



Capital Area Fire District's Association
THE WEEKLY CAFDA

BULLETIN

May 17th, 2025

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

CAPITAL SHORTS:

- See the new OSHA information in the Supplement!!
- CAFDA is happy to announce the dates for **Conference '26** in historic Lake George, April, 9th, 10th and 11th, 2026 plan on joining us.
- Thank you Chief Tom Richardson who said. "We need to get back to teaching firefighters how to put the fire out". It seems so simple, and yet so true. We spend so much time focusing on the new and sexy stuff that we often forget to cover the basics."
- Join us in person or Zoom in, General Membership meeting on Thursday June 12th at 7PM
- OSHA update, a Red Ribbon group established by the NVFC will be examining the proposed standard and making recommendations to limit the adverse impacts on all fire departments. More to come stand by.

STUFF FOR YOUR BENEFIT, NEED TO KNOW!

WWW.CAFDA.NET

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday June 12th, in person or Zoom in. 7PM.

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

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

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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

Days Added to the Legislative Session

The Assembly is adding 3 additional days to the legislative session, but the Senate does not plan to extend their legislative calendar at this time. While lawmakers typically pass 600 to 800 bills in a session, only 153 bills have been passed by both chambers so far this year.

Legislative Scorecard Win!

Governor Hochul and the Senate and Assembly finalized the **State Budget, which included** addressing two important Legislative Scorecard issues - a future ban on potentially harmful PFAS, forever chemicals in new firefighter turnout gear and a five-year extension of the EMS Cost Recovery law.

Legislative Commentary

Here is what the NYS Fire Service has gotten through legislation so far this session; changed the use of the term moped to limited use motorcycle, the commissioner of agriculture now sits on the Code Council, and new construction now requires EV charging where parking is provided. The Fire Service is obviously not the priority of those controlling the legislature. With the number of session days dwindling, the chances of getting significant bills past grows dimmer each day. Bills introduced by Republicans is even slimmer. Perhaps because most of the state voted Republican in previous elections with the exception of NYC. Of the 150 Assembly members, 65 are from New York City, do you believe they care about the volunteer fire service in upstate NY?

Bills affecting the operation of the fire service are being Introduced for the 2025/26 Legislative Session the latest ScoreCard will keep you informed about pending legislation.

When you see ** it's a recommended read!!

THE LATEST FROM WASHINGTON

Sanity is slowly returning to the swamp.

DHS Working on Restoring Funds to National Fire Academy

Sherry Greenfield, The Baltimore Sun

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Thursday that her office is working to restore funding to the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg.

Noem appeared before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, where she was questioned by Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen, a Democrat, about the funding stripped away from the academy in March.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency ordered the academy to cancel all in-person classes, with instructors later receiving additional orders to cancel virtual classes. Though some virtual classes have been restored, in-person training has been shut down since March 7 as a result of a wider effort by the Trump administration to reduce federal spending and align agency programs with its priorities.

Van Hollen questioned Noem about a letter that he, Maryland Rep. April McClain Delaney, a Democrat, and 64 colleagues sent to FEMA in March asking for an explanation as to why the agency decided to cancel the academy's in-person and virtual training for firefighters and paramedics.

"I would just ask, could you commit today to responding to our letter?" Van Hollen asked, according to the hearing transcript.

Noem said she believes her office did respond to the March 14 letter.

"... Those grants and programs are being facilitated, and those dollars will be forwarded," she said. "So, that is something that if I didn't get that back to you, we will get it to you within 24 hours."

Van Hollen continued to press Noem for any reassurance that funding will be restored.

"Well, that would be some good news to come out of the hearing, because we really have not heard a thing," he said. "So, you're bringing good news today that we're going to renew funding for the National Fire Academy?"

Noem said that was the direction her office was taking, and that information would be provided to him.

Meanwhile, training has continued for firefighters and paramedics in Carroll County despite the federal government's abrupt decision to cancel classes at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg.

