



CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION (CAFDA)

BULLETIN

YOUR FIRE DISTRICT NEWS SOURCE

DECEMBER 16, 2023

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Something for everyone in the Fire Service!!

CAPITAL SHORTS:

- I'm saddened to announce the passing of long time State Association Chaplain, Ed Brooks of the Mastic Fire Department. Ed was always a memorable Chaplain, writing his own tributes or prayers and delivering them with his authoritative and booming voice, he constantly commanded respect and attention. Please keep Ed and his family in your thoughts and prayers, he will be missed. Services will be held on December 19th from 2 to 4pm and again from 6 to 9pm at the Robertaccio Funeral Home in Mastic, NY.
- Commissioner Training Registration at 4 local locations for 2024 Page 28
- The 2024 **Installation Dinner** will be held on **Saturday, March 9th 6-10pm** at the **Century House in Latham**. More details to follow, mark your calendar.
- [GO TO THE END OF THE BULLETIN FOR OUR ANNOUNCEMENT OF FINANCIAL TRAINING FOR FIRE DISTRICT OFFICIALS, ALSO POSTED TO OUR WEB SITE AT CAFDA.NET](#)



- SKM_C30823112811480.pdf **Quick Response, Hometown Heroes Night** at Santa's Playland, Monday December 18th 5-8PM, 2081 Route 9 Round Lake, NY – You must have a flyer for admission to event.

CAFDA NEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

WWW.CAFDA.NET

Four Convenient Locations to take the required Commissioner's training - - see the Events Calendar at the end of this Bulletin.

*All correspondence & Capital Area Fire Districts Association Mailing Address should be directed to:
AFDCA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063 or EMAIL: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET*

General Membership Meetings - - In person and Zoom

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

Printable Calendar with much more – See End of Bulletin

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

The 2024 Installation Dinner will be held on Saturday, March 9th 6-10pm at the Century House in Latham. More details to follow, mark your calendar.

- All area fire district officials, chiefs and business partners are invited to this annual mixer. Time to relax have an adult beverage and enjoy some down time to get to know one another. Casual business attire.
-

PREPARE FOR ANOTHER EXCITING LOCAL TRAINING EVENT – FEBRUARY 2024

Financial Training for Fire District Officials

Mark your 2024 Calendar for a two-day seminar, February 29th & March 1st to be presented by The Office of the State Comptroller and held at the Halfmoon-Waterford Fire District #1 at 315 Middletown Road. GO TO THE LAST PAGE!

REGISTRATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED!!



The New CAFDA Website Is Live, Same Happy People, New Name!!

Go to www.CAFDA.net and request a member log on. You are going to see a better layout, easier navigation and we will be posting additional resource documents as we continue to grow the site. You will need a member logon to access the Bulletin archives and other features reserved for members.

Secretary and Treasurer email addresses have changed to:

secretary@cafdanet

treasurer@cafdanet

STATE ASSOCIATION NEWS:

WWW.AFDNYS.ORG

AFDSNY EDWARD “NED” CARTER SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2024

The Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York is pleased to announce that the “Ned Carter” Scholarship Program will continue in 2024. Program information and an application package will be available online for students to apply. We are in the process of finalizing the application form. Please check on our website at <https://www.afdsny.org/application.php> for further information on the program. To file an application students will be able to use the application window at that website address after the application form is finalized. These scholarships are available to New York State High School Seniors who will be graduating in June 2024.

To be considered for this honor, applications must be submitted online or by email by March 6, 2024, or postmarked by March 1, 2024

The scholarship applicant (student) must:

- be related to a firefighter or,
- be a firefighter or,
- be related to a fire district commissioner, fire district secretary, fire district treasurer or deputy treasurer, a fire district administrator/manager or,
- be an explorer in a fire department, and
- the fire district / fire department must be a current member in good standing of the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York.

AFDSNY awards four (4) scholarships a year for \$1,500 each, to graduating high school seniors who plan to attend a two (2) or four (4) year institution of higher education and will be pursuing a community service-related career. This may include but is not limited to fire service, EMS, nursing, social work, health related services, teaching, paramedic, etc.

Good standing means a dues paying member. A “dues paying member” for purposes of the scholarship application process and the awarding of a scholarship is an organization that is a current member in good standing of the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York. ***Good standing is established for purposes of this process by the district or department’s AFDSNY 2024 dues having been paid by March 1, 2024. Timely payment of 2024 dues will make a student in your jurisdiction eligible to be considered for a scholarship award.***

Each year a certain number of applications are rendered ineligible by the failure of a member organization to pay dues in a timely manner.

All applicants must use the AFDNY application forms. *All applications must be received by March 6, 2024.*

Applications submitted via USPS must be postmarked no later than March 1, 2024.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Director Tim Deveny who serves as the Chairperson of our Scholarship Committee. Mr. Deveny can be reached by email at tdeveny@afdsny.org or by telephone at 800520-9594.

AFDSNY Mini Summit in White Plains

Sponsored by **MRA International**
AFDSNY Mini Summit White Plains, Sonesta Hotel in White Plains NY
April 26th & 27th, 2024

Registration Options:

Friday & Saturday \$250 per person

includes: Two days of sessions, breakfast, lunch, parking on Friday, breakfast, and parking on Saturday.

Friday Only \$200 per person

includes: Friday sessions, breakfast, lunch and parking on Friday

Saturday Only \$75 per person

includes Saturday session, breakfast and parking

Overnight Rooms:

Sonesta White Plains Downtown \$179 a night

66 Hale Avenue

White Plains NY 10610

[Click Here to Reserve Your Room](#)

Or Call 1-800- SONESTA (766-37820)

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

https://mms.afdsny.org/members/evr/reg_event.php?orgcode=FDNY&evid=37358663

LOCAL CAFDA TRAINING APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR ENTIRE BOARD/SECRETARY/TREASURER

[The First Annual CAFDA Regional Conference - Spring 2024](#)

For Fire District Officials, Coming CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICT CONFERENCE April 25, 26 & 27th 2024 the CAFDA Spring Conference, a three-day conference to be held in Lake George and will be chocked full of information for Fire District Commissioners, Secretary's, Treasurers and Chiefs. An affordable conference at a local destination in the Capital Area. Watch for more Information as planning progresses.

ALL FIRE DISTRICT OFFICIALS AND CHIEFS FROM ANY LOCATION IN THE STATE ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

IF NOTHING ELSE READ THE ARTICLES PRECEDED BY **

THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

[2024 NYS Fire Service Alliance, Issues of United Concern](#)

The fire service organizations assembled in Troy, NY today to discuss their fire service legislative agendas for the 2023-2024 legislative sessions. In a departure from previous years the group identified several areas of mutual interest where a number of pieces of legislation might be introduced to benefit the fire service in New York State. The areas of common concern are:

- Firefighter Benefits
- EMS
- Building Codes
- Recruitment and Retention

Under these headings several pieces of legislation may be developed during the session beginning on January 1st. As the list is finalized additional information will be provided. The final list is supposed to be finalized by December 21st. More information will be provided when received and the list is refined.

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

THE LATEST FROM CONGRESS

[Reminder to Ask Congress to Fully Fund the AFG and SAFER Grants](#)

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant programs provide direct assistance to local fire and EMS agencies to help them purchase equipment, training, and apparatus, as well as recruit and retain career and volunteer personnel. AFG and SAFER were funded at \$360 million in FY 2023. The House FY 2024 Homeland Security appropriations bill would fund these programs at \$370 million and the Senate bill would fund these programs at \$338 million. This decrease in funding is unacceptable.

SEND MESSAGE AT THIS LINK:

<https://www.votervoice.net/NVFC/Campaigns/98446/Respond>

JUST FILL IN YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AND HIT SEND MESSAGE AT THE BOTTOM, EASY!!

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

****ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING CONSIDERATIONS FOR DISTRICT/FIRE COMPANY RELATIONS**

Greg Serio – CAFDA Attorney

Since I started this series about the annual organizational meeting back in November, this yearly event still seemed like a long way off. Now, as we find ourselves in mid-December, with our board membership confirmed by annual district elections and company leadership selected by the membership (including the nominations of chief officers, as we discussed in the last installment), we know that the organizational meeting is just around the corner. So, it is time to discuss the state of affairs of district/company relations and how the organizational meeting can be used to set the relationship parameters.

