sequential and continuous, both up and down the chain of command.*** The link-to-link process minimizes miscommunication of meaning because there is less distance between cultural and political links

and the message to be communicated. *During a high-stress incident, the validity of the message is enhanced by the immediacy of the information being disseminated and by the familiarity of the messenger regardless of media.*

Like any chain, the chain of communications is at risk of too much information all at once. This pile of communications overwhelms and eventually eliminates any system of verifying arrangement or structure. Without a sequential configuration of communicating, defined by some approved criteria (in our case, rank), the power and authority of any message, let alone the courier delivering it, will be called into question. Further, any distance created by not having a direct source of authentication will be cause for suspicion and delay.

The expansion of information and its processes away from a linear formula and into a lump sum by sheer volume encourages a lack of confidence, a delay in decision-making, an abdication of responsibility and, ultimately, a greater likelihood of unsubstantiated answers to unverifiable questions. The fireground is going in the wrong direction.

While the big ball of spatial thinking may work in a creative context, a lack of sequence in fireground commands or deployment of resources can put personnel and equipment in danger. New officers sometimes forget the time it takes to implement a good idea.

THERE'S ALWAYS A REASON

Firefighters must be deployed with the right equipment. While we may argue the merits of time spent contemplating concepts like span of information or chain of communication, we intuitively understand the importance of sequencing both the messenger and the message while providing for the correct amount of material at the appropriate time (i.e., tasks assigned in a linear fashion to ensure accountability and measurable progress).

By keeping things in line, a hint of deviation can be met with a rapid response, such as changing tactical directives or modifying strategic directions. This sequential decision-making process, the result of good information timely communicated, is a serious path toward saving lives.

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

5 Signs Of Low Firefighter Morale

Jim Spell

Decreasing productivity, lack of participation, bullying as humor, and a loss of confidence are the first signs of a problematic atmosphere in your firehouse.

One of the greatest myths for any faltering fire department is the belief that one good call will raise morale. The reality: Poor morale begins small, but eventually expands to reveal a totally negative, if not wholly unsafe, barrel. When finally recognized, it is often too late to resolve such negative group think, even with a successful knockdown or a timely save. Is it appropriate in today's world to blame the constant scrutiny of the media or the unrelenting public thirst for scandal as the cause for this operational malaise? Even when firefighters are strong, there is the occasional misstep recorded by every cell phone camera, followed by a responding avalanche of departmental regulations that seem to choke off any attempt to grow successfully.

Is a decline in attitude a result of external forces pounding on you and your department, or could it be a consequence of unresolved internal challenges resulting in misguided decisions and inappropriate behavior?

IDENTIFICATION OF LOW FIREFIGHTER MORALE

Listening to persistent rumblings, the question becomes not so much, "what is the problem?" but rather, "who's complaining?" Who exactly is stirring the pot?

Did someone get passed over for a promotion? Have budget issues begun to affect daily operations? Are firefighters feeling unsafe, unsatisfied or underappreciated? Are officers presenting the orders in a negative tone?

Viewed separately, the specific signs of low morale can be easily dismissed as a bad day or fatigue due to a difficult call or a private matter. A lack of clear communication on any topic leads to generating misinformation, creating distraction and delay at every level. This opens the door to low firefighter morale.

And with that in mind, let's review five signs of low firefighter morale:

1. STATION CHORES DON'T GET DONE

A reduction consistent output is the first sign of internal low morale. While not every day is going to be totally efficient, productivity is decreasing as excuses and blame are on the rise.

Chores didn't get done because firefighters are redirected. Engineers can't finish truck checks because their officers didn't allow for enough time. Trucks are dusty, the station is a mess, and paperwork is late.

Everyone seems tired and slightly out of uniform. Those not hiding out are doing things to keep themselves invisible. The irons are examined in the back of the station. Engineers are under the trucks. Officers are having dozens of private meetings and no one seems to know the reasons or the passwords for inclusion. At the end of a tour, no one recognizes what was accomplished and no one seems to care.

Add to this the inability or desire to help other firefighters with unfinished work – regardless of rank or time of day – and you have low morale spilling onto another shift.

2. TENSE, SEGREGATED DRILLS

Complaining about unfinished work, regardless of responsible party, is a next day's measuring cup. Low morale is stirring throughout the department. Drills are tense and often segregated by time, job description or blanket incompatibility.

There are no lists of information to pass along, no good stories to share. Firefighters are packing their gear, bolting out or hanging by the door. The finishing touches are not accomplished.

3. EVERY RUMOR GOES EXPLOSIVE

Rumors and gossip seem to explode as laughter becomes vindictive rather than heartfelt. Stories are amplified to the point of suspicion, formal review and a potential for discipline. Officers become bogged down in an endless administrative quagmire with little time for mentorship or crew development.