"We were happy to see the limited capacity of online training restored," Michael Karolenko, president of the Carroll County Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics and the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 5184, stated in an email Friday. "We fervently advocate that in-person courses are restored as soon as possible, returning not only their specialized education, but certainly the networking opportunities that truly add the crucial mechanism of sharing ideas and contacts to advance the fire service."

Karolenko said the shutdown has not affected the everyday training of firefighters and Emergency Medical Service personnel.

"Position-specific required certification and more general training is done locally and through the University of Maryland, Maryland Fire Rescue Institute," he said. "The cancellation of in-person courses at the NFA does limit our opportunity to access courses that benefit our career and volunteer fire officers, and the professional development of our members. Aspects that, absolutely, positively affect our service to Carroll County."

Meanwhile, the closing is having a direct impact on Emmitsburg, a small town on the tip of northern Frederick County.

Emmitsburg Mayor Frank Davis said in an interview Friday that if the shutdown continues, it will harm local businesses, employment and money coming into the town's water fund.

"It will have a great impact on our economy," Davis said. "Businesses will lose 20% of their income. There are employees from the town who live in Emmitsburg who work there, and the academy is the largest contributor to our water budget.

"We have great hope they open it back up," she said.

Funding for the U.S. Fire Administration, which is controlled by FEMA and is the agency responsible for the National Fire Academy, was secured through 2028 by the Fire Grants and Safety Act, which was signed by former President Joe Biden in July.

President Donald Trump has made cuts to the federal government a priority since he took office in January. The Elon Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency has slashed programs and spending across multiple federal agencies.

"The NFA has long been a bastion of professional development for the fire service. It is a melting pot of best practices from across the nation, built to advance our service to the community and safety of our members," Karolenko said. "It is a nationally recognized point of convergence for fire service leaders, and developing leaders, to network and interweave their knowledge to benefit each of their communities more locally."

Karolenko is hopeful the programs will be restored.

"We hope to see this long-valued resource, that we have had as a close-by neighbor, restored to its full capacity of enhancing public safety nationally, as soon as possible," he said. "The leadership of our Union, the IAFF, has worked positively with the president's administration to restore programs and problem solve other pauses or shutdowns that negatively affect firefighters.

"We hope that they are able to work through this issue, as well. There is no doubt that the NFA has swung far out of its weight class in terms of proportionate benefit to the United States, as a whole."

IAFF Enters Fire Apparatus Conversation with Letter to FTC

Chris Mc Loone

The American Economic Liberties Project (AELP) and International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) have written a letter to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Chair Andrew Ferguson; Pam Bondi, Attorney General; and Gail Slater, Assistant Attorney General, Antitrust Division, requesting that the FTC "investigate and take action against consolidation in fire and emergency vehicle manufacturers."

The letter also asks the FTC to look into other fire service products it claims have been impacted by consolidation trends, citing costs for self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and dispatching software.

The letter suggests that the FTC investigate topics including:

- National and regional consolidation trends.
- National and regional market shares of the top firms in each industry.
- If transactions have been followed by an increased rate of price increases.
- If transactions have been followed by reduction in production capacity or longer delivery delays.

"We urge the DOJ and FTC to launch investigations immediately and bring appropriate enforcement actions accordingly," the letter concludes.

As Recruitment Lags, Goldman Introduces Bill Making Volunteer Firefighters Eligible For Student Loan Forgiveness

Kevin Frey, Spectrum News

Sixty-five percent of firefighters across the country are volunteers. In New York, it is closer to 90%.

But in recent decades, their ranks have gotten dramatically smaller and older.

New York Rep. Dan Goldman (D-NY10) is hoping to reverse those recruitment trends with new legislation, shared first with Spectrum News.

His bill makes volunteer firefighters and EMTs eligible for federal student loan forgiveness after 10 years of service and 120 qualifying payments.

The legislation expands the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which already offers forgiveness to paid career firefighters and [other public service workers](#), such as teachers and law enforcement.

"This would both recognize their public service by giving them a benefit that other public service officials get," Goldman said. "It would also help recruit and retain volunteer firefighters so that the smaller fire departments that rely on them have enough people to deal with emergencies when they pop up."

For New York, the falloff in recruitment has been stark.

