




Capital Area Fire District's Association
THE WEEKLY CAFDA

BULLETIN

June 21, 2025

Editor, Tom Rinaldi, Tom@rinaldi1.com
Serving the fire service community since 2004

CAPITAL SHORTS:

- CAFDA is happy to announce the dates for **Conference '26** in historic Lake George, April, 9th, 10th and 11th, 2026 plan on joining us.
- **Help needed**, is there a District/Company that accepts EMS applicants only. What are your requirements for those members that respond to EMS calls only, but are still considered firefighters for VFBL or LOSAP purposes? Contact me at my email address, asking for a friend.
-  **Grant Alert: FY24 SAFER & FP&S Programs**
Application period ends July 3rd.
- **Sad to report the passing of Past Mechanicville Fire Department member and past station keeper at Clifton Park Fire Department, John VanChance Sr. I work with**

John at DOT many years ago and he was always a hoot. Rest in peace my friend. Our sympathies to John's family and friends.

- **NFPA 'Fatal Firefighter Injuries in the U.S.' report shows 62 on-duty deaths in 2024, a 31 percent decrease over 2023**
- Officials and firefighters' broke ground for the Rockland County firefighter's memorial on June 16 by stabbing shovels into the lawn of the Rockland County Courthouse fronting Main Street. This memorial will be "for those who gave the supreme sacrifice since 9/11 and earlier," Falco said, noting the monument will hold the names of the unpaid volunteers, and those who lived in Rockland and worked elsewhere.
- The firefighter Explorer program, Post 475, in Albany County celebrates 50 years of training teens, one of the oldest in the country, congratulations.

STUFF FOR YOUR BENEFIT, NEED TO KNOW!

WWW.CAFDA.NET

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday September 11th, in person or Zoom in. 7PM.

Day at the Races Friday August 8th, lunch, snacks, permitted beverages included 11:00 am entry, tickets at "will call"

SAVE THE DATE: CAFDA FALL TRAINING SEMINAR, Saturday November 1st at Verday Fire Department

All correspondence & Capital Area Fire Districts Association Mailing Address should be directed to:

CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063 or EMAIL: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET

Financial issues should be addressed to: TREASURER@CAFDA.NET

WHEN YOU SEE ** IT'S A RECOMMENDED READ, TAKE THE TIME TO INFORM YOURSELF!!

CAFDA is happy to announce the dates for Conference '26 in historic Lake George, April, 9th, 10th and 11th, plan on joining us.

THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

Legislative Commentary

In the words of the State Comptroller; "As is often the case in New York, a broken legislative process paired with misguided priorities yielded little of merit during this legislative session. It seems the 2025 session will

likely be remembered more for an obvious lack of productivity and missed opportunities than anything else. New Yorkers deserve thoughtful action but were instead met with political theater and half-measures.” The following are the major accomplishments of the fire service in the state, less than stellar through no fault of our lobbyists or those who stated our case, but rather that lack of attention of our majority who have much different priorities no matter how much they drool all over us or say how much they need us. They are clueless and could care less.

- EMS Billing has been extended 5 more years, provisioned in the Budget Bill.
- S688A/A5619A The property tax break has been amended, to *permit* municipalities to adopt a local law or ordinance to allow unmarried spouses of volunteer firefighters or volunteer ambulance workers with between two and five years of service, who are killed in the line of duty, to continue receiving pre-existing property tax exemptions.
- S8011/A8275 & S7852/A8276 The Heart and Lung bills passed in both chambers and have both been extended for another 5 years to 2030.
- S8409/A8657 statewide volunteer firefighter/ambulance worker property tax exemption intended to replace the numerous local bills authorizing such exemptions in various localities. Chapter 670 sets those local exemption bills to expire in 2025. This bill extends the local bills until 2028 to allow municipalities that have not adopted a local law to replace them.
- S779/A596 increases the number of members on the state fire prevention and building code council from sixteen to seventeen with the addition of the commissioner of agriculture.
- S4157/A112 repeals section 3403 of the insurance law relating to anti-arson applications. Recognizing that the reason that this law was originally enacted no longer exists.
- S31/A34 requires the thruway authority to issue emergency services permits to ambulance and fire vehicles, which would exempt such vehicles from paying tolls while engaged in an emergency operation.
- S4328/A3343 permits a municipality to enact, adopt, or enforce any ordinance, resolution, or regulation permitting the imposition of fines on alarm system companies solely for false alarms resulting from deficiencies in the alarm system, errors by the alarm system company, or mistakes made by the central monitoring station.
- S1515/A2177A the purpose of this legislation is to remove emergency medical services from the tax cap for local municipalities in order to support local ems services.
- S2703/A3790 Requires that a written report be submitted to the governor and legislature, on or before February fifteenth of each year, on firefighter training activities. Such report shall include at least the following information: the minimum training hours allocated on a county-by-county basis, the training hours requested by each county, any unfulfilled training hour requests, [and] the number of hours used by each county on a county-by-county basis, and a statewide total of the number of hours allocated to each firefighter. *Such report shall also identify the fire department or district providing the training including the number of hours of training and the type of training for each firefighter. In addition, such report shall also list the names of those firefighters qualified to do interior firefighting.* The written report shall be prominently posted on the division of homeland security and emergency services website no later than March first of each year.
- S2748/A8485 this legislation will establish a statewide program where veterans or discharged military personnel are encouraged to volunteer ("vets to vollies") in their local fire department or ems agency.
- S801/A2400 this chapter amendment requires the state fire prevention and building code council to promulgate standards that would require new buildings with new parking to have electric vehicle charging infrastructure and charging stations.
- S737/A440 changes instances of the term moped to limited use motorcycle in relation to lithium-ion battery safety.
- S5848/A247 requires the state fire administrator to make available a specialized electric vehicle emergency response training program.
- S73/A4641A to provide for the safe collection and disposal of damaged or defective batteries collected by retailers and by government agencies and provides that a battery manufacturer may not sell, offer

for sale, or distribute rechargeable batteries in the state unless they are implementing or participating under an approved plan.

- S7501/A8086A establishes an emergency medical services local planning process to provide for counties, cities, towns, and villages to develop a comprehensive plan to provide for a coordinated emergency medical services within their counties.

Note that most of the bills that have passed both chambers now have to go to the Governor's office for signature. Continue to monitor the ScoreCard for updates. **Now that the legislature is out of session, the ScoreCard will be reviewed for activity monthly.**

Why New York's 911 System Needs A Major Upgrade

Corey James, Spectrum News

A new audit from the New York state comptroller's office reveals the state is behind in implementing Next Generation 911 — a modern emergency response system that would allow residents to send texts, video and real-time location data during emergencies.

Next Gen 911 (NG911) is designed to replace outdated 911 infrastructure across the state, many parts of which currently lack even basic text-to-911 capabilities.

"[The state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services] was supposed to have had this plan in place when we started our audit," state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli said. "We found that it still wasn't completed. Interestingly enough, in the course of the audit, they did finalize the plan."

The goal is to build a seamless statewide emergency network that improves communication, especially during severe weather events. Currently, fewer than half of New York's 62 counties offer basic text-to-911 service. Sheriff Craig Apple of Albany County, one of the few counties with NG911 in place, said the technology is already making a difference.