No one seems capable of defusing what seems to be a titanic amount of pressure, building every day and with no actionable answers other than changing subjects. Generated in bits and pieces, it is hard to define, yet is felt by everyone. Officers begin complaining about firefighters, as firefighters lose respect for constant and unresolved negative situations.

4. GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND MET WITH IMPATIENCE

In a department experiencing a decline in self-esteem, tasks beyond the job description are met with disdain and visible impatience. Changing batteries in a neighborhood smoke detector, responding to an animal in distress, organizing senior transportation or hosting a community barbeque are irritating inconveniences and the source of endless complaints.

Department inspections outside prevention's purview become grounds for mutiny. While these grumbings are never heard, there are persistent whispers. Firefighters are quick to point to policy and procedure as a defense against leaving the station.

5. SMALL COMPLAINTS BECOME BIG ISSUES

One honestly professed complaint by one unhappy firefighter can spread throughout an entire department if not identified and addressed effectively. Inadequate explanations, threatened consequences, complete denial or ignoring the issue will sustain arguments until they deteriorate morale and lower operational standards. The result is not commendable.

Denying the existence of low firefighter morale, regardless of its initial size and scope, is a recipe for the eventual breakdown of organization, first in the station, then on a call and finally, throughout the department.

Outside issues normally counseled in house are not dealt with appropriately because this deterioration of departmental structure is becoming the dominate force each day. If no action is taken to defuse such conspiratorial energy, it will destroy a firefighter, a shift or a department if given enough time and indecisiveness.

ANTIDOTE TO LOW MORALE

Leadership in every rank is the key factor in promoting an atmosphere of confidence and pride.

Self-assurance begins at the top and is translated into every level of the job. Officers have to believe their decisions are supported. Firefighters must feel someone has their back and that they are being heard. **Firefighters will support a department moving forward if progress is evidenced by everyone and no one is left out of participation.**

All negative perceptions must be separated from this social inclusion and work begun to identify, clarify and resolve them – one at a time and with resolute respect. **Building morale begins by reminding ourselves exactly what we do and why we are here.**

A clear vision for the future must be communicated to each fire department member, recognizing individual achievement, and rewarding teamwork that promotes the mission to save lives and protect property and the environment. Anything less is totally unacceptable and gets tossed out of the barrel.

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

Soliciting Competition for Professional Services

Tom Rinaldi, President CAFDA

This article is being provided as an educational service for the fire districts represented by the Capital Area Fire Districts Association.

Through the first seven months of 2021, the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has issued 21 reports on audits they have performed on fire districts. The majority of them address the lack of oversight the board of fire commissioners has over financial activities (and the treasurer). However, two recent reports addressed the procurement of professional services and the perceived lack of competition sought in securing those professional services. The most recent was released in July, 2021. The OSC further addressed professional services procurement for all local governments in a report issued in July 2018. The Office of General Services also maintains a website specifically dedicated to procurement for municipalities. Links to these reports and resources are below.

We believe competition is good for the consumer and/or the taxpayers of a fire district. There are few options, it opens opportunities for vendors to seek their own interest and not that of the consumer. Without competition, there tends to be less innovation, higher prices, and a lack of customer service. On the other hand, competition keeps potential vendors sharp – they tend to pay more attention to the needs of fire districts and create products and services that will meet their needs at reasonable prices.

Generally, a fire district is not statutorily required to seek competition or use a request for proposal (RFP) process when seeking professional services. One exception is when hiring a certified public accountant to audit the fire district's financial statements. Rather, a fire district is bound by its own adopted procurement policy, which each fire district should have based on their circumstances. The reports released by the State do not state that a fire district requires the use of an RFP process, but they do make it clear that a fire district should go through the process of seeking competition before awarding a professional service contract.

From our viewpoint, the challenge with using an RFP process when soliciting a professional service is that an RFP is generally about meeting a certain specification – can the proposer meet all the stated requirements (specifications) of the request. There is no opportunity for intangibles of value such as experience, diligence or dedication that are difficult to define in an RFP. There are several inherent problems with using RFPs for professional services:

1. Most times, the fire district doesn't actually know what it wants (doesn't know what it doesn't know) and so the RFP is incomplete and/or inaccurate and may eliminate qualified vendors for unnecessary reasons.
2. RFPs usually result in longer detailed contracts and if the fire district is unhappy, it is hard to make changes until the term of the contract expires, which could be as long as 5 years.
3. Conversely, if the contract awarded through an RFP process is too short or vague, vendors may not bid as the effort isn't worth it, and may result in unhappy customers as costs increase when customers realize what is really needed, adding more time and cost.
4. Myriad of other reasons likely stemming from fire districts that are unable to define their specific needs.