John D'Alessandro, a volunteer firefighter in Saratoga County and the secretary of the Firefighters Association of the State of New York, says that roughly 20 years ago, there were about 120,000 volunteers across the Empire State.

Now, there are approximately 80,000.

"At the same time that we see [this] decrease in numbers, the number of calls that each department is facing is increasing. The complexities of those calls are increasing," D'Alessandro said.

"If we have to come crawling on our hands and knees with buckets of water, we will come because not coming is not an option," he said. "But it is getting more difficult."

The rollout of Goldman's legislation comes as the debate over student loan forgiveness remains a source of political friction in Washington and beyond. Former President Joe Biden attempted various initiatives aimed at providing forgiveness, though faced legal challenges.

But D'Alessandro, who supports Goldman's bill, argues labeling this proposal "forgiveness" is inaccurate.

"The volunteer fire service saves New York taxpayers \$3.8 billion a year just in salaries and benefits alone, because we can't be compensated," he said. "This is student loan investment. You're getting something significant, and frankly, you're getting a return of much higher value."

The legislation is in its earliest stages on Capitol Hill, and a cost estimate is not available.

Goldman admits he is not optimistic that much will get done in a Republican-controlled Congress, but he expressed some hope Republicans from districts that rely on volunteer firefighters will see the value of the proposal.

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES

NYS-OSC AUDITS

MONTAUK FIRE DISTRICT – PAYROLL - ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

Did the Montauk Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) pay Advanced Life Support (ALS) employees only the amounts to which they were entitled?

AUDIT PERIOD

January 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024

UNDERSTANDING THE PROGRAM

Payroll is one of the largest components of a fire district's budget. The Board is responsible for establishing and approving all salaries and hourly wages by position or as part of a collective bargaining agreement. The District's 13 ALS employees use a combination of sign-in sheets and a biometric timeclock (finger reader) to help ensure that they are properly compensated for all the time worked. In 2023, the District's payroll for ALS employees totaled \$328,847, which was 64 percent of the District's total budgeted payroll of \$510,000.

AUDIT SUMMARY

The Board did not pay ALS employees only the amounts to which they were entitled. The Board overpaid its 13 ALS employees a total of \$9,386. A lack of oversight and inadequate controls led to the overpayments occurring. For example:

- The Secretary-Treasurer, when implementing a Board-authorized pay increase for ALS employees, increased the hourly rate by \$3 per hour instead of \$2 per hour for each ALS employee. The Secretary-Treasurer also applied the increase nine days before the effective date. Because there was a lack of Board oversight and controls, the error and early implementation of the increased hourly rate went undetected, resulting in a total overpayment of \$8,690.
- The District's inconsistent time records and the Secretary-Treasurer not reconciling time records before processing payroll enabled three ALS employees to overlap their shifts at the District and the neighboring Amagansett Fire District (AFD). Consequently, these three individuals were overpaid \$696 for 29 instances of overlapping shifts.

*Had the **Chairman of the Board (Chairman)**, who was responsible for reviewing the payroll, checked the calculations or verified that ALS employee hourly rates were correct before certifying the payroll each pay period, the payroll calculation errors may have been identified and corrected.*

The report includes six recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the District's ability to accurately pay ALS employees. District officials disagreed with certain aspects of our findings but indicated they plan to initiate corrective action. Appendix C includes our comments on issues raised in the District's response letter.

THE ENTIRE AUDIT HERE:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/montauk-fire-district-2024-153.pdf>

From Dollars To Decisions: Budget Leadership For Fire Officers

Brycen Garrison

Budget leadership in fire departments is a crucial skill, especially for those in senior roles. Like any leadership discipline, the skills involved are built over time through practice, reinforcement and the steady pressure of real-world challenges. To prepare our future leaders to be effective in budgeting, we need to involve them earlier in their careers.

Budgeting probably wasn't part of your fire academy curriculum. It does surface in promotional exams and administrative roles, but the most powerful development happens when people are empowered to make real decisions, even in small ways. Giving individuals ownership of budget decisions in their areas allows them to learn through the small wins and hard lessons that come with resource allocation.