"When you text, we'll respond with a link," Apple said. "If you click that link, you can also share video — like flooded roads — and we can alert all emergency responders in the county."

The state Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services said the responsibility to implement NG911 lies with individual counties, but that the state is offering guidance and more than \$500 million in funding since 2010.

In a written statement, the division said: "It is the state's job to support counties in these efforts, and the Division is proud to have worked diligently for more than a decade to support those partners in their efforts to modernize 911 systems and deliver effective public safety services to New Yorkers."

DiNapoli urged stronger collaboration between state and local agencies moving forward.

"Next Generation 911 is critical to the safety and well-being of New Yorkers," he said. "But local governments can't implement this alone — they need more support and coordination from the state."

THE LATEST FROM WASHINGTON

- Still sorting out the insanity

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES

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

Fire Company Audit Guidance from OSC

Section 209-z of the General Municipal Law requires certain fire companies to obtain an annual audit of their records by an independent certified public accountant or an independent public accountant. The State Comptroller is authorized to prescribe the form of the audit report.

The audit requirement applies to **fire companies** with revenues of \$400,000 or more that contract to provide fire service to a city, town, village or fire district. The audit must examine a fire company's revenues and expenditures in connection with its fire protection contracts and indicate whether the fire company has filed Internal Revenue Service form 990 and the report required by section 30-a of the General Municipal Law³. If the fire company was required to make those filings, but failed to do so, the scope of the audit expands to encompass all of the fire company's revenues, expenditures and resources from any source.

The form of the audit report, whether the statements are prepared on an accrual basis, modified accrual basis, or other comprehensive basis of accounting, should be completed and reported on in accordance with the guidance provided by the Not-for-Profit AICPA Audit and Accounting Guide published in 3/08 or any future amendments thereto. A copy of the audit report certified by the accountant must be filed with the fire company and the municipal corporation with which the fire company contracts within 180 days following the end of the fiscal year audited.

City of Dunkirk Dry on Fire Apparatus Funds

M.J. Stafford, The Post Journal

The city of Dunkirk currently has no obvious way to pay for two new fire trucks that are supposed to get delivered in September.

"There were two fire trucks bought in 2023 that were never really budgeted for," City Attorney Elliott Raimondo stated at a meeting of the Common Council's Finance Committee on Monday.

Fire Chief Nicholas Barter said that payment for the vehicles is due upon delivery, currently expected sometime in September.

The Common Council approved the truck purchases in 2023, along with bonds to pay for them. However, the bonds never went out. The estimated maximum cost of the trucks was \$1.75 million.

Councilwoman Nancy Nichols asked why the bonds weren't issued. "Timing, revenue shortfall," said Treasurer Mark Woods. "It's still something we can attempt to do."

However, Fiscal Affairs Officer Ellen Luczkowiak said later that based on the state Legislature's Fiscal Recovery Act for the city, Dunkirk is not supposed to be taking on any more debt.

"There is quite the need for pumper trucks for the residents' safety," Raimondo acknowledged, a sentiment backed up by Barter.

The fire chief said the trucks are already in production and are due off the line in August. Once inspections are complete, shipment and delivery arrangements should take about 4-6 weeks.

"That was an incurred deficit we all agreed on 100%, 1,000%," said Councilman James Stoye. "So we're gonna pay for them."

Raimondo agreed. However, there were no suggestions on how to pay for them.

Four out of the five Common Council members attended Monday's Finance Committee meeting. Abigail Zatorski did not attend.

The city is in a fiscal crisis, with \$13.6 million due July 24 on a Revenue Anticipation Note that was floated last year. That was floated to help pay off another, smaller Revenue Anticipation Note from 2023.

The state Assembly was debating as of Monday a proposed loan to help Dunkirk, a move opposed by local and state-level Republicans, including Nichols and Stoye. The city was supposed to access millions of dollars in the Fiscal Recovery Act — but it can't get that until the Comptroller's Office has certified its debt, and the office won't do that until it has received a 2024 audit of Dunkirk's finances.

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Fire Chief Considerations: Writing an Effective Equipment Purchase Proposal

Joseph Murray

Fire chiefs today must function not only as the top firefighter within a community but, at times, as the department's top salesperson for obtaining funding for equipment and vehicles. One method fire chiefs use to support their requests for competitive funding is through the development of written proposals. While written proposals can vary widely based on scope and format, they have some key components that should be included to ensure the best chance of success.

WHAT IS A WRITTEN PROPOSAL?

A written proposal is a formal document produced by the fire chief that outlines a plan, idea, or project to persuade an elected official or budget manager to approve and fund purchases such as equipment and apparatus. A written proposal is a preliminary document that is nonbinding but seeks to identify the feasibility and value of a proposed project. It is also often the first attempt to secure support for funding and buy-in from elected officials. Although it is preliminary in nature, the written proposal is a useful document and provides the fire chief with an opportunity to share extensive information about the department with elected officials. This can be extremely valuable in communities in which facetime with elected officials can be more difficult to come by.

WHAT IT ISN'T

A project proposal is not a one-size-fits-all document. While this article provides tips and considerations for the formulation of a written proposal, it is important to note that each proposal will vary depending on the scope of the request. Written proposal design may also be altered to accommodate specific expectations or requirements of the audience. The format for written proposals may also vary based on requirements dictated by the governing body.

IMPORTANCE OF PROPOSALS

The primary goal of a written proposal is to convince elected officials or those in charge of the budget to support a particular course of action. Essentially, a written proposal provides the fire chief with an opportunity to make a “sales pitch” for funding not only new equipment or vehicles but also new initiatives, new programs, additional staffing, and more. Written proposals are an important first step in any project. They help the fire chief outline a plan of action, clearly defining and communicating project needs, deliverables, objectives, and the resources required. A well-written proposal should articulate the fire chief’s vision, sell the elected officials on the course of action, and clearly define project processes.

For new fire chiefs or established fire chiefs interacting with newly elected officials, written proposals can be especially helpful, as their composition can also help establish a professional relationship with elected officials. The written proposal process can have the secondary effect of demonstrating the fire chief’s abilities as it relates to responsible fiscal governance. A comprehensive and well-written proposal can help the fire chief build credibility with elected officials. Conversely, a poorly written proposal with little supporting evidence can quickly erode a fire chief’s credibility.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

To write a successful proposal, it is essential that the fire chief understands the audience. In most cases, written proposals are addressed to elected officials or their designees with authority over the budget. For the best chances of success, it is important that fire chiefs determine who will read and make the decision on their proposal and then customize the writing to address their specific areas of interest or concerns. For example, a fire chief who has a board member who is especially concerned with a fair procurement process may want to go into greater detail about how notifications of the intent to purchase a particular piece of equipment will be disseminated to various vendors. A fire chief who has a board member particularly interested in engineering aspects of equipment may want to provide more information about how the requested equipment is tested and certified for use.

WRITTEN PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

While written proposals can vary significantly depending on the scope and the audience, there are six main components that should be included in all written proposals to ensure the best chances of success. These six components are an executive summary, a description of the problem or need, a proposed solution, a description of deliverables, the resources required for success, and a conclusion statement.