When you as an individual make a purchase, you rarely make the purchase purely on specifications. In reality, most people buy a story. A story that typically makes them feel good about their purchase, in *addition* to the product meeting a certain specification. Apple is great at selling a story in order to get consumers to pay more for a phone that doesn't offer significantly better benefits than other phones (or, the benefit it does offer are not that valuable to the consumer to justify the additional cost). In professional services, relationship, chemistry, loyalty and overall "fit" are very important in the decision-making process. However, when those factors are prioritized, it could lead to a fire district paying more or perhaps not getting all the services they could receive from a competing vendor. In other words, the story a fire district might tell itself about working with a certain professional (such as how long they've been a client or the good things that vendor might do for the fire service) may be preventing that fire district from getting a better experience elsewhere. Soliciting competition at least gives a fire district the opportunity to see if "your guy" is offering the best service at a reasonable (not always best) price. While OSC may be looking for an RFP, what they are really looking for is the process, are you going through the process of determining if your fire district is getting the most bang for its buck, not because you like the company logo.

As a fire district commissioner, you should be looking closely at each of the vendors and the fees that they charge for the services they provide. We can also learn from the guidance issued by OSC in their audit reports. Fire districts should seek out vendors who want to partner with them and not lock in long term obligations so they can drive up billable hours. Keeping professional services providers hungry and honest will discourage bad behavior. A fire district should delineate clear expectations in writing, so a determination can be made at the end of each year if all services were provided and if they were performed adequately.

REFERENCES:

Professional Service Procurement: Considerations for Local Officials

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/local-government/publications/pdf/professional-service-procurement.pdf>

Local Government Management Guide - Seeking Competition in Procurement

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/local-government/publications/pdf/seekingcompetition.pdf>

Bidding 101

<https://ogs.ny.gov/procurement/bidding-101>

Procurement for Municipalities

<https://ogs.ny.gov/procurement/procurement-municipalities>

Contact the NYS OSC Division of Local Government and School Accountability,

518-408-4934 or at localgov@osc.ny.gov

OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE -CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES!

OPPORTUNITIES:

'Wood For Life' Project Is Preventing Wildfires And Helping 2 Arizona Tribes

A new project is preventing potentially catastrophic wildfires in Arizona forests and helping two of the state's tribal communities. Arizona Lottery and the National Forest Foundation teamed up for the "[Wood For Life](#)" program, and volunteers began cleanup efforts in the [Coconino National Forest](#) near Flagstaff on Thursday.

The program begins with volunteers taking downed trees from forests to lower the risks of fires. The wood is then given to the [Navajo Nation](#) and [Hopi Tribe](#) communities, which they can use as firewood or to build homes. Forest rangers say the program will go a long way in helping tribal members heat their houses. "So we had this big need and we had a lot of trees here, so really we were able to sync up. They need wood, we have wood. And then we're able to get partners like the [National Forest Foundation](#) to help us get the wood from here to there," one forest ranger said.

In some cases, the wood has to be shipped 100 miles to its final destination, but the National Forest Foundation is assisting by driving it out to the reservations. In addition, the [Arizona Lottery](#) is giving \$50,000 to help fund the project.

CHALLENGES:

Monsey Volunteer Fire Department Bucks Recruitment Decline Trend With Unique Volunteer Program

Like many volunteer fire departments around the country, the Monsey Volunteer Fire Department in Rockland County needed a lifeline. "We were struggling a few years ago," says spokesman Aaron Lerer, a veteran firefighter. "We knew we had to get creative to attract and keep new members." The biggest challenge: working around the restriction that doesn't allow firefighters who have beards to go inside buildings. Facial hair can prevent air supply masks from properly sealing. Lerer says they started an external firefighting program that allows the volunteers to perform every task except inside entry. The members are increasingly reflective of the community where the number of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews is skyrocketing. Monsey now has more members than ever before; seven are external firefighters.

****Volunteer Firefighters Are Getting Older. It Could Be A Life-Or-Death Issue**

Adam Bearne

[The senior citizen's engine company]

Jerry Scarborough is 69 years old, but that doesn't stop him from jumping behind the wheel of a fire engine when there's an emergency.

Frequently, the 20-plus-year member of the Darlington Volunteer Fire Company in rural Maryland isn't even the oldest firefighter on the scene.

On one call last year, he raced to extinguish a blaze engulfing a tractor in a field, but found a situation that wasn't quite that exciting.

"It turned out to be a little John Deere lawn mower," Scarborough explained.

Buddy Tester and Robert Worthington of the neighboring Level Volunteer Fire Company had also raced to the scene.

Tester is 76 years old. Worthington is 87.