As you may know, some districts and towns pay for fire protection through contracts with private fire companies who receive money for their services. Those contracts are specifically governed by a variety of state statutes. My friend and colleague, attorney Tim Hannigan, general counsel at FASNY, addressed issues relating to these types of contracts in a recent column in *The Volunteer Firefighter*. But what about those fire companies and associations that are not separately and independently incorporated entities but rather organized, equipped and otherwise supported by the fire district? My experience over 33 years in a commissioned district, and in my time as a district counsel, have told me that there is not much focus on approaching those relations to some degree like those relationships between authorities having jurisdiction and private incorporated fire companies. In a question, can a fire district condition its selection of the X fire company as the official firefighting and rescue force of the fire district for the coming year on certain principles if not prescriptive requirements?

In a word, yes, they can do so even if they haven't done so in the past.

As I teach the state mandated class for new fire commissioners (chiefs and assistant chiefs, along with district secretaries and treasurers would be good to attend these classes as well if for no other reason than you are mentioned—a lot—in these programs) I hear lots of stories about how the fire companies either assume that they are the core engine of a fire district, or, conversely, the fire district is there to take all of the problems away from a risk averse fire company. While a critical component in the operation of any fire department, the fire district is the authority having jurisdiction and is ultimately responsible for providing fire and rescue services to its constituents, be those services be delivered by the company that has long been affiliated with the district or one from the outside that the district decides to contract with as an alternative, or whether the district comes up with another plan altogether. For our purposes, we will assume that the fire district will want to continue to appoint its partner as the official firefighting and rescue force to operate upon the authority of the fire district. But we

will also assume that issues have cropped up between the two organizations, like those that are now commonplace: declining enrollment in fire companies, which is leading to fewer qualified firefighters, less than satisfactory chief officer nominees, and longer response times, higher burnout and other things that stand to challenge the core mission of the fire district.

The fire company's sole role insofar as the fire district is concerned (its mission or objectives as a social organization may vary and give it purpose outside of a firefighting responsibility) is to provide members to the fire district, to be handed over to the chief officers for training, and then put into service as active firefighters and rescue personnel. If the fire company cannot meet that singular purpose to the satisfaction of the district in the discharge of its duties to the public,

then a foundational conversation must be had between the two organizations. Such a conversation is always better when it is in a context of what is expected of the fire company, when it is informed by the experience of the chiefs in managing the personnel provided by the fire company, and when it is against a backdrop of what is necessary to effectively serve the public. Establishing parameters on the fire company to meet certain personnel goals, whether they are principle-based goals, such as “the fire company shall endeavor to improve the membership of the fire company so as to continue to provide firefighters to the fire district,” or more prescriptive, such as “the fire company shall increase its membership by not less than 5% each year to accommodate established attrition trends of active firefighters coming off line annually,” the district is putting the fire company on notice that it is closely watching personnel trends, perhaps even in the context of response performance or other additional metrics.

The fire district may also insist on other principles or prescriptions:

- The fire company shall annually provide the district with a list of all members, their addresses and their respective status, so that the commissioners can be informed as to the number of active-duty responders, where they are (remember the 45% rule? That is to be sure that there are adequate responders within the confines of a fire district, something the district needs to know) and what their respective performances were for the previous year.

- The fire company shall provide its bylaws and constitution each year, regardless of any change thereto, together with monthly meeting minutes and quarterly financials, so that the board can determine the fitness of the company to meet its obligations as the official firefighting force for the fire district (this being an amalgam of law, comptroller audit findings and actual exchanges between fire districts and fire companies; as one fire company lawyer said to me, this is a silly hill to die on for the fire companies

because the fire district has many different ways to compel production of such information).

- The fire district shall require the fire company to maintain such policies and procedures that to the greatest extent possible safeguard the safety and well-being of its members when not otherwise under the direction and responsibility of the chiefs (such as at fires, drills, parades, funerals, and other statutorily-allowed activities of a fire district).

How a fire company acknowledges and responds to such conditions of appointment will largely be up to them unless things are specifically demanded by a board (the boards would do well to not delve so deeply into the “how of things”). They will have to have a plan of recruitment and retention; so many people think that is the chief’s responsibility, and as a matter of necessity a chief oftentimes picks this up as a default, but it is definitely NOT the responsibility of the chief to create members of the fire company. (The fire district may require periodic reporting on recruitment efforts, and that would be appropriate.) The chief turns them into responders. For the company’s protection, if the problem of making members into responders is because of failing of the firematic officers, the company president should inform the district of same. Some will say that they have such good relations between their boards and companies that no such parameters need to be set; amen, and move along, as this is certainly not necessary for everyone).

There is one fire company in the Capital Region that maintained a particularly strenuous relationship with the fire district board that appointed this company as one of two official firefighting forces for the district. That was up until the day when the district had had enough, informed the company its services were no longer necessary, and removed the fire district equipment out of the company-owned station and back into the district’s main station. Insto-presto, the fire company became a social organization and the fire house became a clubhouse for that social organization. The company was even forced to remove the name of the fire department from its facade lest it be confused with a real firehouse. Another district in our region did it once before around 15 years ago and came very close to having to do it again, but cooler heads prevailed at the company level and now there is a far more harmonious relationship between the two. And I am certain there are many more stories than that around town.

All of this is not to say who is stronger, though many will look at this as nothing than an organizational fistfight. The law is very well designed to articulate who is expected to do what, how lanes of responsibility are to be defined, and what are the objectives of the fire district/fire company relationship. This is not a scrum. This is a well-established order of things. It is always up to those at the company level to understand how it works, and for commissioners to

articulate why they need the things they are asking of the company (most of which are self-evident). The organizational meeting, which should be attended by the fire company president (if not its board if the directors are looking broadly at their obligations), the chief officers and all of the commissioners so that this relationship and its parameters are clearly understood so that there is no surprise if it comes time for the commissioners to decide that they must look elsewhere for their official firefighting and rescue force for the year.

If anyone would like a template of such a resolution for appointing a fire company as the official firefighting force of the fire district, feel free to connect with me at gregoryserio1@gmail.com.

Good luck with your organizational meeting and all of 2024.

Former Paint Rock Fire Chief Stole More Than \$10,000 From His Department, May Have Used Some Of It On A Jeep Down Payment, TN Comptroller Says

Tom Barclay

HELENWOOD, Tenn. — The former chief of the Paint Rock Volunteer Fire Department in Scott County is charged with stealing money from his department after a grand jury indicted him, according to the Tennessee Comptroller's Office.

The comptroller's office said Scott County officials reported concerns of "questionable financial activity" against the former fire chief, 24-year-old Austin Lewallen. State investigators said they discovered Lewallen had been using the VFD's debit card to make personal purchases and said he paid a utility bill using Paint Roack VFD funds.

Between May 2022 and Jan. 2023, the comptroller's office said Lewallen stole nearly \$14,000 and said most of that happened by making over-the-counter bank withdrawals and unauthorized ATM withdrawals. The investigation also turned up another \$4,700 in questionable cash withdrawals that weren't supported by receipts to determine if it had benefited the VFD.

On one occasion, the comptroller's investigative report said Lewallen withdrew \$2,500 from the VFD's account. The next day, they said he put a \$2,500 total down payment on a Jeep Patriot.

In the report, Lewallen told investigators he had mistakenly used the VFD ATM card for 44 personal purposes. The comptroller's report said he did not track the number of unauthorized purchases, which included fuel, food, alcohol, groceries and other personal items.

Scott County removed Lewallen as fire chief in March 2023. A grand jury later indicted him for theft of property over \$10,000 in November. Lewallen was arrested on Dec. 4 and released on the same day on a \$20,000 bond.

The comptroller's report noted that the VFD lacked several internal controls and did not have an active board of directors until after members removed Lewallen as chief, saying that would have helped maintain financial oversight accountability.

The comptroller noted that the VFD had several necessary unpaid expenses such as insurance and utility payments during Lewallen's tenure, and at one point the gas line was disconnected because of multiple unpaid bills.

"During the time this theft occurred, Paint Rock VFD did not have an active board of directors," said Comptroller Jason Mumpower. ***"Once Lewallen was removed as fire chief, a board of directors was formed. I encourage the board to establish firm internal controls to ensure money is properly handled and all disbursements are properly documented."***

According to a post Lewallen made in Aug. 2022 on the Paint Rock Fire Department's Facebook page, he joined the department while he was a senior in high school in 2017. He said at the time he also served as president of the Scott County Fire and Rescue Association for two years and was the community outreach coordinator for the department.