Executive summary:

Similar to an abstract of a research paper, the executive summary is an overview of what information will be provided throughout the remainder of the document. It should, at minimum, clearly define the problem or need that your proposal plans to address, the solution your proposal provides, and the overall impact that the project will have if funded.

Description of the problem or need:

Defining the problem is one of the most important steps of the written proposal. In an age of tightening budgets and limited financial resources, it is especially important that the fire chief convince the audience that there is a significant problem or need to be addressed. In most cases, the problem statement does not include proposed solutions. Instead, it simply articulates the problem in detail. The goal of the problem statement is to demonstrate why the proposal is necessary.

Often, problem statements are composed of 200 to 400 words; however, the length of the section can vary, depending on the scope of the proposal. Problem statements generally do not need to be overly descriptive but include enough information to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the issue. While formats for writing problem statements can vary, some common components include the following:

- Cause and background: The problem statement should include the circumstances that have led to the problem or need.
- Impact: After identifying the problem, the fire chief should discuss how the problem is affecting the stakeholders (internal or external).
- Other effects: The final component of a problem statement should discuss repercussions of not solving the problem and the broader impact the problem will have on the fire department or community.

A well-written problem statement should address the “5 Ws” (*Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, and *Why*) to help you describe the problem.

- *Who*: Who are the stakeholders affected by the problem? Stakeholders for the fire department are often internal (firefighters, officers, support staff) or external (public, businesses, educational institutions, etc).
- *What*: What is the current state, desired state, or unmet need? The *What* identifies the problem or potential problem.
- *When*: When is this issue occurring or what time frame is involved?
- *Where*: Indicate the location of context where the problem exists.
- *Why*: Explain the significance of the problem and its consequences.

Proposed solution:

Following the identification of the problem, the next logical step in the written proposal process is to present a solution to the problem. In this section of the proposal, the fire chief should provide an outline of the approach in greater detail. The plan or approach section should identify the steps or actions that will be required to successfully mitigate the problem. This section is often the longest section because of the detail required. The amount of discussion points will depend on the scope of the project, but in general, the fire chief should include the vision for the presented project, a schedule for the steps to accomplish goals, roles and responsibilities of team members, a plan to address any risks associated with the project, a listing of deliverables to be measured, and an explanation of the reporting tools that will be used to monitor the progress.

Description of deliverables:

Once the approach to mitigating the problem has been discussed, it is important to clarify what the project will achieve and how success will be measured. It is important for the fire chief to define the specific tasks and outputs that will be delivered and the associated outcomes. Identifying key performance indicators and deliverables will often help elected officials visualize the project.

Resources required:

After the fire chief has defined the problem, formulated the plan to mitigate the problem, and identified the deliverables of the project, the focus should turn to what resources will be required to accomplish the proposed solution. In this section, the fire chief should include the project budget and a resource allocation plan. Depending on the scope of a project, budgets can range from small and simple to quite extensive. Proposals for equipment purchases often include items such as purchase price of the equipment, warranty costs, ongoing maintenance costs, supplies required, and any resale credits for old equipment. A breakdown of each of these costs helps elected officials understand the complete picture. The last thing any fire chief wants is for an elected official to identify unforeseen costs not included in the proposal. This hurts the overall chances of success and diminishes the credibility of the proposal. For larger scoped projects, a resource allocation plan is often helpful to include in the proposal to identify where the fire chief intends to use specific

financial resources. This includes categories such as technologies, subscriptions, salaries, materials, maintenance, and all other applicable components of the project.

Conclusion statement:

The final section of the written proposal will be the persuasive summary and conclusion of the document. Like the executive summary, the conclusion section briefly summarizes the problem your proposal seeks to mitigate and the actions the fire department is seeking to undertake to provide a solution to the problem. It is advisable to place a heavy emphasis on the impact your proposed solution will have on the various stakeholders, whether internal, external, or both.

Written proposals can be valuable tools for fire chiefs in their attempts to acquire funding. When constructed correctly, they provide fire chiefs with excellent opportunities to persuade their elected officials to fund much-needed resources for their departments, such as apparatus or equipment. Fire chiefs should ensure that written proposals are always well-researched and include reliable data, as these documents can have a secondary effect of impacting credibility.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Is a referendum vote of the fire district residents required for the construction of a new or the addition to an existing fire station?

There is no requirement for a fire district to conduct a public referendum (vote) to construct a new or an addition to an existing fire station *as long as the fire district has sufficient funds* in their operating account and reserve funds to pay for the construction. *If it was necessary for the fire District to bond any portion of the construction project, a mandatory referendum would be required of the District's voters.* The conduct of a referendum for permission to bond is subject to the same legal requirements as the conduct of any public referendum.

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OUR CHANGING FIRE SERVICE –CHALLENGES & POSITIVE IDEAS. LEARNING FROM OTHERS

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

N.Y. Town Launches 'Operation Step Up' To Boost Volunteer Firefighter Ranks

Mark Scheer, Niagara Gazette

When it was formed in 1890, Gratwick Hose Fire Co. No. 6 (*a contract fire protection district*) had thousands of volunteer supporters.

Today, the number of volunteers supporting the Lumber City fire company has dwindled to just 15.

It's a sign of changing times and an example of a larger problem facing many fire companies statewide.

On Thursday, North Tonawanda officials unveiled "Operation Step Up," an incentive-based plan they hope will help increase volunteer rates at Gratwick.

"We know times are changing and across the country volunteer organizations are facing growing challenges," North Tonawanda Mayor Austin Tylec said during a press conference at Gratwick's fire station on Ward Road. "People are busier than ever, juggling work, family life and personal commitments. The decline in volunteerism is real and affects the most important services like firefighting. That's why Operation Step Up is such an important initiative. This is more than just a recruitment effort. It's a modern and thoughtful approach to revitalizing volunteerism.

Operation Step Up will allow volunteers to receive stipends for service and training as part of what Gratwick's President Robert Brennan described as a "basket full of benefits" being offered at the local and state levels to boost volunteer firefighter service in North Tonawanda and across New York.

"We can't continue on the current trajectory that we are on," Brennan said.

Through Operation Step Up, volunteers will be eligible to receive \$3,000 annual stipends for their service as well as \$2,000 initial training stipends. *(not legal in fire districts)*

In addition, as is the case with all volunteer firefighters in New York, Gratwick's volunteers can take advantage of full tuition payments if they pursue degrees as students at SUNY schools and can also receive free certification as Emergency Medical Technicians.

Volunteers also become members of the North Tonawanda Volunteer Firemen's Benevolent Association. Through that organization, volunteers are eligible for reimbursement for medical and dental procedures, eye care treatment and other health benefits.

Most importantly, Brennan said, volunteers get to be part of a larger volunteer community as they provide a vital service to their fellow residents.

"Part of our mission statement, really our whole mission statement, is to support the city, to support the fire department as a whole," he said.

Fire service in North Tonawanda is covered by a combination of paid and volunteer firefighters. Fire Chief Doug Orlowski said the city's current paid staff of fire personnel is 38. Orlowski set increasing the number of volunteer firefighters citywide as a priority when he was sworn in as fire chief in January.