AS FIREFIGHTERS AGE, THE PROBLEM GROWS

Two-thirds of U.S. firefighters are volunteers, who can face anything from a house fire with people trapped inside, to a pile-up on the highway or a leak of hazardous chemicals.

Fewer young people in recent years have signed up to take on those challenges and that poses serious risks to people and their homes, especially in rural areas.

There may not be a fire crew nearby during an emergency and it's increasingly likely to have older firefighters respond. People may find themselves waiting "45 minutes for a fire truck to show up when their house is on fire," said Steve Hirsch, head of the National Volunteer Fire Council, or they may be stuck for more than half an hour during a medical emergency when every second counts.

"People have to understand that if they don't go out and volunteer, that could happen," said Hirsch.

More than a third of volunteers in small communities were over the age of 50 in 2020, according to the National Fire Protection Association. That compares to 1987, when only 15.9% were older than 50.

Leaning on older volunteers has its own risks, Hirsch believes.

"In our line of work, cardiac events are always a major issue, and the older you get, the more likely you're going to have a cardiac event," Hirsch said. "That affects the crew's safety, affects the public's safety and our ability to respond."

WHERE ARE THE YOUNG VOLUNTEERS?

The heart of the problem: fewer people willing to put on the boots and helmets and spend long hours at the firehouse. There were just 676,9000 volunteers in the U.S. in 2020, compared to 897,750 in 1984.

In the same time, emergency call volumes tripled.

For Worthington, who has been a firefighter for 70 years, the role has changed over the decades.

"The big difference between then and now – if we joined tonight we could ride the truck tomorrow. It was none of this stuff. You got to do all the in-house training before you can ride," he said.

The demands can be rough, said Tester, a firefighter of 60 years.

"I'd hate to be a young kid today to join the fire department," he said. "And I feel sorry for them."

Hirsch says that juggling volunteering with everyday life dissuades people from signing up.

"I don't think it has anything to do with young people not wanting to volunteer," he said.

The NVFC [lists other reasons](#) that make recruiting difficult.

Potential volunteers may not be able to afford to live where a department is based or they may have a lower sense of pride in community.

Also, some companies won't allow employees to leave work to run out on calls.

SOME YOUNG PEOPLE ARE STEPPING UP

There are some young firefighters at Darlington, however.

20-year-old Ben Shrader had very personal reasons for joining.

"I witnessed my dad, he went into cardiac arrest in front of me and my mother," he said. "I just felt so helpless."

A crew from another department arrived to try to revive his father, but were unsuccessful.

"When it was his time it was his time," Shrader added. "I spent a little while not knowing really what to do, until one day I said 'screw it, I want to do something with my life.'"

He signed up at Darlington, following advice from a friend of his dad who also volunteers there.

For 18-year-old Sam Santelli, the motivation is different.

"My grandfather is a Baltimore city fireman, he pushed me into it," he said. "It was either this or the military, so I chose this."

Also, time spent at the firehouse is time spent staying out of trouble.

"Being here keeps you straight and in line," he said.

THE BENEFITS OF OLDER VOLUNTEERS

Both young men see the value of having older volunteers around.

"They teach you a lot, especially on the calls," said Santelli.

They also are role models, "teaching us respect and integrity lessons," he added.

Shrader is still surprised by the older volunteers' abilities on the fireground.

"Even if we think they might not be in their prime, they can still show us a thing or two," he said. "They kick our butts on what we're doing!"

They also can make judgment calls and decisions based on years of experience, he said.

"They've seen plenty of stuff, so they know when 'hey, we should probably get out of here' or 'hey, go check there's no-one inside here,'" he said.

Scarborough knows his department needs more young people like Santelli and Shrader.

"It's a problem and to me, so many kids, and including my own grandchildren, some of them, they're just not coming out and wanting to volunteer," he said. "We need people badly, and I wish more people would be interested in doing this."

But that's a call the NVFC's Hirsch believes people will respond to.

"I have faith in the American people that once we tell them we need help, they will be there."

TRAINING FOR YOUR MEMBERS AND OFFICERS: PASS IT FORWARD!!



FARMEDIC AG Response Awareness: Farm Structures ESIP WEBINAR SERIES

In the second installment in our FARMEDIC Agriculture Awareness series, we will take a look at the various structures and buildings we find on farms and how to approach them. We will also discuss the common hazards we can encounter and what we can expect if called to help out.

Wednesday July 12th at 7PM

REGISTER HERE: [https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-](https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=1f7f836fa6&e=781e9a2c81)

[manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=1f7f836fa6&e=781e9a2c81](https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=1f7f836fa6&e=781e9a2c81) REGISTER HERE:

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

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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 – NYS AFC 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 40 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com**

In 2022 we experienced 101 LODDs reported nationally.!