Here we'll highlight some of the core principles of budget leadership and how we can teach them in a way that supports both the mission and the people we serve.

ESTABLISHING A FOUNDATION: MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

Every strong budget strategy starts with a clear understanding of your organization's mission, vision and values. Without that grounding, it's far too easy to spend money on shiny new things that will collect dust in a station corner. Your mission, vision and values serve as your compass, directing you toward what matters most.

In our organization, we live by the mantra "People over things." So, when a team brings forward a new purchase, we pause to ask a series of questions:

- Where does this take us?
- What are we trading off?
- Is this aligned with our values, or are we chasing convenience?

We also challenge our teams to reframe the questions as follows:

- If you used this money to invest in people, what would that look like?
- Could you enhance training, fund education or grow new capabilities that move the whole organization forward?

Leadership is about creating clarity and modeling reflection. When people start asking these questions on their own, you know your values have taken root.

CORE BUDGETING PRINCIPLES

Every purchase, big or small, matters. Million-dollar purchases usually get rigorous scrutiny, but it's the accumulation of small, unchecked expenditures that can quietly drag your organization down. The truth is, the big-ticket items are often better planned. It's the unmonitored spending on the margins that catches up with you.

Budget leaders must be just as disciplined with the small stuff. That means long-term forecasting, sustainable personnel costs, and a realistic replacement plan for every program or asset. One of the best ways to teach this is by building systems that mentor others. Use a structured command and oversight model, embed mentorship into budget planning, and equip your team with tools to track and manage funds effectively. In our organization, we place a chief as oversight of the team lead to help be a guide.

Remember, Excel isn't just a spreadsheet, it's a mirror. If your people don't know where they stand on budget-to-actuals, they're flying blind. And when multiple teams are in the red, it's not always a team leader problem, it's a system problem.

FUNDING SOURCES FOR FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Good budgeting starts with knowing where your money comes from. Most fire departments rely on some combination of mill levy assessments, sales taxes and general funds. Others may receive revenue through impact fees, mineral rights, grants, donations or permitting.

No matter the source, these funds are not ours. They are entrusted to us. That trust is fragile – and essential. Misuse not only threatens future funding, but also the very faith the public places in us. As fire service leaders, we must always remember: We are stewards, not owners. Our job is to reinvest these funds in ways that elevate service, response, training and people. Nothing less.

LONG-TERM PLANNING AND DEBT MANAGEMENT

Salaries and benefits typically account for 60% to 85% of the operating budget, though that varies depending on whether you're in a city department or a fire district. Either way, long-term sustainability matters.

Five-year planning isn't optional. It's the safeguard against decisions today that bankrupt us tomorrow. I was taught that when we hire someone, we are making a long-term commitment to them and to their families. Budget accordingly. I'd go out 10 years, but I'm not that good yet! Still, a five-year forecast helps us avoid overcommitting and underdelivering.

As for debt, avoid it when you can. Borrowing often doubles the cost of capital projects due to interest. And every dollar you commit to debt service is one you can't spend on people. Worse yet, long-term debt outlives leadership. A decision made today can handcuff your successor 20 years from now. Our job is to make things better, not just now but for the leaders who follow us.

CAPITAL PURCHASES VS. OPERATIONAL COSTS

Capital means long-term investments – stations, apparatus, facilities. Operational costs are the day-to-day expenses – wages, benefits, fuel, insurance. Understand that these are separate budgets. Unlike your personal checking account, you can't just move money between them.

Amending the budget to cover poor planning? That's not leadership. Set your plan. Stick to it.

LABOR AND MANAGEMENT COLLABORATION

Joint Labor-Management (JLM) meetings are essential for building partnerships. We open every budget meeting to anyone who wants to attend. Every document is transparent. We use the process to teach, to build trust, and to invite participation.

Sure, we won't always agree on how the money is spent, but working through those differences together, with respect and openness, creates smarter decisions and stronger teams. And when we take care of our people, guess who benefits? The community.

STRATEGIC THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

Leaders need to think beyond the numbers. Triple Constraint Management – balancing time, cost, and quality – is one framework to help navigate trade-offs. You might be able to save time, but at what cost? Can you maintain quality?