"I will tell you being Chief is not all it's cracked up to be you have a lot more responsibility on your shoulders than when your a assistant,captain, or lieutenant. My whole life I have always been taught about service and giving back to your community," Lewallen said in the post. "This is my way I give back this has become my life and passion to do is service and protect the lives and property of others. I do believe I have a great group of men and women who I can trust, and also who I can call my other family."

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****Authentic Leadership Doesn't Require You to Be Soft**

Kerry Henderson

If you have been in the fire service any length of time, you have probably taken some of the obligatory officer and leadership classes. You will likely agree that these classes are taught by firefighters and fire officers of varied ability. Some of these classes may be required for promotion or may serve to check a box for a career ladder advancement. Believe me, there are some great fire service leadership classes out there, and I encourage you to seek those out.

My fear is that too many in the fire service take the required, check-the-box promotion classes and never look anywhere else for development. Today, I want to encourage you to think outside of the traditional fire service leadership concepts and seek out what will personally improve your ability to influence and mentor others in a positive way, because that is what makes an exceptional company officer.

When I started to branch out of fire service-specific classes and delve into private sector-driven training, it really changed how I saw my role as a leader and made me want to change how I lead others. This type of training and development led me down a road to work on my personal authenticity and learning how to use my empathetic nature to be an exceptional leader.

The single, most important thing a company officer can do to exhibit exceptional leadership is to be authentic. Developing an authentic leadership style and learning what it means to be truly authentic must take place before taking that big promotion. This means taking time early in your career, well before a promotion process, to evaluate your own authenticity and then use that authenticity as an informal leader in the department. I have seen too many firefighters get promoted and then try to emulate someone else's leadership style that doesn't quite fit them or try to suddenly figure out what they want their style to be. Your subordinates will see right through you if you aren't being your true self or if you suddenly try to change who they've always seen you to be.

What does it mean to be authentic? Mike Robbins says, ***"We live in a culture that is starving for authenticity. We want our leaders, our co-workers, our family members, our friends, and everyone else we interact with to tell us the truth and to be themselves."*** Unfortunately, many people feel that we have to act or be a certain way to be a part of whatever culture is around us. This is very often the case in the firehouse.

How does this relate to the fire service and our company officers? As leaders, we should want every individual we work with to feel empowered to say what they think, to live out their passions, to be themselves, and to tell the truth (even when it is difficult). I do not just say this as a huggie-feely way to say we want everyone to have a safe space. I say this because the people we meet in life who have the courage and confidence to be who they are without apologizing, the people who aren't afraid to admit their weaknesses, and the people who are willing to be vulnerable are the people who make the best leaders. Not only are they great leaders to work for, but they are also great people to be friends with and to work alongside.

I've heard others say that doing the personal work to improve your authenticity and your empathy and focusing on the feelings of your employees is soft and is geared toward a generation that needs a safe space. To try and respond to this in a compassionate, empathic way, I have to say that this type of thinking and this type of leadership is outdated. Data, research, and retention efforts show us that ignoring how things make our employees feel and what they value is extremely detrimental not only to the individuals but to the organization and its culture.

Authentic leadership comes from ancient Greek philosophy and is associated with virtues such as fortitude, temperance, justice, and prudence. When I first thought about what it meant to be an authentic leader, a steadfast, speak-your-mind-at-all-costs type of leader came to mind. But when I carefully looked at each of those virtues, ***I came to the realization that authentic leaders also use great restraint when needed, use judiciousness and are careful when choosing words, and—most importantly—use compassion to get to know what each member of their team needs to succeed.*** Andreas Jones, from the Forbes Coaches Council, says that the authentic leader has a flexible style to accommodate each team member but, "regardless of the situation, a true authentic leader will put their authenticity above all else and keep communication as real as possible."

How does one become an authentic leader? **First and foremost, you need to spend time working on your emotional intelligence (EQ) early in your career.** *Psychology Today* reports that emotional intelligence "refers to the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others." Those who can recognize their own

emotions and regulate them are often extremely good at reading social cues. We gravitate toward people like this in the fire service because they are self-aware enough to understand how they respond emotionally in certain situations and can empathize with how others may respond as well.

Second, you need to be confident enough to trust your heart. I have seen too many leaders quote a policy or lack thereof instead of doing what is right for their employees. If you know deep down that something is wrong or doesn't feel right when you are making a decision, then be confident enough in yourself to find a way to make it work. This doesn't mean directly disobeying policy or orders, but it does mean finding ways to make sure your crew knows you have their best interest at heart.

Next, you need to be a person of your word. Identifying the values that make up who you are is a top priority. Once you decide on them, stick to them. Your crews and your bosses need to know at the end of the day that your integrity does not waver. They need to know that you aren't flippant in what you believe today vs. what you believe tomorrow. Authentic leaders always do what they say they will, and if they don't, they have a damn good reason, or an apology follows close behind.

Authentic leaders are as direct in communication as they are empathic. They know how to communicate with each member of their team in a way that is most appropriate with each team member. They do not take the approach of "This is how I am so this is how everyone else should be." Team members will need you to present criticism in a way that they can receive it, and this varies dramatically from person to person. Empathy starts with understanding your own personal values and how you got them. Once you understand what your true values are (not just what you think they should be) and what life experiences caused you to establish those values, you can lead from a totally different place. You can use that to raise your expectations of others because you can easily communicate to others what values you hold dear and have expectations on and what values are not as high on the list.

Once they understand their values, authentic leaders work to understand the values of those they work with or of their subordinates. Just like understanding your own values helps you to set your own expectations, understanding your teammates' values helps you to be able to make sure you do not let them down in the areas of what they value. I've found that most people have not done significant work to nail down their true values. Helping your subordinates work to find their own true, personal values is extremely beneficial and will change so much for them and for your relationship with them.

Authentic leaders are often "overcommunicators." One of the best supervisors I ever worked for taught me that phrase and it stuck. **I would rather tell my crew too much than have them left in the dark to draw their own conclusions on what they are supposed to be doing or on what is happening.** This goes for expectations too. Don't assume they know what you expect of them. Every company officer has higher expectations in certain areas than others; make sure each firefighter who works for you understands what those areas of high expectations are. For me, this was a high level of customer service, detailed reports, if you see something that needs to be cleaned/fixed/taken care of then do it without being asked, and no shift wars (worry about your own self).

Last, but probably most important, authentic leaders are honest and transparent about their capabilities. They are vulnerable enough to admit their weaknesses and are showing their crews that they are actively working to improve them. There is nothing worse than working with someone who openly admits he is bad at some portion of his job but does absolutely nothing about it. In short, be willing to admit your faults but be just as willing to make them better.

Hopefully, some of this encourages you to develop your authentic leadership style. If you do nothing else, I want you to try every day to be less in-authentic, or, according to "The Art of Charm," "not being your real self. That can take many forms: masquerading as someone you're not, compromising what you feel is right, feeling strange in your own skin, mimicking those around you, or generally feeling like you're not one with your day-to-day experience."

We see this in the fire service, people mimicking those around them because they feel like they should behave or lead exactly like someone they admire does. But what happens? That person tries to take on a personality that is not authentic and it seems fake or is not convincing. I much prefer leaders who know themselves well enough to be comfortable being themselves and have a leadership style that fits them. We gravitate to leaders who are authentic because it feels real, and it helps us feel okay to be authentic ourselves.

"Ask Before Task": Establishing Ownership in Fire and Emergency Services Leadership

Dave McGlynn

Many times, leaders throughout fire and emergency services struggle with getting the right people to execute the needed tasks to support the mission. Many leaders fail because they assume the best course of action is to assign tasks to their people. This often fails due to the lack of interest and resistance from the membership. It is a psychological certainty that people will be more receptive to a task when they are asked rather than tasked.

In the high-stakes and fast-paced world of fire and emergency services, teamwork is paramount, and effective leadership is nonnegotiable. Amid the urgency, there is a guiding principle that bolsters both these aspects: “Ask Before Task.”

“Ask Before Task” is the process of engaging team members in conversations about assignments before they are given. This dialogue helps ensure understanding, fosters ownership, and builds confidence within the team. It also reinforces the importance of each task within the broader mission context.

While it may seem counterintuitive to pause for discussion when every second counts, this step is crucial. It confirms comprehension, alignment, and readiness among team members, leading to more efficient and effective action.