You Just Never Know!

- Fredrick County VA. recruit firefighter Ian Strickler died on July 5th after suffering a medical emergency during training.

- Augusto Acabou, 45, and Wayne Brooks Jr., 49, both long-time Newark firefighters, died after they were trapped fighting a ship board in the Port of Newark.
- Three Atlanta firefighters were injured after a tractor-trailer struck their fire truck while at a car fire on I-285. {See article below}
- The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) announced on July 3 the on-duty death of Assistant Chief Jarod F. Kammeyer of the Noble Township Fire Department on Feb. 14, 2023, Jarod contracted COVID 19 while standing by at another station on a mutual aid fill in. Kammeyer passed away from multiple organ failure related to COVID-19.

****Blocking Apparatus: Are Attenuating Units The Next Must-Have Apparatus Type?**

Chief Marc Bashoor

“Necessity is the mother of invention.” And thank goodness for that, as firefighters are at their most creative when they need something to work.

Firefighters have always been a creative bunch. Over the years, I’ve seen the magic of that imagination manifest at many events and while addressing many issues, especially in the area of specialty apparatus. From boats to all-terrain vehicles to dump trucks and buses, we have seen apparatus adaptations to answer the needs of firefighters around the world, typically spurred by our “field needs” amid a lack of funding for the *exact* thing we needed.

While every one of these apparatus adaptations has had impact on the industry in one way or the other, few, if any, have been built to *take* the impact we’re talking about today.

Blocking apparatus, while not designed to be destroyed, are intended to protect the first responders and other emergency vehicles on the incident scene. They are design to take the impact of a vehicle, maintaining the integrity of the emergency scene even in case of a secondary crash.

WHO OWNS THE ROADWAY?

I recall a time when we just blocked a part of the lane we needed at roadway-based emergency scenes. Maybe we found a cone on the side of the road and let the police handle the traffic. It seemed there were fewer secondary wrecks or incidents back then. Most of the secondary wrecks involved passenger vehicles rear-ending another passenger vehicle as drivers crawled past the scene, gawking at the movement of emergency crews. Aside for dealing with minor injuries or fluid leaks, most of those incidents “weren’t *our* problem.” Law enforcement officers made it abundantly clear that the roads were their territory.

While many (including yours truly) have previously opined that traffic management is not the fire department’s responsibility, it is undeniable that the safety of our personnel IS one of our primary responsibilities. No other agency has demonstrated the consistent ability to provide a high quantity/quality of site protection as quickly as the fire department, especially during rapidly evolving emergency incidents. Road service/safety patrols and highway departments do everything they can, and are great at the long-duration events, but in most cases, the fire department responds with the “big stuff” faster than the others.

Over the years, roadways have expanded, congestion has increased, and speed limits have fluctuated, all while populations have skyrocketed in many of our response areas. Of course, fire departments rarely grow at a similar rate, thus adding volume to an already busy business.

Add to that the vehicle features that put the driver more at ease, some almost literally on auto-pilot – cruise control, seatbelts and air bags, warmed and heated seats, and any number of safety-minded alerts – *plus* the distractions we didn’t used to have (mainly smartphones), and a significantly more dangerous roadway environment now confronts our firefighters.

I’m pretty sure I speak for every fire chief out there when I say that I’d like the highway department and police to provide the traffic control and blocking we need at incident scenes. In fact, depending on your state’s laws, it might be their statutory responsibility. Unfortunately, what I’d *like* to see doesn’t always align with state statutes, and the reality is that those entities have been unable to provide any better coverage than us to keep our folks safe. Agencies **MUST** work together!

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT BLOCKING APPARATUS EVOLUTION BEGINS

The [Emergency Responder Safety Institute \(ERSI\)](#) was born out of the need the fire service saw for improved roadway safety on the busy interstates around the country. In 2019, ERSI – a committee of the Cumberland Valley Volunteer

Firefighters Association – produced a [white paper that addresses the hardening of fire department vehicles for roadway blocking](#). The report summarizes a workshop convened during the 2018 National Traffic Incident Response Awareness Week on how to harden blocking vehicles to protect responders and the public. ERSI also published important resources for fire departments looking to better protect emergency scenes:

- [Blocking Procedures at Roadway Incidents](#)
- [Fire Department-Based Vehicles for Traffic Control](#)

The paper, along with these training resources, are essential tools departments can use to prepare for both roadway blocking and vehicle hardening.

TAKING ACTION TO PROTECT FIRST RESPONDERS

Many of the adaptations we've seen in equipment and apparatus have risen out of a particular incident that was challenging or a need that was unmet by available industry equipment. The need for this service is evidenced by the growing number of struck-by incidents we see in our news feeds daily. At the time of this writing, 40 responders, including tow operators, have been killed in roadway incidents in the United States in 2022.