Orlavsky said volunteers must commit to participating in at least monthly city fire training drills and must obtain 100 hours of training to be considered fully qualified. On average, he said city fire crews respond to about 4,000 calls per year, the bulk of which — roughly 80% — involves EMT-related incidents. Actual fires represent about 20% of the total number of fire calls each year, he said.

"There's absolutely a danger involved in firefighting, however, that's what the training is for," he said.

Brennan, Orlavsky and North Tonawanda Mayor Austin Tylec all stressed that the need for volunteers is great as are the benefits to those who agree to train and serve.

Individuals interested in volunteering are asked to fill out an application form found on the the Step-Up program link on the Gratwick Hose website at <https://www.gratwickhose6.com/operation-step-up.html>.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

Va. County Residents Face Insurance Hike After Sudden Fire Department Closure

Heather Price-Ives, The Daily Progress

Greene County residents may soon have to pay more money to insure their properties after the sudden and unexplained closure of the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company.

Greene County has shuttered the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company, saying only that an outside agency has been brought on to look into claims against it.

More than a month after the closure was unannounced, it remains unclear why the county Board of Supervisors made the decision. An investigation into the fire company has been announced, but not described in detail, leaving residents and even officials speculating.

"The reason behind this closure an [sic] appears to be on what we have discovered personal squabbles and dislikes among our Board of Supervisors and possibly others within the Greene County's Administration that is not fully clear to us of why," Stephen Fitch, spokesman for the Greene County Republican Committee, wrote in a June 12 email to Virginia's top fire marshal, Billy Hux. "It does show their lack of commitment to put public safety before their own agendas."

What is known is that the closure means more than 1,300 residents and businesses along the U.S. 29 corridor in Ruckersville have limited access to fire coverage in case of an emergency.

"The ISO evaluation will come in and review the fire department apparatus and training records. But they also look at the water supply and look at dispatch, too," Harold Richards, president of the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company, told The Daily Progress.

The Insurance Services Office, or ISO, scores fire departments across the country based on their ability to suppress fires. Insurance companies depend on the rankings to help determine insurance rates for residences and businesses. The lower a community's ranking, the better prepared it is to mitigate a fire. A higher ranking means that a community is not as prepared, and insurance companies can charge higher rates to customers for potential loss in a fire.

“The Ruckersville area has had a ranking of 5 out of 10. Five is a number we could be proud of as an all-volunteer department. We expect to have a score of 10 after next week’s evaluation because the ISO will find Ruckersville is not adequately covered by an open fire company. Ten is the worst ranking any community can have. People’s insurance rates are going to increase with this ranking,” Richards said.

With Ruckersville’s crew of roughly 20 volunteer firefighters unable to assist residents in an emergency, the Stanardsville and Dyke fire companies will have to step in. The two fire companies can take 15 to 20 minutes to mobilize and respond to the Ruckersville area.

“If a situation requires a ladder truck, the closest company that can assist is Hollymead in Albemarle, and that’s only if Hollymead isn’t using the ladder truck already. Ruckersville is the only company with a ladder truck in Greene,” said Richards.

After closing the fire company last month, Greene County Board of Supervisors Chairman Steve Catalano told concerned residents that the loss of the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company would not imperil their lives.

Richards and others disagree.

“You added a 15-to-20-minute delay on initial response. That’s enough time for a human being to be incinerated,” Fitch told the Board of Supervisors at its June 10 meeting.

“It’s the board’s moral and more-than-legal responsibility that the public is served effectively, safely and efficiently during times of emergency,” Catalano read from a prepared statement at the beginning of that meeting.

Catalano also said that the mutual aid offered by other agencies near Ruckersville, in addition to Stanardsville and Dyke, will provide sufficient coverage for the county.

“The board does not want to publicize details until the pending investigation is complete,” Catalano read, referring to the unexplained investigation into the fire company. “The fact-finding portion of this review shall be wrapped up by the beginning of next week. The complete review process should be wrapped up by the beginning of July. At that time, the board will act upon the findings of the independent review.”

The fire company has cooperated with and completed several stages of the review successfully, according to Catalano.

The Greene County Board of Supervisors unexpectedly closed the fire company May 13. The board did not inform the fire company until two days later. It was days later the public was informed of the development.

“The public is not at risk as Stanardsville Volunteer Fire Company [sic] and Dyke Volunteer Fire company are arranging their staffing to handle call volumes from Ruckersville’s first-due area. There is the same level of protection as before,” Catalano said in a previous statement after the public found out about the shuttered fire station.

After the Ruckersville insurance evaluation, residents can expect to see property insurance rates rise in the coming year, according to Verisk, an ISO mitigation company which compiles information on fire services to help communities manage risk.

“A community can expect to see a change in insurance rates within six months to a year from an evaluation,” Verisk told The Daily Progress.

Richards is still holding out hope the board will agree to reopen the fire station.

“We know what we’re doing. We have several members who are paid firefighters in Charlottesville and come back home to Ruckersville and volunteer here. These are not country cowboys grabbing a hose and fighting fire,” said Richards.

SPECIFYING NEW APPARATUS? NEED TO KNOW

The Apparatus Architect: Outfitting Your Truck Company

Tom Shand, Mike Wilbur

The extent of technical rescue and other support services that are provided by a department can affect the extent of the tools and equipment that are carried on truck company apparatus. Some departments prefer to operate stand-alone rescue companies, *but this largely depends on the available staffing to operate these vehicles along with the engine and truck company units*. Rescue and squad companies can provide not only additional staffing but specialized equipment to support routine fireground operations.

Truck companies can be staffed and outfitted to provide these services but also, of course, for safe operation at any incident, including the needed ground ladders. What's the difference between aerial devices, such as rear-mount aerial ladders, mid-mount tower ladders and truck-drawn aerials, and how they affect operations and the capability to carry the desired tool and equipment cache along with an appropriate complement of ground ladders?

MISSION & OUTSIDE RESOURCES

The 2024 edition of [NFPA 1900: Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Vehicles, Automotive Fire Apparatus, Wildland Fire Apparatus, and Automotive Ambulances](#) *no longer stipulates portable equipment and ground ladders within the main body of the document*. Table 8.4 provides a list of *suggested* tools and equipment, including ground ladders. This list is based on the type of apparatus that's being acquired. *The ladder complement is listed as 115 feet for a truck and 85 feet for a quint, to include two extension ladders and two roof ladders*. As a side note, at one point, NFPA 1900 required more than 220 feet of ground ladders, but over the years, the ground ladder complement was lessened. This was in part because of the increased number of quint apparatus that were being produced and put into service.

While not disparaging quint devices, adding a fire pump, water tank and hosebed to any aerial device affects the space that's available to store ground ladders and the amount of compartment space that can be dedicated to truck company tools. Furthermore, the increased use of battery-powered hand tools, ventilation fans and extrication equipment can affect the space that's required to mount and store this equipment on any multipurpose vehicle.

Because of staffing and deployment models, some departments must operate with a quint aerial device(s).