BUILDING OWNERSHIP

In fire and emergency services, a sense of ownership is key to motivation and efficiency. When firefighters feel ownership over their tasks, they’re not just going through the motions—they’re committed, invested, and more likely to do their best work.

“Ask Before Task” promotes this ownership in several ways.

- It provides an opportunity for firefighters to understand the reasons behind their assignments, connecting them to the larger mission. This understanding promotes engagement, as firefighters can see how their efforts directly contribute to the team’s overall success.
- By providing a platform for questions and clarifications, it shows respect for team members’ professional knowledge and judgment. This validation not only boosts morale but also encourages personal responsibility for the task at hand.
- It promotes an open dialogue, which can generate innovative solutions or preemptively identify potential issues. By fostering this openness, leaders build a culture where firefighters feel empowered to voice their opinions and ideas, enhancing their sense of ownership and commitment.

It is important to establish an environment that warrants ownership from the team. This creates “buy-in” while empowering your people to feel that they are a valued member of the organization.

Here are a few examples of some “taskers” that help create buy-in and offer ownership to your people.

- **PPE:** If you have people who are passionate about the latest standards and requirements involving PPE, you should ask them if they’d like to be a part of that committee. This helps your organization get the proper up-to-date specifications while making the members feel empowered to research that information.
- **Apparatus/Equipment:** Within every organization, there are several people who not only love but understand what the latest and greatest fire trucks are out there. In addition, they also know what the best equipment is to offer the best services that support the mission. Again, these people have a passion for this topic, so they will be willing to do the research to compare specifications and prices to get the best for your organization.
- **Training:** The training committee should probably consist of the greatest number of people assigned to that task. Being as fire and emergency services has multiple walks of life that come with a magnitude of different disciplines, there is a need for different subject matter experts (SME). The members assigned to this tasker will help bring the best to your training program, which will offer the required preparation to the members. Having people who are passionate about training and equally passionate about specific disciplines will strengthen your training program and the efficiency of your team. The members assigned to this committee will deliver the best level of training to the membership, which will prepare them to execute the required skills they are expected to perform.

ENSURING THE MISSION IS MET

As time goes on, mission needs may change, and the workload can ebb and flow. Due to this reality, it is important to ensure that the mission is still met. The protection of the community, the residents, and the businesses throughout your community should always be the focus. Implementing a “tasker” or “other duties as assigned” to your team not only allows them to show their strengths, but it also ensures that the best people are completing the tasks that produce efficiency within your organization while maintaining operational readiness.

While promoting individual ownership, “Ask Before Task” also ensures the broader mission is achieved. The success of any emergency response relies on a coordinated effort, where every task, no matter how small, contributes to the overall mission.

This strategy ensures everyone is on the same page, reducing misunderstandings that could potentially derail operations. By providing a clear understanding of each task, it enables firefighters to better anticipate and adapt to changing conditions on the fire ground. This adaptability is key in a field where every situation is unique and unpredictable.

VERIFYING TASK COMPLETION

“Ask Before Task” also helps in verifying that work is being completed. As leaders engage with team members, they can track progress and troubleshoot problems. This engagement is not about micromanaging but about understanding the challenges team members face and offering support.

Moreover, this leadership style promotes accountability, as tasks are discussed and agreed on rather than just assigned. Firefighters who understand their roles and feel ownership are more likely to carry out their tasks diligently, report on their progress accurately, and seek help when necessary.

CONCLUSION

In fire and emergency services, where urgency, teamwork, and efficiency are critical, the “Ask Before Task” strategy provides a robust framework for leadership. It builds a culture of ownership and accountability, ensures alignment with the mission, and verifies that work is being completed, leading to more effective emergency responses. While the principle might require a moment’s pause in the rush of decision making, its benefits far outweigh this momentary investment of time.

OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE -CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES!

OPPORTUNITIES:

Volunteer Ffs In Pa. Township Could Earn Up To \$14K Under New Program

Sarah Roebuck

A new program in a Pennsylvania township offers volunteer firefighters up to \$14,000 a year. The program was started in response to the declining number of volunteer firefighters in Pennsylvania, which went from 300,000 in the 1970s to now 30,000, the report states.

In an effort to reverse the trend, Lower Paxton Township is offering money for volunteers to spend more time working shifts at its firehouses.

Since it started on Nov. 1, the program has been well-received among fire companies, with 10 out of 48 Lower Paxton firefighters increasing their participation, Deputy Fire Chief Brett Graham told PennLive. The township now aims to use these incentives to attract more firefighters.

“The 30,000 were really feeling that pain,” Graham told PennLive. “We are hoping these staffing changes help reduce our response time.”

Firefighters from Colonial Park, Paxtonia and Linglestown fire companies can register for 4, 8 or 12-hour shifts, earning \$10 per hour. Firefighters can pick and choose shifts as long as the total amount they earn comes in at less than \$14,392 in accordance with federal wage requirements.

Graham said the money comes from the township’s fire tax and was already budgeted for 2023.

“Our goal is to bolster our ranks with skilled volunteers, ensuring our community’s safety is never compromised,” Robin Lindsey, a township supervisor, told PennLive. “By extending this opportunity beyond our borders, we aim to enrich our pool of dedicated volunteers.”

CHALLENGES:

Two Middletown Area Volunteer Firefighters Charged With Grand Larceny, Conspiracy

State Police arrested two volunteer firefighters who live in Middletown for grand larceny and conspiracy involving what they said was the theft of \$17,500.

The State Police’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation was notified in September about a possible larceny from the Washington Heights Volunteer Fire Company in the town of Wallkill, according to a release from State Police Troop F. An investigation revealed that over several months, the department’s financial secretary and vice president had withdrawn

more than \$17,500 from the department's account in numerous unauthorized transactions. The pair were arrested on Dec. 12 at the State Police barracks in Wallkill. They were both arraigned in the town of Chester court and released on their own recognizance with a return date to appear in the town of Wallkill court.

[Wappingers Falls Fire Chief Allegedly Called Resident A Racial Slur In Dispute](#)

Maria Silva

Wappingers Falls volunteer Fire Chief Jason Enson allegedly called a Black female resident the N-word during a neighbor dispute on Nov. 13, according to the woman and police reports obtained via a Freedom of Information Law request.

Enson also worked in the village's Water Department. He said he was first suspended with pay on Nov. 20 and then fired on Nov. 30. As of Dec. 15, Enson said he remains fire chief, a volunteer position that is elected by the membership.

"I did not say this word," said Enson, adding that he knows of seven people who witnessed the dispute and can back him up. "This isn't the first time that I've been accused of this. And guess what, every time it's come back that I've never said that word."

Attorneys for the village said they were unable to comment on whether Enson had been fired from the Water Department, citing the matter as ongoing, but village Mayor Kevin Huber and the Board of Trustees did provide a statement concerning the allegations of racist language.

"The mayor and the Board of Trustees of the village of Wappingers Falls have been informed of the Nov. 13, 2023, incident involving the village of Wappingers Falls Fire Chief Jason Enson allegedly calling an African American resident a racial slur," reads the emailed statement. "The mayor and the Board of Trustees take these allegations very seriously and have taken immediate action to investigate and pursue all necessary actions to address these allegations. The Board views the alleged behavior as unacceptable, and it does not tolerate such conduct. The Board of Trustees will continue to pursue all legal avenues at its disposal to address these allegations and to protect the people of the village from this sort of ugliness."

Enson said the termination is part of a "witch hunt" against him conducted by the village and that he's had "a target on his back."

Enson declined to share his termination letter signed by Huber but read it aloud over the phone to a reporter. He said he was fired because he was still on a probationary period, but that the village did not communicate with him before he was terminated.

Enson said he plans to sue the Black resident for defamation and pursue legal action against the village, but did not specify on what basis. He also said he wanted to get his job back at the Water Department.

"I don't know how to put this, but I have colored people in my family," Enson said. "My cousin's kids are Black. So, I don't understand why I would ever say it. There are other words that you can use. But anyway, it's just a regular name-calling. So no, I've never used the word and it is funny that it's in the police report. Those witnesses won't even come forward and admit that I said this word."

THE DISPUTE

The neighbor dispute Enson got involved in took place on the evening of Nov. 13, when Wappingers Falls police responded to a verbal altercation. The report states that police officers were met by several individuals yelling from what appeared to be the back of the residence.