There are many thinking strategies – divergent, convergent, lateral. Each challenges you to look at problems differently.

- Divergent thinking allows you to explore many solutions.
- Convergent thinking narrows to the one option.
- Lateral thinking helps solve problems in unexpected ways, usually by seeing the problem as an advantage.

I encourage you to explore these ideas further. Think different, lead better. And remember, great decisions are both data-driven and people-driven. Rely too heavily on one, and your perspective falters. Combine both, and you'll get it right more often than not.

PREPARING FOR GROWTH

As communities grow, so must we. But expansion takes foresight. You need quiet time to imagine the future – to see what isn't there yet – and then translate that vision into something others can believe in. That's your job as a leader: to paint the picture, then guide people into it. Most won't see it at first. But if you communicate clearly and consistently, they'll get there. That's how buy-in happens.

Pro-tip: Skip the arbitrary increases. Adding “10% across the board” shows a lack of understanding. Instead, dig into the actuals. Track and trend your expenditures so you know what things really cost – and what they’re going to cost.

ENCOURAGING A LEARNING CULTURE

Every mistake is tuition. Sometimes you pay it in a college classroom, other times you pay it with a budgeting decision that didn’t go as planned. Either way, experience is a great teacher.

If you want innovation, reward experimentation. Make it safe to try. When people stop learning, it’s usually because they’re afraid of failing in front of you. Let them know that mistakes are opportunities. Growth is the goal, not perfection.

BUILDING ALIGNMENT AND TRUST

Budget alignment takes more than spreadsheets. It takes trust. Communicate. Listen. Ask questions. Give people space to weigh in. And if resistance shows up, lean in. Understand where it’s coming from. Clarify your message.

If people are working against the vision, confront it directly but with empathy. You can’t build unity without accountability. Everyone has to paddle in the same direction. And that only happens when trust runs deep.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

To lead effectively in budget management, fire service leaders must:

- Align decisions with the organization’s mission and values.
- Strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and people-focused leadership.
- Leverage strategic thinking to prepare for both immediate and long-term challenges.
- Foster a culture of trust, alignment and continuous learning.

Remember, budget leadership isn’t just about numbers; it’s about stewardship, vision and people. The most effective leaders don’t just balance the budget. They build teams, teach others and leave the organization better than they found it. That’s the legacy worth leaving.

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STEP INTO THE CHIEF’S OFFICE

****Mixed Signals: Managing Conflicting Orders Within The Chain Of Command**

Greg Rogers

Fire departments are considered paramilitary or quasi-military organizations, and much like the armed forces, fire departments are structured for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. As such, the chain of command is an essential element in the fire department organizational structure. When understood by all parties and used correctly, this system improves communication, reduces confusion and helps limit risk. But when misunderstood or misused, the chain of command can severely hamper a department’s ability to function, both on the fireground and in the station.

EVERYBODY ANSWERS TO SOMEBODY

If a department consisted solely of firefighters and a fire chief, the chain of command would be simple – one link. But this system would quickly fail because the chief’s span of control would be exceeded, hence our setup of divisions, battalions and companies. The structure may be simpler in smaller departments, but the concept remains the same: Everybody answers to somebody. This is accountability in its simplest sense.

Looking from the bottom up, the chain of command appears straight and direct, but when viewed from the top down, the chain of command is a series of splits that break responsibility down into manageable pieces. These pieces are the foundation of span of control, the concept that a fire service supervisor is only capable of effectively and efficiently managing 3-7 subordinate people or units. The concept of span of control is already applied to incident management but should also be adhered to in non-emergency activities.

The issuance of orders is an effective means of directing fire department operations, but the authority to issue orders comes with heavy responsibility. This is because people tend to follow orders, sometimes to a fault.

AUTHORITY GONE WRONG

American social psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted a series of experiments on human obedience at Yale University in the early 1960s. His research was intended to discover and explain how humans will follow an order from somebody in authority, even if that order is unethical or unjust.