Therefore, careful consideration must be given to defining the mission of the vehicle and to the appropriate equipment that's outfitted on the apparatus, particularly when there are limited outside resources to complement the capabilities of a department's front-line units.

On a quint apparatus, the hosebed area might be located ahead of the aerial turntable or on the side of the body over the lower compartments. How this supply line hose gets loaded and deployed depends on the design of the vehicle. The number and configuration of ground ladders that are desired to be carried on the apparatus is determined by the available space that's under the turntable and outside of the body based on water tank size, depth of the body compartments, amount of supply line that's carried and the location of other components, such as hydraulic oil reservoir and generator, along with water way piping for the device.

A trade-off might be to carry additional ground ladders in a side-stack arrangement, where the ladders can be deployed easily by a single person.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Members of an apparatus committee should conduct an assessment of the structural conditions in the response district to review buildings where access to current or planned new aerial apparatus would be limited. They then should seek out the number and appropriate working length of ground ladders that are required to protect not only potentially trapped occupants but department personnel, too.

With this in mind, few communities have any type of structural conditions by which a ladder company that has just two extension ladders could position ground ladders safely on multiple sides of the building. A review of past incidents can determine the frequency of use of the different lengths of ground ladders and can assist the apparatus committee in determining the appropriate ladder configuration that's needed for a new vehicle.

Likewise, a community-based aerial needs-assessment might make sense as a means of determining the appropriate type of aerial device for the district. [An evaluation of building heights, setbacks, parking areas and green spaces provides data to determine the suitable working height and vertical reach that's required to access these areas.](#)

Several apparatus manufacturers produce single-axle rear-mount aerial ladders in varying working heights, which provides a short-wheelbase-and-overall-length vehicle to operate in tight, urban areas. Quint apparatus that are built on a single axle are limited with respect to the compartment size and space that's available for ground ladders, particularly where all ground ladders are deployed only from the rear body of the vehicle.

MIDSHIP TOWER LADDER

Midship-mounted tower ladders first were developed for departments that had apparatus bay doors that were shorter than 11 feet. For the most part, the rigs were built without a fire pump or a water tank, to maximize the equipment and ground ladder complement.

Current midship tower ladders can provide a number of body compartment layouts. However, higher body designs can limit tower operations at lower angles. *Electric cable reels, scene lighting, saw boxes and other equipment should be located on the body of the rig, so they don't inhibit low-angle operations nor limit the scrub area of the device.*

DETAILED LIST

In addition to determining the type of aerial device that would work in a response district, members of the apparatus committee must determine the inventory of tools and equipment that must be carried on the apparatus. NFPA 1900 provides some guidance for a starting point of 2,500 lbs. of equipment. This is the minimum weight allowance that each apparatus manufacturer must provide, regardless of the make and model of the aerial device. Mid-mount tower ladders typically have counterbalance weight added to them to provide sufficient stability during operations along with offloading weight on the front axle on some units. Determining an accurate accounting of tools and equipment is critical in the design phase. This isn't only to avoid an overweight condition but also to keep the vehicle in balance from front to rear and side to side when the vehicle is fully outfitted. Ensure that your department provides a detailed listing of the anticipated hose, tools and equipment that are planned to be carried on the vehicle to the apparatus sales representative. Then have the manufacturer's engineering group provide a detailed weight analysis for review and approval by all parties prior to contract, to confirm that the apparatus design will meet the department's needs.

Tractor-drawn ladders have a distinct advantage of having almost unlimited space to carry portable ladders both inside of the trailer and on the body compartments. Where there is a requirement to carry a number of longer roof and wall ladders in addition to multiple two-section extension ladders, a tractor-drawn aerial can accommodate more than 300 feet of portable ladders easily, with room to spare. Tractor-drawn ladders can provide extensive compartment space to carry equipment, including hydraulic rescue tools, air bags, stabilization jacks and other equipment that's required for technical rescue.

CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

Consider the concepts that are noted above during the initial design process of ladder company apparatus. *Defining the mission of the vehicle and melding this with the operational needs of the department while staying within the organization's fleet replacement plan go a long way toward ensuring a safe and well-designed aerial apparatus.*

The old adage states, "What is old is new again." When working with your apparatus committee, take time to study your department's history and determine the current and future needs of the response district. *The apparatus that you design today must provide service to the community for the next 15–20 years and embrace available technologies while enhancing the safety for members.* Given the current apparatus market conditions, in which an aerial ladder and tower ladder can cost in excess of \$2 million and require a 3–4-year production time, upfront planning pays dividends when the new vehicle is placed into service. Your fire department and the community deserve nothing less.

FF HEALTH AND SAFETY – TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBERS!

IN 2025 WE HAVE EXPERIENCED 38 FIRE FIGHTER LODD'S

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com**

*In 2024 we experienced **64** LODDs reported nationally.!*

DOES'NT HAVE TO BE A FATALITY-JUST A DIBILITATING INJURY. YOU JUST NEVER KNOW!

- 25 year old Violet Caramella was killed and two others were injured when a weekend training exercise spiraled out of control in western North Carolina. The firefighters are members of the Riceville Volunteer Fire Department, the Buncombe County Emergency Management conducting ATV training when a serious accident occurred. Caramella had only been with the department for as year and a half. County officials are conducting an investigation.
- An Indianapolis firefighter is recovering and in stable condition after suffering an electric shock and falling from a roof while responding to a storm-related house fire.

FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK

- Two firefighters and a civilian were injured in a crash involving a city firetruck on Interstate 91 south Wednesday night, according to an official. District Fire Chief Mario Oquendo, Jr. said the truck was struck by a motorist while crews were responding to a different crash around 11:50 p.m. Wednesday, the firefighters had been released from the hospital on Thursday morning. Connecticut State Police said 22-year-old Davon Williams, who was driving a 2016 Acura TLX, was found at fault in the crash. Police said Williams, of Hartford, was traveling at a high rate of speed before he struck the firetruck and another vehicle
- One Hospitalized After Shepherdsville (KY) FD Apparatus and Passenger Vehicle Collide
- In Orangeburg County, South Carolina an ambulance driving south on U.S. 321 hit a pedestrian, according to Sgt. Tyler Tidwell of the Highway Patrol. The pedestrian, later identified as 38-year-old Marcus Glover, was taken to an area hospital where he died.
- A Twiggs County, GA fire truck was flipped over by a pickup truck while firefighters were trying to respond to a car fire earlier this week, officials say. "When the fire truck slowed down, it was struck in the rear by a GMC Sierra going at a high rate of speed, causing the Fire Truck to flip over on its roof." Both drivers were taken to Atrium Health Hospital to be treated for minor injuries.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Public Safety Hiring Crisis: We (The Leaders) May Be The Problem

Lexipol Content Development Team

Public safety agencies across the country face a critical challenge in finding and keeping the right people to staff up their ranks. During a time when job applicants are in short supply and lateral moves are on the rise, leaders can no longer afford to rely on outdated recruitment tactics or ignore their retention gaps.

In the recent Lexipol webinar "Beyond the Hiring Crisis: Strategies for Strengthening Recruitment and Retention in Public Safety," Battalion Chief (Ret.) Bruce Bjorge and Police Chief (Ret.) Dave Funkhouser share honest insights and practical solutions drawn from decades of experience. Their message is clear: If you want to recruit and retain well, it's time to take a long, hard look in the mirror.