According to the report, two police units responded to the scene. They were met by Enson, who said, "Don't say anything that the body cameras are on."

The police report also includes a supporting deposition from the woman, signed under penalty of perjury, accusing Enson of calling her a racial slur. It states several profanities were exchanged between herself and the two other women involved in the argument and that Enson intervened telling her to leave the property "before he f---- me up himself."

As the woman walked back to her home, she said Enson yelled profanities at her and called her the N-word, according to the police report.

"I turned around and called him out on the fact that he called me this and he said, 'Yeah that's right,' to confirm that's what he said to me," the woman states in the supporting deposition.

Shortly after, she said Enson knocked on her door and she asked him to leave her property. She said the Enson continued to yell profanities at her and repeated the racial slur. The woman states in the police report that Enson then yelled out "f--- both of you" at the woman and her 17-year-old daughter and left in a red fire department SUV.

The police report also includes information from a witness who states that she heard yelling coming from the home and she went outside as a concerned neighbor. The witness stated that “she did hear the N-word being used from across the street. She stated she did not see the person’s face but saw a fire vehicle parked in front of her neighbor’s house and then drive away,” according to the police report.

Enson said he responded to the scene after he was contacted by his sister-in-law, who lives in the house, saying she they felt unsafe. Enson added that he got involved in the dispute in defense of his family.

“How do I know this woman didn’t have a knife or a gun? She was in her face and not for nothing but the world that we live in now, how can you trust anybody? We have kids that bring guns to school. You’re telling me that I should have sat on my couch and let my family be alone?” Enson said. “I would do it again. It’s my family. You would do the same for your family.”

“This was really traumatic,” the woman told the Times Union anonymously and said she was considering moving away because of the incident. “The argument went on both sides, but this has reached a whole other level.”

The woman added that Mayor Huber had called her and notified her that Enson did not have his job at the Water Department.

“(He) got really deep with me about how he knew this person, how he tried to help this person to grow and to evolve,” she said.

The woman said the village should “go out of their way” to revamp its policies and “maybe make an effort to show that you want diversity.”

“I was peaceful, calm and minding my business, but something happened that caused an argument and somebody that shouldn’t have jumped in it did, and now my life is just not the same anymore,” the woman said. “I just want this to be over with and I want him to be held accountable.”

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



[NVFC Webinar - Tesla Part 1: Introduction to Tesla First Responder Page and Documents & Tesla Vehicle Shut-down Procedures](#)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24TH AT 2pm

WEBINAR: INTRODUCTION TO EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR TESLA VEHICLES

Presenter: Mike McConnell

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PdMe3vgzQ3SIKMzDd_SEbA#/registration



[Thin Ice ESIP WEBINAR SERIES](#)

Join us for a webinar discussing potential risks and best practices associated with ice rescue emergencies.

Wednesday 12/20/23 at 7PM

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: [https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-](https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=0a9892caf8&e=781e9a2c81)

[manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=0a9892caf8&e=781e9a2c81](https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=0a9892caf8&e=781e9a2c81)

2024 EVOC Train the Trainer Courses

Now Scheduled!

This course is intended to prepare a qualified instructor to provide high quality training to their agency membership in the safe operation of vehicles in response and non-response modes. We discuss the operation of emergency vehicles, personal vehicles and special vehicles when operating on behalf of their agency.

2024 Dates:

These times are all Eastern Standard Time

January 8th:

3:00pm **FIRE** 7:00pm **EMS**

April 8th:

3:00pm **EMS** 7:00pm **FIRE**

July 15th:

3:00pm **FIRE** 7:00pm **EMS**

October 7th:

3:00pm **EMS** 7:00pm **FIRE**

Topics include:

- Risk Management
- Intersection Safety
- Response Driving
- Defensive Driving
- Discussion regarding the hazards and challenges of vehicle operations.

We also prepare the instructor candidate in teaching how to perform a complete maintenance inspection and having students perform safe driving skills practice.

Pricing:

ESIP Insureds: Free

Non-ESIP Insured: \$200 per student

Register Here!



SCAN ME

For questions about this course or other Risk Management offerings:

Call: 1 800 822 3747 ext. 176

Email: RiskManagement@mcneilandcompany.com



Bring NYSAFC Training to Your Area

Fire departments and county agencies or associations that are interested in hosting classroom-based programs or Regional Hands-On Training are invited to submit host request forms. The forms outline the specific host responsibilities and logistical considerations for each NYSAFC program. Sites are now being considered for programs in 2024.

COMPANY OFFICERS LEADERSHIP TRAINING COLT 2024

NYSAFC's [Company Officers Leadership Training \(COLT\)](#) is a two-day leadership development program for current and aspiring company officers featuring the lectures:

- **“Leading from the Middle – Challenges for Front Line Officers”** with Chief **Tom LaBelle** (Prince William County [VA] Fire & Rescue)
- **“Tactical Considerations with Minimal Staffing”** & **“The Leadership Journey in the Fire Service”** with Chief **Tony Perez** (Pasco County [FL] Fire Rescue)
- **“Improving Company Level Operations”** with Lt. **Hector Lopez**, Deputy Chief **Tom May**, & Captain **Ed Tracey** (Rochester F.D.)

Fulton County, Friday and Saturday January 12-13 2024, Berkshire Fire Department • 320 Steele Avenue Ext. • Gloversville, NY 12078

Registration (per person):

\$200 – NYSAFC members

\$225 – non-members

Pre-registration is encouraged. New – online registration available for departments!

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001Xydryrcjpr9ytJAhzhPu_Z4BMAoLB-KJ_I7mo2ltSi239rNjTz1ZyifU9Zi32aSPeOpHD0r9HQFO0P4kjONoqpfXk_MorV9y1V6Npdri30dOgzzl8wweyZ0FMEAgzz2k8R4OwMgH3mbm6KylvDjRgJ_zY5xgjn&c=Z1RoMp5f8GFFFXy-

2024 SEMINAR SERIES

"Searching –
The Offensive and Defensive"



With Lieutenant Mike Scotto, Fire Department City of New York

Searching tactics are primarily thought of as an offensive action – moving in, checking behind doors, in closets, and numerous other areas. As we search, our concerns are focused on the search. Defensive tactics involve our escape plans, which are needed as we complete our search, but more importantly under extreme or emergency conditions. To make these tactics work, we must always have our strategy front and center. Both sides of the coin are in play all the time. In this three-hour program, students will examine strategy and tactics to gain a more concise understanding of the training necessary for search.

REGISTRATION FEES:

\$35 – NYSAFC members • **\$50** – non-members (per person)

Pre-registration is encouraged. New – online group registration is available for fire departments!

REGISTER HERE:

https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001QZWPfjYZRP6tAYnVrgg36Z_YE6vp89dymWfQQD1d7q4ZRwVDbNdE8ByVmF5_856f_UrB-yGihYJigwEPzCbQfCvEoeEALHRXrk_M-dbDWBRYRtKiko1vLice_oi1AFseMKfN01xTmCmiyzyMwYur-39p1T1V2_yCho2C2F1_fJn94LviwwZ3Aag==&c=AmhECQ6uFruSlwrKRKspNlivj3NWEIzhZOrf3KrFnUls83Dp1Q1JdQ==&ch=AqMwftSnQqSSjoelDoQJ-cfc_GyhBFLqV23YaEp7HU-kR9WoEr9kSg==

7:00pm STARTING TIME

Albany (Monday, February 26)

Schenectady (Tuesday, March 12)

Clinton (Tuesday, April 9)

Herkimer (Wednesday, April 10)

Fulton (Tuesday, September 10)

Rensselaer (Tuesday, October 29)

VFIS® *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 **81** FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S*

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com**

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

You Just Never Know!

- A suspected DUI driver overnight drove their Toyota Tacoma into the scene of an earlier DUI crash on Interstate 76 and hit two Commerce City, Colorado police officers and two South Adams County Fire Department firefighters.
- 39-year-old Matthew Babcock a fire lieutenant with the Lisbon, Connecticut was killed Sunday following a rollover crash in Preston that sent his pickup truck down a ditch and into a creek.

DISTRICT FINANCES

OSC Audit of the STAFFORD Fire Department, Inc. - Financial Management

BACKGROUND

The Department is a not-for-profit organization incorporated to provide fire protection and emergency medical services within the Town of Stafford (Town) fire protection district, in Genesee County.