One study, dubbed the Baseline Study, found that all participants continued to follow orders to administer an electric shock to a test subject until 300 volts were delivered and the subject screamed. In the same study, 65% of participants continued delivering shocks until they believed they were delivering the maximum charge, 450 volts, despite the understanding that they were causing severe pain. (It's worth noting that the test subject and experimenter were role playing and there was never any electrical charge applied. However, the participants were not aware of this.)

The experiments demonstrated that many people obey authority figures even when asked to perform actions they believe are wrong due to social pressures, perceived legitimacy or fear of consequences. This provided a psychological explanation for why individuals in hierarchical systems might follow immoral orders, and the concept can be extended to apply to unsafe orders or those orders issued outside of the chain of command.

STAY IN YOUR LANE

This behavioral tendency should be studied and understood by all personnel. Officers need to know how their authority is interpreted and that personnel may have a desire to comply with their orders, even if misdirected or inherently risky. Firefighters also need to understand this psychological phenomenon because awareness of it can help prevent them from falling into it.

Because of the positional authority associated with rank, firefighters can be misled into thinking that all officers senior to them are in their chain of command, and some officers may believe that all firefighters should answer to them, but this is not the case. While members are expected to respect superiors outside of their chain of command, officers must recognize that not all firefighters are under their charge. Issuing orders to those outside of your charge leads to confusion and failure, potentially ending in catastrophe. This is a form of mission creep or overreach, and it is counterproductive to effective operational initiatives. In simple terms: Stay in your lane.

SPLINTERED ACCOUNTABILITY

While fire companies usually operate under the direct supervision of their company officers, there are many tasks that members must complete independently (e.g., operating apparatus on scene, connecting to a hydrant or performing outside ventilation work). When a member is given an order by their officer, that order needs to be carried out to completion, whether the officer oversees it directly or not.

One purpose of the Incident Command System (ICS) is that it helps to streamline the chain of command at incident scenes. When adhered to, orders are issued and received only within the appropriate chain of command. Unfortunately, conflicting orders are sometimes issued on the fireground. This practice creates a tremendous hazard to firefighters by splintering accountability and interrupting the chain of command.

Let's review this scenario as an example:

Firefighters are operating at the scene of a house fire. A firefighter from Truck 1 has been issued an order by their captain to place ground ladders on all sides of the structure while the captain and another firefighter go inside to search. It is not an uncommon practice for truck companies to split interior and exterior duties based on staffing constraints or incident needs.

The firefighter places a ladder for egress on the "A" side of the house and heads back to the rig to retrieve another one when he is stopped by the captain from Engine 1 who tells him to help with stretching a second hoseline from the engine because they are short-handed.

Not wanting to disobey the engine company captain, the Truck 1 firefighter helps get the handline into position. As this is happening, the conditions inside the building suddenly change, requiring all firefighters to evacuate. The fire causes a stairway collapse, trapping the truck company captain and firefighter on the second floor. The captain locates a window and opens it, hoping to find a ladder. But the ladder isn't there. It was never placed because the firefighter was given a subsequent order by an officer outside of his chain of command – and he

followed it. Now there are firefighters trapped on an upper floor of a burning building, and they need to resort to bailout methods to safely escape.

Conflicting orders are issued more often than they should be in our business. On the one hand, firefighters choosing to follow a conflicting order illustrates the desire to get the job done and to help each other out. On the other hand, it can lead to disastrous situations, like the example above – and quite frankly cannot be tolerated. Officers should exercise care when asking for help from firefighters who aren't assigned to them. There may be times when this practice is acceptable, but those situations should be a rare exception.

The chain of command and issuance of orders can become complicated if all parties involved do not respect the system and its boundaries. Yes, I said all parties – even the fire chief. It's understood that the fire chief is the ranking officer of the fire department and that their orders override those issued by other officers in the organization. But if you're a fire chief and you want your fires to go out, make sure your firefighters carry out the orders issued by their officers before changing the plan. Overriding orders not only leads to confusion, it also disempowers and marginalizes the other officers. It essentially says, "Your captain doesn't know what to do, so do what I tell you."