Fire departments across the country are doing what they can to address this growing problem.

Some states have employed fire-police divisions/units/teams, either affiliated with a sheriff's office or similar and a fire department, that have several levels of traffic control units with various capabilities and responsibilities. Pennsylvania has what is regarded as one of the most robust fire-police units in the country, with the primary responsibility of traffic control at incident scenes and special events. These units employ various response vehicles (pickup/utility trucks or similar) loaded with traffic cones, signage and sometimes arrow boards that will at least provide some advance warning. Most of them are *not* equipped with impact attenuators, but at least one department below is paving the way in that realm.

There are also various pickup truck or utility-type units across the country that provide some level of fire department traffic control service, either ad hoc or in full-time deploy.

Below is a listing of some departments that have purchased a new or retrofitted a blocking unit for fire department responses. There are likely additional departments with similar equipment or other types of attenuating systems. I encourage you to share those with us at editor@firerescue1.com.

Michigan

Grand Rapids was the first fire department in the United States that I am aware of to employ a blocking attenuator as part of the fire department fleet. [The fire department converted an older city water department dump truck converted to a blocker](#). Wyoming and Zeeland Township also have blocking apparatus, too.

Pennsylvania

The Alpha Fire Company in Pennsylvania took delivery of a demo attenuator vehicle in August. Staff is training on the vehicle, which is being outfitted with equipment for its intended use.

South Dakota

Sioux Falls, South Dakota, has deployed a tow-behind attenuating device to protect its emergency vehicles and personnel. A trailered unit reduces may reduce the number of drivers needed to get the equipment there, but trailering also results in limited positioning and other uses for that vehicle.

Texas

Several departments have some form of attenuating system:

- Travis County ESD No. 2 – an older fire engine converted to a blocker:
- Irving – Multiple older fire engines converted to blockers:
- Denton – A custom built emergency response vehicle blocker:
- Grand Prairie – Two reserve-engines outfitted as blocking vehicles:
- Spring – Double-duty high-water rescue units outfitted with arrow boards and traffic control equipment:
- Carrollton Fire Rescue – A mobile barrier trailer that recently proved its worth:

We sometimes wince at the thought of spending money on apparatus or equipment that doesn't meet the core fire-focused mission. But when it pays off, it really pays off. Within days of being placed in service a little over a month ago, the return-on-investment for the Carrollton unit was realized. The vehicle, which had just been positioned on a vehicle wreck scene, was struck by another vehicle, protecting the crews and apparatus working the original incident.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Making sure that “everyone goes home” applies to every type of incident we respond to. When it comes to protecting our responders and our front-line apparatus, it really doesn’t matter who owns the roads or how much it costs!

Building Bridges, Not Walls: Creating a Culture of Respectful Workplace Discourse

Chioma Ofodile, MHC EAP Intern

Disagreements at work are to be expected and quite common. After all, you are two people coming into the work environment with different backgrounds and life experiences. The question isn't how to avoid disagreements but rather how to disagree respectfully. ***Handling conflict abrasively or unhealthy can lead to a hostile and unwelcoming work environment.*** Some people have different expectations for what the workplace serves. For some, work is work, and building relationships outside work isn't prosperity. In contrast, having a close-knit relationship with their coworkers is a valuable experience for others. Whatever end of the spectrum you are on, fostering a cohesive work environment for healthy disagreements is essential. Conflicts can arise from a difference in role expectations, demographic and multigenerational values, etc.

What are ways not to handle conflict in the workplace? One is sweeping it under the rug. While openly discussing our grievances isn't easy, ***letting them fester builds resentment in the long haul.*** Some handle confrontations directly face-to-face. In contrast, others might feel more comfortable having another staff member present or express their feelings through email or over the phone. All methods are good, and both parties must communicate their needs with one another to come to a compromise.

A second tip is to be wary of blame and guilt. When most people feel attacked or solely held responsible, they might shut down or become defensive. Awareness of your body language and how it could influence the other person's reaction is essential. Physically, you want to position yourself in an open and receptive manner. Two to use I statements when describing how that person's actions or words made you feel. When in doubt, substitute you for I. A typical workplace disagreement is due to multigenerational differences. When this is the case, it is important to focus on the person's behavior rather than stereotyping the person's personality based on stereotypes of that generation. Doing so feeds into blame and is not constructive.

Before conversing with your coworker or supervisor, it is essential to reflect on the end goal. This can be clear, concise, and specific about the changes you wish to see. Or simply compassionately expressing your truth. This can be done through the *sandwich method*. First, you acknowledge what is working or what that person does well. Then using I statements, describe your frustrations. Thirdly, end on a positive note. For example, acknowledging their openness to discussing with you.