The Department is governed by its adopted bylaws. The five-member Board of Trustees (Board) is responsible for the Department's financial activities, which are funded primarily by a fire protection contract with the Town. The Town pays the Department for these services from its real property tax revenues.

The Department's officers are elected by its members and include the Board as well as the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Fire Chief, four Assistant Chiefs and two auditors. The President is responsible for enforcing the Department's bylaws and ensuring all officers perform their duties.

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

Determine whether the Stafford Fire Department's (Department) Board and Treasurer properly managed the Department's finances.

KEY FINDINGS

The Board and Treasurer did not properly manage the Department's finances. The Board **did not adopt realistic budgets or take an active role in monitoring Department finances. As a result, the operating budget was underestimated** by \$29,667 in 2021 and by \$33,298 in 2022.

The Board did not:

- Include revenue estimates in the budgets for 2021, 2022 and 2023.
- Develop realistic budgets, as certain expense estimates were omitted or overstated in the operating budgets.
- Develop a written multiyear financial or capital plan to help guide budget development and save for capital asset and equipment purchases.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Review and adopt structurally balanced budgets that contain realistic revenue and expense estimates.

Develop a written multiyear financial and capital plan.

Local Government and School Accountability Contact Information:

Phone: (518) 474-4037; **Email:** localgov@osc.ny.gov

Address: Office of the State Comptroller, Division of Local Government and School Accountability
110 State Street, 12th Floor; Albany, NY 12236

LIVING WITH NEW GREEN TECHNOLOGY - - HOT TOPIC!

Push Continues for Moratorium on Battery Storage Systems in NY County

Chad Arnold, The Daily Gazette

A push to enact a yearlong moratorium on battery energy systems throughout Schenectady County will continue after lawmakers quickly tabled the proposal at a meeting earlier this month, without discussion.

County legislators Eric Hess and Josh Cuomo, who each represent District 4, brought the proposal forward in September, citing concerns that local volunteer fire departments are ill-equipped to combat fires at existing lithium-ion battery energy storage systems within the county. The legislation was introduced just months after Gov. Kathy Hochul appointed a task force to establish new protocols following a series of fires at similar facilities in the state earlier this year.

The proposal appeared poised to advance after it was placed on the agenda for the Legislature's Dec. 4 committee meeting. Hess and Cuomo — the only Republicans on the 15-member Legislature — were even preparing to thank their colleagues for listening to their concerns.

But a resolution calling for the moratorium was quickly tabled without discussion outside a brief mention that Schenecady County Fire Coordinator Scott Pike provided a letter to lawmakers detailing the county's current training and response protocols for battery energy storage fires.

The letter was not made available in documents provided to the public in advance of the meeting, and both Hess and Cuomo said they only received a copy minutes before the meeting began.

Both lawmakers were baffled by what unfolded.

"It's super frustrating," Hess said. "I was prepared to speak about this at the meeting and it was immediately tabled after the letter was distributed from the fire coordinator."

Battery energy storage systems — which store excess energy captured from solar arrays and wind energy systems that is dispersed for later use — have become a growing concern in recent months throughout western portions of Schenectady County, where a pair of transmission lines provide access to the electrical grid and an abundance of sprawling, undeveloped land is ripe for siting the systems.

Some residents have raised concerns about the ecological impact of clearing land to place large green-energy systems. But more recently, the conversations have shifted to whether local fire departments have the resources needed to combat fires at battery energy storage systems that burn far hotter and longer than normal structure fires, due to the lithium-ion used to make the batteries.

The moratorium would prevent any additional facilities from being sited in the county and is intended to provide time to update legislation and protocols and allow a state task force an opportunity to further review standards, Hess said.

Fires broke out at battery energy storage facilities in Jefferson, Orange and Suffolk counties this past summer, prompting Hochul to establish the Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group. The group is made up of various state agencies and has been tasked with examining current battery storage fire and safety standards and developing new standards and training for local fire departments.

The Schenectady County fire coordinator, in his letter, outlined training the county has provided local fire departments and resources the county provides as part of its Hazardous Materials Response Team, which includes a drone-mounted meter that monitors air quality.

"These facilities have garnered attention throughout New York state and the country," Pike wrote. "With this in mind, we in the county have done our best to provide training and equipment to responders and our Hazardous Materials Response Team, so they can be as prepared as possible in case an incident should occur at one of the facilities."

In his letter, Pike said the county provided a seminar on lithium-ion battery emergencies which was attended by around 60 members of local fire departments and detailed plans to provide additional training and efforts that will take place early next year to include battery energy storage systems in the county's Emergency Management Plan.

"My recommendation as the Schenectady County Fire Coordinator would be to allow this task force to gather information and make recommendations which will in turn allow Schenectady County to make more informed decisions," Pike wrote, referring to the recently appointed state task force.

Gary Hughes, a District 2 representative and the Legislature's majority leader, said the proposed moratorium is not off the table and that lawmakers are simply waiting for recommendations to be handed down from the state before taking any further action.

"In my opinion, we need to see whatever is coming from that state before we can make a decision," he said. "It's there, it's still alive, but it hasn't been voted on."

Supporting small towns

Hughes said, if local municipalities are concerned about battery energy storage systems, they are free to pass their own moratorium. The county, he said, doesn't typically involve itself in issues of land use.

"Certainly local municipalities — planning and zoning is reserved for them," Hughes said. "We're not forcing anything. We're just saying, as a county-wide issue, we'd like to wait and see what the state says because we do have some responsibility. We have a large responsibility over public safety and fire service in the county. Less so with land use. So, if a municipality wants to have a moratorium and tap the brakes on solar, they can certainly do so. We're not stopping them."

The town of Rotterdam recently approved a moratorium on battery energy storage systems, and the town of Princetown is considering similar legislation.

But, Cuomo said the county passing a moratorium would help to further support local municipalities concerned about battery systems, noting the county has more influence with the state compared to a small town.

“If they have the backing of the county, it makes them feel much more comfortable and they feel like they have more control over their own towns,” he said. “We know the state has threatened to overrule small towns and we don’t have the resources to fight the state.”

Hess added that he plans to keep pushing for a moratorium, and believes that it is the county that should take the reins on the issue and provide additional guidance to municipalities that have less resources.

“I just think the county should be the leader on the rules and the plan and filter it down to local municipalities. I think local municipalities would appreciate the guidance from the county, in other words,” he said.

The legislator said he still has concerns about battery energy storage systems and has written his own letter to Pike detailing his concerns, emphasizing that he doesn’t feel first responders have the necessary resources to combat fires at battery storage facilities. The letter also emphasizes the county should adopt a moratorium to provide first responders an opportunity to be better trained.

“As a county, we have failed our communities and first responders,” Hess wrote. “Schenectady County clearly does not yet have a county-wide methodology to identify best practices, address potential risks, and ensure that first responders, facilities and communities are safe.”

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

HOLIDAY LIGHTING: TO INSPECT OR NOT TO INSPECT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Dean Austin

As the holidays approach, some may wonder, do I need an electrical inspection to hang my holiday decorative lighting? The answer is maybe. I know—probably not the answer you were hoping for.

The decision to require an inspection often lies with the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) along with any applicable laws. The AHJ will likely consider the type of lighting or wiring that is being installed when making the decision. If you are just hanging a few twinkling decorative lights around the house and on trees, an inspection might not be needed. But if you are putting on a holiday lighting extravaganza like Clark Griswold in Christmas Vacation, an inspection might be necessary—or probably should be. The 2023 National Electrical Code® (NEC®) Section 590.3(B) permits the installation of temporary holiday decorative lighting and associated wiring as long as it is not up more than 90 days. This permission has nothing to do with the requirement or waiver of an electrical inspection but does provide the inspector with valuable information.

Another question that comes up often pertains to string lights, such as the ones hung around a patio or along a fence for ambiance. Would those require an inspection? Again, the answer is possibly since the string lights may be considered lampholders by the AHJ and are often left up for longer periods of time. NEC Article 410, Part VIII, and Section 225.24 cover lampholders and their wiring. Because string lights are usually installed in a more permanent manner than holiday lights, a fixed and not temporary wiring method is frequently used to supply the power.