MANAGING CONFLICTING ORDERS

So, how do we deal with conflicting orders? First, we need to understand that not all orders are lawful, nor are they valid if the person issuing them has no authority over the recipient. Sounds tricky, doesn't it? How does a firefighter handle such orders?

Let's start with the conflicting order example from above. As uncomfortable as it may be to do so, the truck company firefighter needs to refuse the order. This isn't a disrespectful action, nor is it insubordinate, but it does need to be done as tactfully and clearly as possible. The firefighter could say something like, "Sorry Captain, I'm under orders from my captain to get these ladders placed." That should be all the information the engine captain needs. The fireground is not the place to discuss this in detail and if the engine company boss is unhappy with what occurred, he can discuss it with the truck company boss after the fire.

What about unlawful orders? Just because someone has the authority to issue orders does not mean they are all lawful or safe. Here's an example. An engine company is responding to a call and the officer is concerned about response times, so he tells the engineer to speed up. The engineer, familiar with the laws and regulations governing his actions, knows he can't go any faster without violating department policy and putting people at an undue risk. But he does it anyway and the apparatus is involved in a crash, injuring firefighters and the driver of the other vehicle. Speed was determined to be a factor in the collision, and both the engineer and officer are disciplined. There are things both parties could have done to avoid this.

For the officer, it's a simple fix: Don't do that. It's unethical to use your authority to order your people to do incorrect or dangerous things, period.

For the engineer, it's a little more complicated. He needs to firmly but tactfully refuse the unlawful order. A simple statement like, "It isn't safe to go any faster" or "I'm not going any faster; it's against the policy and I'm not going to put us at risk" should be enough to send the message.

"ONLY FOLLOWING ORDERS"

Claiming that you were "only following orders" is indefensible and unacceptable in this case. This is known as the "Nuremberg Defense," so-named because Nazi soldiers used it while on trial at Nuremberg following World War II. (It was also the initial basis of the Milgram experiments.) The soldiers' argument was that they should be acquitted of their war crimes because they were merely following orders from superior officers. This defense was denied, as judges ruled that unlawful orders should be refused if the individual receiving the order knows them to be unlawful. While the origins of the Nuremberg Defense are egregious and extreme, the concept should be understood in the professional setting. Just because your boss says to do it doesn't make it OK. "Just doing what I was told" is no excuse to do the wrong thing.

Department policy should provide some guidance on this. If a member receives an order that they believe to be unlawful or unethical, they should inform the officer issuing the order that they believe it to be unlawful and that they intend to refuse it.

They should also contact a superior officer within their chain of command to report what occurred. However, the belief that an order is unlawful does not absolve the member from accountability. If it is later determined that the order was indeed lawful, the member may be subject to discipline.

FIREHOUSE CHAIN OF COMMAND

While not as critical as the operational examples, breaking the chain of command at the firehouse can have consequences as well. A company officer should take great pride in leading their crew and should also have a handle on where everyone is and what they're up to throughout the shift. If another officer is assigning tasks and responsibilities to members of the company, it leads to confusion and undermines the company officer's authority with their crew.

Certain decisions in a fire department are reserved for the fire chief, so when there is a recommendation from the ranks, it should be routed through the chain of command. This might mean that a firefighter's recommendation needs to be considered by several officers before the fire chief sees it, and some recommendations never make it to the fire chief.

Let's say one of the officers in the chain of command does not like the recommendation. This may be because the recommendation is unsafe, impractical or unrealistic. But it may also be because the officer misunderstands the recommendation or has a personal bias against the idea. Even if an officer disagrees with a recommendation, it should still make it all the way to the top of the chain. In this case, the officer should indicate that they do not support the recommendation and provide some background on why. This prevents good recommendations from being missed due to personal reasons. Sometimes the chain of command is used as a mechanism to prevent ideas from turning into action. In order to prevent this, your department should have a policy that supports all recommendations reaching the intended recipient.