Below are important points from the webinar that every public safety leader needs hear.

1. WE MAY BE THE PROBLEM

While multiple factors are involved in the public safety recruiting/retention crisis, one specific element stands out to the presenters. "We may be the problem," Bjorge says bluntly. "We being the leaders of the organization. And that's an important acknowledgment."

As the panelists emphasize, recruitment and retention issues aren't just about budgets or generational shifts. Leadership and culture both play a defining role. For example, if your own people aren't talking up your agency and encouraging others to join, that's not a people problem. That's a leadership issue.

Funkhouser adds: "If your newest recruits aren't telling their friends to apply, ask yourself why. Have the courage to go to them and ask what brought them here and what might make them stay."

And what should you do if your people are leaving? Ask them why, too. Whether you conduct formal exit interviews or more casual (but frank) conversations, this information is crucial to your agency leadership. After all, the only way to come up with an effective treatment is to begin with an honest diagnosis.

2. THE HOLLYWOOD SET PROBLEM

Bjorge describes what he calls the “Hollywood set” issue. In highly produced recruiting videos, glossy websites and Photoshopped social media posts, agencies often look polished and professional from the outside. But what’s behind the scenes?

“It looks great on the outside. But you open the door, and it’s empty. It’s an empty organization,” he explains. “That starts from the top.”

For all their foibles, this new generation of recruits can spot inauthenticity from a mile away. Culture isn’t what you claim in a press release — it’s what people live every day. If there’s hazing, toxic leadership, poor camaraderie or lack of support, Gen Z isn’t sticking around and hoping things get better.

“They’ll go find that same sense of purpose in a different career,” Bjorge says. “One where they feel welcome.”

3. RETENTION BEFORE RECRUITMENT

Funkhouser makes the analogy: “If you’re losing people faster than you bring them in, you’re pouring water into a leaky bucket.”

Too many agencies focus heavily on recruitment while doing little to ensure their existing employees are happy enough to stay. That’s a mistake. In public safety, your best recruiters tend to be your own people — if they believe in the mission, they’ll spread the word.

“If you take care of the people you have, they’ll become your best ambassadors,” Funkhouser says. “They’ll say, ‘Come work for us. Our leadership is outstanding. We take care of each other. We have an amazing wellness program.’”

Retention must be a deliberate strategy, not an afterthought.

4. RECRUITING NEEDS TO BE PART OF YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Bjorge and Funkhouser are clear: You can’t treat recruitment as an HR task or something you only think about when a position opens up. It needs to be permanently embedded into your agency’s long-term strategic plan. “We specifically use the term marketing,” Funkhouser says. “Because that’s what it is. We have to get into a business mindset.”

That means leveraging social media, creating recruiting videos, building partnerships with schools and local organizations and engaging your current staff in outreach. It also means updating your website — your 24/7 recruiter — so it reflects who you are now, not who you were 10 years ago.

Even better? Involve college students in marketing programs. “They know how to connect with their peers,” Funkhouser says. “Why not let them help you craft your message?”

5. GEN Z SEEKS PURPOSE, NOT JUST PAY

If you think bigger bonuses and better benefits are the key to attracting younger applicants, think again.

“Looking at what motivates Gen Z, it wasn’t pay and benefits,” Funkhouser notes. “It was purpose. A supportive culture. Work-life balance.”

Today’s younger workforce wants to be part of something bigger than themselves — but they also want to know they’ll receive mental and emotional support. Mental wellness isn’t just about crisis intervention or suicide prevention. It’s about fostering a culture where it’s safe to ask for help, and where life outside of work is respected.

“We don’t have to be the highest-paying agency,” Bjorge says. “We just have to show them that we have their back, that they matter and that this career is worth their time and energy.”

FINAL THOUGHTS: CULTURE IS THE BRAND

At the heart of it all is culture. Hiring and retention at your agency is primarily driven by your agency’s culture. It’s what draws people in ... and it’s also what can push them out. And whether you’re aware of it or not, culture starts at the top.

“Leadership is everything,” Funkhouser says. “Have the courage to look inward. Ask the hard questions. Empower your team to help shape the solutions.”

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the hiring crisis in public safety. But the agencies that are thriving all have one thing in common: They’re not sitting around complaining about the problem. They’re doing something about it. Let this be the year you do the same.

BUILDING CODE ISSUES AND REPORTED FIRE FATALITIES

If we had sprinklers in 1 & 2 family homes by now the death toll of 700+ would be a hell of a lot less and fewer firefighters would be injured. But because builders and realtors make big contributions to politicians, sprinklers have been negotiated out of the Code!!

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: Our fire problem would not be as bad if there were residential sprinklers!!

HOME FIRE FATALITIES REPORTED BY THE MEDIA FROM THE US FIRE ADMINISTRATION FOR 2025

Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	40
Last fire death 6/18/25 Eastchester, Westchester Co. Female, 70s	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	70
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	543
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/46
	#2 NY/41
	#3 IL/34
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2025: 1093	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
Week 25 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 43.7 lives PER WEEK, perhaps OSHA should examine that death toll.	
Both the states of Maryland and California as well as Wash. DC require sprinklers in 1&2 family dwellings.	
According to realtors and builders only old homes burn, so sprinklers are not needed in new homes: so when does a new home become an old home?	

Md. VFD Credits Fire Sprinklers With Saving Station During Storm Response

Fire Rescue 1, staff

Potomac Heights firefighters responded to multiple calls during a series of severe storms on Sunday, with one emergency occurring at their own firehouse.

Between flood-related calls, firefighters from the Potomac Heights Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad, Company 7, were preparing dinner at the station. They were then called out to another storm-related emergency, and while away, a fire ignited in the firehouse kitchen. Upon returning to the firehouse, Battalion 20 requested a working fire dispatch. Additional firefighters arrived soon thereafter and made entry, locating a stove on fire. The fire was contained within 10 minutes, with no extensions located, according to **Southern Maryland News**.

Fire Chief Michael Gimmel Jr. highlighted the role of the station's fire sprinkler system in successfully containing the fire to the cabinets and immediate area of origin: "Our members constantly put themselves in harm's way to serve the community. I'm incredibly thankful that our safety systems worked flawlessly to keep them safe at home."

FireRescue1 Senior Advisor Chief Marc Bashoor echoed the department's sentiment that this incident serves as a powerful reminder of the critical role that fire protection systems play in safeguarding both property and lives.

"I urge fire chiefs to take steps to protect your department's assets, not the least of which are the people serving in the firehouses," Bashoor said. "While firefighters were absolutely needed to finish this up, a properly installed and maintained sprinkler system made the difference in this incident. I can't emphasize enough how important the smoke alarms and sprinklers are in helping us all get early notification and to have enough time to get out. In this case, the sprinkler system kept this facility from joining the long list of firehouses burning that I captured in 'America (Firehouses) Burning': What are you doing about it?"

GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE

Va. Firefighters Spend 4 Hours On EV SUV Blaze, Using Drone To Track Battery Hotspots

Bill Carey

Chesterfield County firefighters spent nearly four hours extinguishing and cooling a burning electric SUV after it overturned on Walton Bluff Parkway, highlighting the extra resources required for electric-vehicle (EV) fires. In a Facebook post, the department stated that firefighters from Station 5, the Fire Marshal's Office and the department's Unmanned Aerial Systems team were dispatched to the crash on June 16, which ruptured the vehicle's battery pack, igniting a stubborn blaze.

Using a drone equipped with a thermal-imaging camera, firefighters monitored battery-cell temperatures long after flames were knocked down, confirming hot spots that could reignite.

"EV batteries are encased in protective shells, making them harder to cool and extending on-scene time compared with gasoline vehicles, which are typically cleared in under an hour," the department said in the social media post.

Chesterfield firefighters have trained on lithium-ion battery incidents since 2021, and Virginia will require all firefighters statewide to complete similar training by year's end.

STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!

Must Have Policies and Practices for Every Fire Department

June 27, 2025 - 12 p.m. ET

A certificate of attendance will be offered.

Free to Attend - [Save My Seat!](#)

This class reviews the top administrative policies and operational practices every fire department must have to prevent liability, firefighter injuries, and public embarrassment and to increase proficiency on the fireground. The suggested policies are derived from Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommendations and case studies on poor outcomes in fire departments that lacked sufficient policies or operational practices. Attendees will learn how to create vital administrative policies to protect their personnel and the department and learn to conduct a risk analysis of their operations to determine if there are policies or practices they must implement immediately. Among the topics addressed are the OSHA Operational Statement, physical fitness, carrying firearms **REGISTER AT THIS LINK:**

, photography, training requirements and skill testing, health and safety, and marijuana.

https://clarionevents.zoom.us/webinar/register/6817460421303/WN_WH3oQuJqTpKynBHwlgxl1g#/registration



Webinar - Fire Up Your Recruitment Game: Harnessing Digital Tools for Recruitment Success

Aug. 7 at 2pm ET

Presenter: Katie Bulla

Webinar - The Continuing Evolution of Utility-Scale Battery Energy Storage System Design and Safety

July 8 at 2pm ET

Presenter: Mike Simpson

Sponsored by: 



2025 Seminar Series, Short-Handed Firefighting

34 years ago, this class was developed by Firefighter Andrew A. Fredericks. At that time, the fire service was starting to suffer from a shortage of members, especially but not limited to the volunteer ranks. Today, as we all know, departments across the nation have experienced a large drop-off in membership. With today's hotter, faster-moving fires, it is imperative that we get on the road ASAP and are ready to mount an aggressive interior attack – especially where life-saving attempts must be carried out. This class will look at new apparatus and equipment designed to make our jobs less labor-intensive. In many places, where it used to take one or maybe two departments to handle the job at a single-family residence, now up to six departments are necessary due our diminished ranks. We must protect our residents and, just as important, our members and make sure everyone goes home.

Mike Healy has been a member of the Rockland County fire service for 54 years, serving with the Blauvelt F.D. for 14 years, followed by the Central Nyack F.D. for 40 years. He has served as a chief for three terms. Healy is currently the coordinator of education for the Rockland County Fire Training Center. **Jeff Daniels** is a 23-year fire service veteran. He served with the Air National Guard as a crash rescue firefighter for 17 years and was a member of the West Haverstraw Volunteer F.D. for 14 years. In 2002, he was hired as a NYS DMNA firefighter and served for over four years before being appointed to the FDNY. Daniels was assigned to Ladder Co. 39 for 12 years and was later an instructor for the FDNY Fire Academy. Currently, he is a member of Squad 61. He also teaches at the Rockland County Fire Training Center.

Coming to These Counties in 2025 (7:00 p.m. Starting Time):

Cortland (October 28) • Erie (October 8) • **Fulton (September 9)** • Jefferson (October 15)
• Monroe (September 30) • Nassau (November 5) • Niagara (March 12) • Oneida (September 24)
• Onondaga (February 18) • Orange (April 29) • Otsego (September 15) • **Rensselaer (October 20)**
• Rockland (April 23) • St. Lawrence (March 24) • Suffolk (April 2) • Westchester (September 3)

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

REGISTER AT THIS LINK: <https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/2025seminarseries>

ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Coming Attractions:

- **October 2-4, 2025, Thursday - Saturday**, Annual Meeting and Vendor Expo at the Saratoga Hilton and City Center, Saratoga Springs
- **October 8-10, 2026**, Annual Meeting and Vendor Expo at the Saratoga Hilton and City Center, Saratoga Springs



NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL – TRAINING TIMES – COURSES/WEBINARS/EVENTS

LINK TO THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM: https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/featured_courses

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

The fire company thanks you for your support!! Breakfast will resume in September.

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

See you in October when we start up again. **Thank you for your support!**

Asking for a Friend

Help needed, is there a District/Company that accepts EMS applicants only. What are your requirements for those members that respond to EMS calls only, but are still considered firefighters for VFBL or LOSAP purposes? Contact me at my email address, asking for a friend. If you have a written policy and are willing to share please send to tom@rinaldi1.com, thanks.

GENERAL INTEREST

What To Do When Your Community Stakeholders Know Little About Fire Department Operations

Leonard N. Chan

Strategic planning and decision-making processes for fire departments often require the participation of stakeholders that lack subject-matter expertise. This may be frustrating at times, but it's reality, and the fire service has a responsibility to educate these stakeholders so they can become contributors to the strategic planning process. Let's dig into why and how.

WHY IT MATTERS

Regardless of governance and administrative structure, fire departments exist to serve the safety needs of their respective communities. Fire departments depend on their financial support, let alone their permission to operate. *The communities served have the right to determine the strategic direction and the scope of services of their fire departments.* This often occurs through the community's representation via its elected officials. While incredibly essential and meaningful, the views of elected officials should be complemented by the perspectives of other community organizations and members. This includes members of the fire department itself.

Casting a wide net in collecting stakeholder feedback in a strategic planning process carries multiple advantages. A broadened approach allows for an increased likelihood in recognizing potential opportunities and emerging threats to the community. Common goals and objectives may be identified among various stakeholders, even those that seemingly have a tangential connection to the fire service. In addition, involvement in the planning process incentivizes stakeholders to support the actual execution and implementation of a strategic plan.

ROOTED IN DATA

A strategic planning process must anchor stakeholder input in facts and data. *Television and movies have warped perceptions on how fire sprinklers work, which have hamstrung efforts to expand their use.* The frequency of motor vehicle collisions and extreme heat have desensitized the masses. This has led to risk acceptance as proposals to mitigate these risks are met with an attitude of defeatism. Recency bias from a natural disaster may warp the sense of danger that a community experiences.

Members of the public typically lack knowledge of the number and type of emergency incidents responded to by fire departments. This results in stakeholders clamoring for additional resources in specific areas when other needs should be prioritized.