Section 590.2(B) indicates temporary wiring methods, including lighting, are acceptable only if approved based on conditions of use and any special requirements of the temporary installation. How is it approved if it is not inspected by a qualified electrical inspector? Simple, it is not approved. So, what is the AHJ looking for with temporary wiring or holiday decorative lighting installations? Typically, they are looking for:

- Authentic listing and labeling marks (occasionally holiday lights can have fake listing and labeling markings), Sections 590.5, 410.6
- Wet location listing for lampholders, Section 410.96
- Location of outdoor lamps, Section 225.25
- Installation methods, Section 225.24, 590.2

So, as the holidays near and we start digging into the boxes in our basements and attics for holiday decor, now is the time to consider your approach to safety. Ensure your holiday decorative lights, string lights, and associated wiring are

hung in a safe and code-compliant manner and request an inspection where available. By reducing electrical hazards in your home, you can help assure you and your family will enjoy a fun, festive, and safe holiday season.

NFPA has free resources to download and share, including a safety tip sheet on outdoor electrical safety and a safety checklist. For more information, visit nfpa.org/electricalsafety.

UNATTENDED COOKING LEADS TO UNINTENDED FIRES

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	71
Last fire death 12/14, Caitlin, Chemung Co. Gender unk, age unk	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	144 + 5=149
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	1221 + 51=1272
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	1 PA & NY = 76
	2 OH = 66
	3 TN = 58
There has been a total of 2020 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.

PURCHASING NEW APPARATUS

****NFPA 1900: What's New and Why**

Roger Lackore

On January 1, 2024, a new National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard will go into effect for fire apparatus contracted from that date forward.

The new standard will combine NFPA 1901, Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus; NFPA 1906, Standard for Wildland Fire Apparatus; NFPA 414, Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Fire-Fighting Vehicles; and NFPA 1917, Standard for Automotive Ambulances. **The new standard is NFPA 1900, Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Vehicles, Automotive Fire Apparatus, Wildland Fire Apparatus, and Automotive Ambulances.** Why put all the standards together? The NFPA administration made a high-level decision to combine related standards into groups. I believe they felt there would be an advantage to some users who could purchase a single document that would cover all of what they would need rather than purchasing several single documents. For us on the apparatus committee, it was a lot of work. We needed to coordinate with the ambulance and ARFF committees, splitting the work up one chapter at a time. On the plus side, we did take the opportunity to consolidate the old structural and wildland chapters so that the specific differences between them are more clear.

CHANGES EXPLAINED

Besides being a combination of several standards, there were a number of changes about which fire departments should be aware. The following are explanations on some of the major content changes. Electric Vehicle (EV) Accommodation: Most fire departments will not purchase an apparatus that is not NFPA-compliant. If the standard says you need an alternator or a muffler, an EV apparatus without those items would be technically noncompliant. So, NFPA 1900 is written to be clear that those features or requirements that are internal-combustion-engine-specific are only required if the apparatus has the need for them.

Night Mode for Warning Lights:

There was a lot of discussion over the advantages of modifying warning lights when operating at night. There are really two reasons for this, and they both have to do with the advent of LED lighting. In the old days, the amount of light an incandescent lamp could put out was capped by the size of the alternator you had on the truck. The NFPA established a minimum amount of lighting intensity to make sure the apparatus could be seen during the daytime. An apparatus that does not exceed that minimum standard by too much has reasonable daytime visibility and still will not be too obnoxious at night. Any modern apparatus will use LED lights. This technology can produce much more intense lighting and will greatly exceed the minimum requirements that were set by the NFPA years ago. This is a great thing for visibility during the day when the apparatus is competing with the sun. But at night, the contrast between these very bright flashing lights and a potentially pitch-black background is distracting both for first responders and passing motorists.

The second thing that came with LED lights is the speed with which they get to their maximum brightness. An incandescent bulb needs to heat up before it can glow, and this means that when it comes on, it comes on more gradually. When LED lights come on, they reach their maximum intensity almost immediately. Researchers have found that humans are less stressed by the smoother on-and-off of an incandescent light flashing than the very abrupt characteristic of an LED light. The NFPA committee weighed both these factors, and some of the draft language included consideration for limiting the intensity of the lighting at night as well as the profile and speed of the flash patterns. ***In the end, we decided not to force the issue at this time but added guidance in the annex for those departments wishing to adopt a night mode feature.*** This approach allows an apparatus to just meet the long-established minimum requirements at night and then far exceed the minimum requirements during the day. I suspect that as the lighting industry evolves the standard will evolve as well.

Stabilizer Pad Size:

This change was made to reduce ground pad size. The maximum ground pressure came from the civil engineering world, and the committee felt that the change was rational.

Seating:

The new seating requirements were really intended to encourage departments to consider the impact of seating during the apparatus specification process. Much apparatus have more seats in the crew cab than are normally occupied during a response. If that is the case, the new standard allows you to configure in a way that provides more room for those seating positions that will normally be occupied at the expense of those that will not. The physical space in the cab can't really grow because we are limited by regulatory width restrictions as well as the practical desire for narrower cabs to improve maneuverability. The key is getting the truck committee to think about their seating decisions and maximize the comfort of personnel who will be riding in the cab most of the time.

Rear Chevron Striping:

Chevron striping has always been a contentious topic for the apparatus committee. The rear chevrons definitely improve conspicuity. One school of thought is that the color of the chevrons is not that important to making sure the truck can be seen from the rear as long as those colors are retroreflective and contrasting. Keep in mind that during a response you also have all those intense LED warning lights flashing at the same time, so what is the problem with letting a fire department use blue and white if it wants to? The other school of thought is that we wanted a consistent color scheme so that every fire apparatus would stand out as a fire truck. Civilians would get used to seeing the yellow and red chevrons and associating that pattern with a fire truck. The counter to that argument is that the scheme is not unique to fire apparatus anyway. This same pattern and color have become popular on other heavy trucks like refuse trucks, utility trucks, and others. *There were strong opinions on both sides of the argument, and those who were OK with allowing the varying colors were in the majority.*

Equipment Requirements:

During the process of combining all the chapters, one of the members pointed out that the apparatus committee had exceeded its charter years ago. The scope of the document is minimum requirements for: "... the design, performance, acceptance criteria, and testing of aircraft rescue and firefighting apparatus, new automotive fire apparatus and trailers, wildland fire apparatus, and automotive and remounted ambulances." When you study this statement, it is not intended to consider what you carry on the apparatus at all. *So, NFPA 1900 no longer requires that specific hose, ladders, or miscellaneous equipment be included on the truck. All that information is still in the standard, but it was moved to the annex as recommendations rather than requirements.* This allows departments to carry those items that they feel are important based on the way they operate.

FUTURE EVOLUTION

NFPA 1900 is a significant evolution of several standards. As we move forward, it will continue to evolve. I would like to see us continue to at least question whether all the requirements are essential. Some of the requirements were added to the standard years ago when the industry was less mature, and some of the requirements are operational in nature rather than safety-related. I hope the committee will do some "housekeeping" with an eye toward ensuring that we are not exceeding the scope as setting out "minimum" standards, not just "nice to have" standards. I would also like to ensure that the wording of the standard is always calling out "performance" standards rather than dictating the specifics of how that performance is achieved. This approach leaves departments and designers more open to innovation and provides flexibility for adapting to new technologies as they are developed. The Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association (FAMA) has published a guide titled, "Fire Apparatus Standard Changes 2024." It presents highlights of changes in NFPA 1900 and is for reference only. It can be downloaded at <https://www.fama.org/fire-service-resources-list/>. FAMA is committed to the manufacture and sale of safe, efficient emergency response vehicles and equipment. FAMA urges fire departments to evaluate the full range of safety features offered by its member companies.

THE LIGHTER SIDE!

I just cleared out some space in the freezer, sounds much more productive than I just polished off another pint of ice cream.

CAFDA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

2024 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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The Capital Area Association represents any fire district that wishes to join CAFDA. Fire District Officials include Commissioners, Treasurers, and Deputy Treasurers. Secretaries and Chiefs are also invited to participate!

Please advise your secretaries that all correspondence should be mailed to:

CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063

[EMAIL TREASURER: TREASURER@CAFDA.NET](mailto:TREASURER@CAFDA.NET)

518-407-5020

[EMAIL SECRETARY: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET](mailto:SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET)

[Long Way to Travel Zoom into the General Membership Meetings!](#)

It's our desire that every member fire 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.

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.CAFDA.net

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

[Membership Audit](#)

CAFDA, currently has **80-member Fire Districts** in the contiguous counties surrounding the capital district area.