Lastly, to make this interaction construction, it is valuable to **come into the experience open to taking responsibility and reflecting on your shortcomings.** *We are human beings and inherently flawed. Instead of looking at a workplace disagreement with negative skepticism, it can be a moment for growth—a time to connect, understand and learn more about the people in your workplace.*

LIVING WITH LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES! HOT TOPIC!

Fire Chief: Small Lithium Battery Explosion Forces Evacuation Of Several Stores At Suffolk County Strip Mall

A small lithium battery explosion forced several stores to evacuate at a Brentwood strip mall Thursday, according to the Brentwood fire chief. Brentwood Fire Chief Andrew Renison says a charging lithium battery caught fire at an e-bike store and sent smoke everywhere. When firefighters showed up, they took the battery outside and worked on putting it out. No one was injured in the fire, but Renison says the lithium-ion battery had to be removed from the site by Suffolk County Arson. There was also no structural damage to the store but there may have been some damage to the merchandise inside. Mike Loiacono was there when the fire broke out. "We all freaked out about it," Loiacono says. "Everybody in the plaza came outside and were all looking at it."

****Preventing Fire and/or Explosion Injury from Small and Wearable Lithium Battery Powered Devices**

OSHA Health and Safety Bulletin

INTRODUCTION

Small and wearable electronic devices used in workplaces (e.g., body cameras) rely on a power source that stores a high amount of energy in a small space (i.e., high energy density). Lithium cells provide sustained power and often have the capability to recharge. When designed, manufactured, and used properly, lithium batteries are a safe, high energy density power source for devices in the workplace. While lithium batteries are normally safe, they may cause injury if they have design defects, are made of low quality materials, are assembled incorrectly, are used or recharged improperly, or are damaged. In February 2018, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Status Report on High Energy Density Batteries Project reported over 25,000 overheating or fire incidents involving more than 400 types of lithium battery powered consumer products that occurred over a five-year period

Many consumer products have practical applications in small and large businesses. Ensuring these products will operate safely in workplaces begins with using batteries, chargers, and associated equipment that are tested in accordance with an appropriate test standard (e.g., UL 2054) and, where applicable, certified by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL).ⁱ Manufacturer's instructions provide procedures for use, charging, and maintenance that is specific to each device and necessary to prevent damage to the lithium batteries (See Image 1). For example, some batteries will overcharge if a charger is used that does not turn off when the battery is fully charged. Workers who wear or frequently handle lithium-powered devices or batteries are particularly at risk if a lithium battery catches fire or explodes since the device or battery is close to the body. – 2 – For example, small cameras worn by workers (e.g., police and security personnel), as shown in Image 2, can cause burns or other serious injury if the lithium battery catches fire or explodes while worn. To prevent injury, it is important for employers and workers to understand a lithium-powered device's basic function, hazards, and safe use.

HOW LITHIUM BATTERIES WORK

The term "lithium battery" refers to one or more lithium cells that are electrically connected. Like all batteries, lithium battery cells contain a positive electrode, a negative electrode, a separator, and an electrolyte solution. Atoms or molecules with a net electric charge (i.e., ions) are transferred from a positive electrode to a negative electrode through an electrolyte solution. Lithium cells store and release power by converting chemical potential energy into electrical energy using lithium ions or lithium metal. Electrolyte solutions allow ions to flow freely between the electrodes. Lithium-ion batteries use lithium in ionic form instead of lithium in solid metallic form (See Image 3). They are also usually rechargeable, often without the need to remove them from the device. Lithium-ion batteries power devices such as mobile telephones, laptop computers, tablets, cameras, and power tools. Lithium-metal batteries are generally non-rechargeable and have lithium-metal electrodes. Lithium-metal batteries are generally used to power devices such as watches, calculators, temperature data loggers, car key fobs, flashlights, and defibrillators.

Hazards Lithium batteries are generally safe and unlikely to fail, but only so long as there are no defects and the batteries are not damaged. When lithium batteries fail to operate safely or are damaged, they may present a fire and/or explosion hazard. Damage from improper use, storage, or charging may also cause lithium batteries to fail. Testing batteries, chargers, and associated equipment in accordance with an appropriate test standard (e.g., UL 2054), NRTL certification (where applicable), and product recalls, help identify defects in design, manufacturing, and material quality. Damage to lithium batteries can occur immediately or over a period of time, from physical impact, exposure to certain temperatures, and/or improper charging.