Stakeholders, internal and external, also struggle in understanding the costs to operate a fire department, including the salaries, equipment, tools and vehicles. The need for new apparatus may have been demonstrated yesterday, testing the patience of firefighters. A deliberative process, however, is required in its

financing, design and build to meet operational needs while exercising fiscal responsibility. Budgetary constraints can place inconvenient limits on what is possible – but that cannot be ignored.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Developing a fire department strategic plan does not require choosing between a stakeholder-driven or a data-driven approach. An effective strategic plan development process entails following both paths in parallel. The fundamental first step is to equip the facilitators of the strategic planning process with the necessary qualitative and quantitative data. Even the most acclaimed and qualified individuals will struggle in collecting stakeholder feedback without demonstrating cultural literacy of a given profession and community. The chapter on industry-specific knowledge in the recently published [NFPA 1022: Standard for Fire and Emergency Services Analyst Professional Qualifications](#) provides a basic framework in learning the basics of the fire service.

Along with reviewing demographic data, meeting people is the means to understand a community. Fire departments should also regard interaction with stakeholders in the strategic planning development process as an opportunity to increase awareness and education. *As part of the dialogue, fire departments should discuss subjects such as the regulatory requirements, services provided, peer comparisons, industry-accepted standards, and financial obligations.* The depth of detail in these discussions depends on the audience. Stakeholders have varying levels of existing knowledge and different sets of needs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The community serves as the ultimate decision-maker in establishing the mission, goals and objectives for a fire department. Quality decision-making often relies on the information available. Thus, fire departments have an obligation to lend their subject-matter expertise to ensure that decision-making is anchored in reality.

10 Rules For American Flag Etiquette On Fire Apparatus

If your department plans to display the American flag on your trucks during daily operations, holiday parade participation or other special events, it's important to refresh your memory on flag etiquette specific to vehicles.

Here are 10 rules to follow when displaying the American flag on fire apparatus.

1. According to the Firefighters Association of the State of New York, only one flag is authorized to fly on a fire truck.
2. The American flag should never be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle.
3. When the flag is displayed on a vehicle, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.
4. Displaying a torn or tattered flag is not permitted.
5. The flag may only be displayed at night if it's illuminated by light.
6. If the flag is flying in a parade with other flags, ensure the flag is positioned to the marchers' right.
7. If a flag is displayed on a float in a parade, it must be displayed by a staff.
8. The flag should not be subject to harsh weather conditions so, unless you have an all-weather flag, it's improper to display your flag during rain, snow and wind storms.
9. The flag should not be placed with something attached to it and it should not be touching the ground.
10. If a flag is hung between two aerial rigs, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.

Keep these points in mind to ensure our nation's flag, a living symbol, is never disrespected and always displayed properly.

If you plan to display an American flag somewhere besides on your vehicle, here is a comprehensive list of the [flag code regulations](https://www.firerescue1.com/american-flag/articles/8-rules-for-properly-displaying-an-american-flag-gasdjOk1nttnuxUj/). <<https://www.firerescue1.com/american-flag/articles/8-rules-for-properly-displaying-an-american-flag-gasdjOk1nttnuxUj/>>

LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

A woman has the last word in any argument. Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Greenfield Fire District is Hiring

The Greenfield Fire District is looking for a professional and highly-motivated person to perform a wide variety of functions relating to the material needs and possessions of the Greenfield Fire District. Must have good organization and communication skills, the ability to manage several projects simultaneously, and be flexible with work hours when necessary. Prior experience preferred and all candidates must have a clean driver's license. Individuals residing within Fire District Boundaries preferred. Employment application and job description can be found on the district website at www.greenfieldfd.org. Applications, or cover letters & resumes, will be accepted until the position is filled, and should be sent to Joyce Petkus, District Administrator via email at jpetkus@greenfieldfd.org or regular mail to Greenfield Fire District, P.O. Box 103 Greenfield Center, NY 12833.

CAFDA 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:

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[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.

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

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

We want to thank all of our Business Partners for renewing their partnership for 2025. You are invited to our monthly membership meeting and to any of our social events..

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*The Weekly Capital Bulletin is reaching well over **650+** subscribed fire district members and now other members of the fire service on a regular basis. This is a service of CAFDA through the effort of Tom Rinaldi who can be reached at tom@rinaldi1.com for comments and content contributions are always welcome.*

BECOME A MEMBER OF CAFDA!

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 100 members in 14 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.

FOR A MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR A BUSINESS PARTNER APPLICATION GO TO THE FOLLOWING LINK:

<https://cafda.net/membership-info/>

CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

SAVE THE DATES!

CAFDA has been busy, and 2025 is shaping up to be a great year!

COMMISSIONER TRAINING

AVERILL PARK FIRE DISTRICT	Saturday, February 1, 2025 — Snow Date: Sunday, February 2, 2025
CLIFTON PARK FIRE DISTRICT	Saturday, March 1, 2025 — Snow Date: Sunday, March 2, 2025
BERKSHIRE FIRE DISTRICT	Saturday, March 29, 2025 — Snow Date: Sunday, March 30, 2025
WARRENSBURG FIRE DISTRICT	Saturday, April 5, 2025 — Snow Date: Sunday, April 6, 2025

OTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

FINANCIAL TRAINING FOR FIRE DISTRICT OFFICIALS	Fulton-Montgomery Community College — Thurs-Fri. March 13-14, 2025 — 2805 State Hwy. 67, Johnstown
FINANCIAL TRAINING FOR FIRE DISTRICT OFFICIALS	Brighton Fire District — Tues-Wed. March 25-26, 2025 — 3100 East Avenue, Rochester
CAFDA CONFERENCE	Fort William Henry Hotel & Conference Center, Lake George — Thurs-Sat. April 10-12, 2025
ANNUAL FALL SEMINAR	Verdoy Fire District — Saturday, November 1, 2025 — 988 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham

SOCIAL EVENTS

OFFICER INSTALLATION DINNER	Century House, Latham — Saturday, March 8, 2025
ANNUAL DAY AT THE RACES!	Saratoga Race Course, Saratoga Springs — Friday, August 8, 2025

MEETINGS – CLIFTON PARK FIRE DISTRICT & ZOOM

General Membership Meeting	Saturday, January 4, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, February 13, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Wednesday March 5, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting	Thursday, April 3, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, May 8, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, June 12, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting	Thursday, August 14, 2025



General Membership Meeting	Thursday, September 11, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, October 9, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, November 13, 2025

FOR MORE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Website	www.CAFDA.net
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OSHA INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

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ASSOCIATION - CAFDA

NEWEST INFORMATION ALWAYS AT THE TOP WITH RED ARROW

[Dave Denniston Reports on a Successful Visit to Washington, D.C.](#)

Could not be prouder than to be part of the current team as we laid the foundation for groundbreaking collaboration between the US Secretary of Labor, OSHA, IAFF, and NVFC. We all agreed to roll up our sleeves and finish crafting the Emergency Response Standard. **This new rule** will be a labor of love that protects our mutual volunteer and career first responders with a standard that is reasonable, and both economically and technically feasible.

The passion in this room was unsurpassed and I am confident the group will leave a fire service for the next generations that is safer and better than the one we found. Thank you for all the hard work that got us this far and the work of additional others that will be invited to help us in this process moving forward.

[NVFC Forming Red Ribbon Panel to address proposed OSHA ER Standard, more information to be posted as soon as it is available.](#)