Are we missing anyone? Sometimes there is confusion between the State Association and regional associations such as CAFDA. CAFDA is **NOT** a branch or subsidiary of The Association of Fire District of the State of NY, we are not in each other's reporting chain or organizational structure. ***We exist solely as a not for profit for the benefit of the member fire districts that join CAFDA!***

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Note the new address for H2M Architects & Engineers

PLEASE SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US!!

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.CAFDA.NET

We invite our business partners to submit educational information to be included in this Bulletin for district commissioners and chief officers 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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Heather R. Lewis, CPA hlewis@mmb-co.com

Business Partner Opportunity!

Thank you for your continued support of the Capital Ara Fire Districts Association. You have the opportunity to have vendor space at our Spring Conference in April of 2024. We have several excellent presentations lined up, which we believe will attract many upstate districts.

CAFDA is seeking sponsors for the event – for breakfasts and lunches. Stay tuned for more information and an opportunity to be Conference Sponsor.

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.

You Can Become an Individual 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 CAFDA.NET website.

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

Download THE APPLICATION available on the home page at CAFDA.NET

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION (CAFDA)

Would you like to join Capital Area Fire Districts Association along with 76 members in 10 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 or Other County or Regional Associations \$300 annually.

Business Partners: \$100.00 annual member fee

If You, Your Fire District or Department is not a Member of CAFDA You Can be?

Individuals can be members of CAFDA. The annual membership fee is \$50, which will provide you access to this Bulletin, attendance at meetings and social gatherings. Provides networking with other fire district officials and a source of the constant barrage of information related to today's fire service.



Capital Area Association of Fire Districts

Membership Application/Renewal

Fire District Fire Protection District Village Fire Department EX-Officio Associate/Individual
Associate Regional Fire District Association

Name: _____

County: _____ Fire District: _____

Mailing Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Primary Contact Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

IF FIRE DISTRICT OR ASSOCIATION TWO POINTS OF CONTACT WILL SHARE INFORMATION

Name: _____ Email: _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Fire Company if Different: _____

FIRE DISTRICT OFFICERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OUR EMAIL DISTRIBUTION LIST

Name: _____ Email: _____

The yearly membership dues January 1st to December 31st shall be as follows and shall be based on the annual budget of the Fire District/Organization;

Annual budgets up to and including \$200,000	\$50.00
Annual budgets more than \$200,001 up to including \$400,000	\$100.00
Annual budgets more than \$400,001 up to including \$600,000	\$200.00
Annual budgets more than \$600,000	\$300.00
Associate/ Individual membership fee (for individuals whose dist. is not a member)	\$50.00
Regional or County Fire District Association	\$300.00
Business Partners membership fee	\$100.00

Please submit payments to: Capital Area Fire Districts Association
CAFDA Treasurer
PO Box 242
East Schodack, NY 12063

Signature: _____

IF VOUCHER IS REQUIRED, PLEASE MAIL IT AND I WILL SIGN IT AND MAIL IT BACK

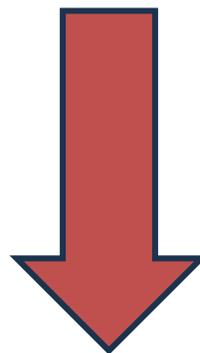
CAFDA UPCOMING TRAINING AND MEETING CALENDAR

The following calendar, while tentative, provides our members and participants some insight into the planned activities to be provided locally to our membership and other fire district participants for '23, '24 and '25. We hope you will join us on this journey to provide reasonably priced, quality training in a local setting for your convenience.

For General Membership meetings food is served 1 hour prior to the start time of the meeting, at 6pm, meetings begin promptly at 7PM

Capital Area Meetings/Seminars/Trainings/Conference Dates (Subject to Change & Updated 11/6/2023)				
Day/Date	Time	Type	Location	Notes
2024				
Saturday, January 6, 2024	9:00 AM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Organizational/Morning Meeting
Saturday, February 3, 2024	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Averill Park	Snowdate - Sunday, February 4, 2024
Thursday, February 8, 2024	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	
Thursday, February 29, 2024	8:00 AM	Financial Training for Fire District Officials	Halfmoon-Waterford	
Friday, March 1, 2024	8:00 AM		Fire District #1	
Saturday, March 2, 2024	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Halfmoon-Waterford Fire District #1	Snowdate - Sunday, March 3, 2024
Thursday, March 7, 2024	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	
Saturday, March 9, 2024	6:00 PM	Officer Installation	Century House	
Saturday, March 23, 2024	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Berkshire FD	Snowdate - Sunday, March 24, 2024
Saturday, April 6, 2024	8:00 AM	Commissioner Training	Warrensburg FD	Snowdate - Sunday, April 7, 2024
Thursday, April 11, 2024	7:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting	Clifton Park	
Thursday, April 25 - Saturday April 27, 2024	TBD	CAFDA Conference	Fort William Henry Conference Center	Lake George
Thursday, May 9, 2024	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	
Thursday, June 6, 2024	7:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting	Clifton Park	
JULY	NO MEETING			
Friday, August 9, 2024	1:00 PM	Membership Activity	Saratoga Race Course	NYRA Day at the Races!
AUGUST	NO MEETING			
Thursday, September 12, 2024	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	
Thursday, October 10, 2024	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Officers/Director Nominations
Saturday, November 2, 2024	8:00 AM	Fall Workshop	Verdoy	
Thursday, November 7, 2024	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Officer/Director Elections
DECEMBER	NO MEETING			
2025				
Saturday, January 4, 2025	9:00 AM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Organizational/Morning Meeting

COMMISSIONER TRAINING SCHEDULE AND REGISTRATION NEXT PAGE





2024 COMMISSIONER TRAINING

Saturday, February 3rd (Snow date: Sunday, February 4th)

Averill Park & Sand Lake Fire District, 35 Eastern Union Turnpike, Averill Pk.

Saturday, March 2nd (Snow date: Sunday, March 3rd)

Halfmoon-Waterford FD#1, 315 Middletown Road, Waterford

Saturday, March 23rd (Snow date: Sunday, March 24th)

Berkshire Fire District, 320 Steele Avenue Extension, Gloversville

Saturday, April 6th (Snow date: Sunday, April 7th)

Warrensburg Fire District, 18 Elm Street, Warrensburg

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Seating is Limited!!!

**Please Register Soon to Reserve
your Seat & To Assist us with
Meal Planning!**



**CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION
COMMISSIONER TRAINING**



REGISTRATION FORM

COMMISSIONER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FIRE DISTRICT OFFICIALS

- Saturday, February 3rd (Snow date: Sunday, February 4th)**
Averill Park & Sand Lake Fire District, 35 Eastern Union Turnpike, Averill Pk.
- Saturday, March 2nd (Snow date: Sunday, March 3rd)**
Halfmoon-Waterford FD#1, 315 Middletown Road, Waterford
- Saturday, March 23rd (Snow date: Sunday, March 24th)**
Berkshire Fire District, 320 Steele Avenue Extension, Gloversville
- Saturday, April 6th (Snow date: Sunday, April 7th)**
Warrensburg Fire District, 18 Elm Street, Warrensburg

Registration: \$85 per person for Member Districts, \$95 per person for Non-Members
(Continental Breakfast and Lunch Included)

DON'T WAIT - Please Register Soon to Reserve your Seat & To Assist us with Meal Planning!

Fire District/Organization: _____

Membership Status (select one): ___ Member of CAFDA or ___ Non-Member of CAFDA

Attendees (include full name & at least one email so we can confirm registration & prepare certificates):

Attendees:

Email Address

Total Number Attending: _____

Payment Options:

- 1) Check enclosed payable to **Capital Area Fire Districts Association** for: \$ _____
- 2) Pay at the Door (check box):

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or Email to: secretary@cafda.net



**FINANCIAL TRAINING FOR FIRE DISTRICT OFFICIALS THURSDAY,
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JOIN CAFDA FOR THIS ONE-OF-A-KIND EVENT! CAFDA has proudly partnered with the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) to bring this FIRST OF ITS KIND event to the Capital Area!

Event Location: Halfmoon-Waterford Fire District #1 315 Middletown Road, Waterford

EVENT FLYER – TRAINING SESSIONS – REGISTRATION FORM

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<https://cafda.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024-Financial-Training-for-Fire-District-Officials-Information-and-Registration-Documents.pdf>

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN – ANY FIRE DISTRICT IS WELCOME TO REGISTER!