- Physical impacts that can damage lithium batteries include dropping, crushing, and puncturing.
- Damage to all types of lithium batteries can occur when temperatures are too high (e.g., above 130°F). External heat sources (e.g., open flames, heaters, etc.) can also accelerate failure in cells with defects or damage from other causes.
- Damage to lithium-ion batteries can occur when the batteries themselves or the environment around the batteries is below freezing (32°F) during charging. Charging in temperatures below freezing can lead to permanent metallic lithium buildup (i.e., plating) on the anode, increasing the risk for failure.

- Charging a device or battery without following manufacturer’s instructions may cause damage to rechargeable lithium-ion batteries. For example, some manufacturer-authorized chargers will cycle the power to the battery on and off before it is fully charged to avoid overcharging. Since ultra-fast chargers may not cycle power, do not use them unless the manufacturer’s instructions include them as an option.

Heat released during cell failure can damage nearby cells, releasing more heat in a chain reaction known as a thermal runaway. The high energy density in lithium batteries makes them more susceptible to these reactions. Depending on the battery chemistry, size, design, component types, and amount of energy stored in the lithium cell, lithium cell failures can result in chemical and/or combustion reactions, which can also result in heat releases and/or over-pressurization.

- In chemical reactions, by-products from the electrolyte solution and electrodes can increase the pressure in the cell to the point where the cell walls expand and by-products leak out. Chemical by-products usually include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, hydrogen, and hydrocarbons. In many cases, the by-products are also combustible and could ignite.
- In combustion reactions, a thermal runaway releases byproducts that may ignite to cause smoke, heat, fire, and/or explosion. The by-products from a lithium battery combustion reaction are usually carbon dioxide and water vapor. In some lithium batteries, combustion can separate fluorine from lithium salts in the battery. If mixed with water vapors, fluorine may produce hydrofluoric acid, which is particularly hazardous because workers may not feel its effects until hours after skin exposure.

PREVENTION

Workplace injuries from lithium battery defects or damage are preventable and the following guidelines will assist in incorporating lithium battery safety into an employer’s Safety and Health Program:

- Ensure lithium batteries, chargers, and associated equipment are tested in accordance with an appropriate test standard (e.g., UL 2054) and, where applicable, certified by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL), and are rated for their intended uses.
- Follow manufacturer’s instructions for storage, use, charging, and maintenance.
- When replacing batteries and chargers for an electronic device, ensure they are specifically designed and approved for use with the device and they are purchased from the device’s manufacturer or a manufacturer authorized reseller.
- Remove lithium-powered devices and batteries from the charger once they are fully charged.
- Store lithium batteries and devices in dry, cool locations.
- Avoid damaging lithium batteries and devices. Inspect them for signs of damage, such as bulging/cracking, hissing, leaking, rising temperature, and smoking before use, especially if they are wearable. Immediately remove a device or battery from service and place it in an area away from flammable materials if any of these signs are present.
- If batteries are damaged, remove them from service, place in fire resistant container (e.g., metal drum) with sand or other extinguishing agent, and dispose in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations. Contact a local battery recycling center for disposal instructions.
- Follow manufacturer’s guidance on how to extinguish small battery fires, which could include using ABC dry chemical extinguishers, Class D fire extinguishers (for lithium-metal), dirt, or sand.

TRAINING

Ensure that workers who use or handle lithium-powered devices, cells, or batteries in the workplace receive training associated with these products, including training on how to:

- Verify NRTL certification for batteries, chargers, and associated equipment, where applicable.
- Identify defective, damaged, or failing lithium-powered devices and batteries.
- Remove defective devices or batteries from the work place.
- Quickly remove a lithium-powered device from clothing if it feels hot or if the device is leaking, releasing gas, hissing, bulging/cracking, or on fire.

Ensure that an emergency action plan (EAP) for a workplace with lithium-powered devices or batteries includes lithium-related incident response procedures based on manufacturer’s instructions for responding to battery failures including fires and/or explosions.

Ensure that appropriate information about the hazards of lithium-powered devices and lithium batteries is

communicated to exposed workers (e.g., during repair of lithium-powered devices or during recycling activities) and that workers receive training on the physical and health hazards associated with lithium-ion and/or lithium-metal cells or batteries.

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+0 = 47
Last fire death 6/22/23 New Cassel, Nassau Co. Female, 73	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	94+0 = 94
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	721 + 19 = 740
Top Three State with the most 1&2 Family Deaths	1 NY = 47
	2 PA = 45
	3 OH = 44
There has been a total of 1208 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!

Does anyone know specifically which verse of the bible explains how to turn water into wine? Asking for a friend.

CLASSIFIED

OFFICERS OF THE CAPITAL AREA ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS

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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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Veteran Owned Business

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
Thursday, July 13, 2023	7:00 PM	Board Meeting	Clifton Park
August 2023	NO MEETING		
Thursday, September 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.