Fire chiefs should ensure that all members understand the concept of the chain of command and the concept of lawful orders. Merely being in a position or rank that is higher than another person does not make you their boss. Members should show proper courtesy and respect to all other members, regardless of rank. A job title or rank does not guarantee respect, nor does it excuse you from respecting others.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Fire departments are structured organizations. Orders are issued and should be followed. Lack of order and discipline can cause chaos and mission failure and may ultimately cause failure at the organizational level. However, those issuing orders must adhere to the authority they have been granted and refrain from issuing orders outside of their scope. At the same time, all members should possess a strong understanding of the chain of command and the positional authority within the organization. Leaders should foster an environment where members are empowered to speak up when something is wrong and refuse conflicting or unlawful orders without fear of retribution.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Fire Law: Misconduct vs. Incompetence: Distinguishing Between the Two

Curt Varone

Two distinct yet often overlapping areas of disciplinary concern in the fire service are misconduct and incompetence. Although they share certain characteristics, including the need for corrective action and in some cases termination, they have fundamentally different causes and require different approaches from fire service leaders. Failing to recognize these differences can result in unfair treatment, legal complications, and unintended consequences for both individual firefighters and the department as a whole.

MISCONDUCT VS. INCOMPETENCE

Misconduct occurs when a firefighter chooses to engage in behavior that violates department policies, ethical standards or legal requirements. It involves a willful decision where the firefighter knows what is expected but acts in a way that breaches those expectations. Misconduct can range from insubordination and dishonesty to harassment, theft, substance abuse on duty or even criminal behavior. The key element in misconduct is intent—an individual knowingly violates a rule, regulation, order or expectation.

In contrast, incompetence is not about intent. Rather, it involves an inability to meet performance expectations due to a lack of knowledge, skill or judgment. It occurs when firefighters want to perform their duties correctly but fail to do so because of insufficient training, cognitive limitations, physical disabilities or other factors that prevent the individuals from meeting required standards. Unlike misconduct, incompetence does not involve a conscious decision to disregard policies or expectations. Instead, it is a performance issue that often manifests in repeated mistakes, failure to follow proper procedures despite good faith efforts or

difficulty adapting to evolving job demands. Incompetent firefighters may disagree about whether the requirement is appropriate or fair or whether the requirement can be met, period. However, the firefighters lack a desire to fail to meet what is required. A challenging area for fire officers is distinguishing between carelessness and incompetence. If a firefighter knowingly ignores safety protocols despite having been trained, that is misconduct. However, if the firefighter received proper training and fails a task due to lack of skill or failure to recall proper procedure, that is incompetence. The distinction affects how the department should proceed.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

Consider a firefighter who falsifies training records to appear qualified for a technical rescue team. This is a clear case of misconduct, as it involves deception and a willful violation of department policies. On the other hand, if a firefighter who is assigned to a technical rescue team has the requisite training but struggles with certain tasks, that person's inability to perform those tasks would be incompetence.

Another example: If a firefighter refuses to wear proper PPE because of a dislike for the gear, that is misconduct. However, if a firefighter repeatedly fails to properly don PPE due to it taking too long, that is incompetence. The distinction is important in terms of how the department should address the firefighter's shortcomings.

DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

When a firefighter engages in misconduct, the purpose of discipline is to change the offending behavior, deter future violations and uphold department standards. The response typically follows principles of progressive discipline, which include:

- Verbal or written warnings. For minor infractions, a documented warning may suffice.
- Suspension without pay. A temporary removal from duty to reinforce the seriousness of the violation.
- Demotion. Reduction in rank for severe or repeated misconduct.
- Termination. If the misconduct is egregious or if prior disciplinary efforts failed, termination may be necessary.

Misconduct investigations typically lead to written notice of charges, an opportunity for the firefighter to respond, documentation of findings and issuance of discipline. Because misconduct cases involve intent, counseling or training is unlikely to resolve persistent behavior problems, hence the need for punishment.

Because incompetence stems from an inability rather than an unwillingness to perform, corrective measures should be developmental rather than punitive. In fact, punishment will not improve a competency problem.

The primary objective must be to improve the firefighter's skills through:

- Additional training and mentorship. Assigning a mentor or scheduling targeted training to address deficiencies.
- Performance Improvement Plans (PIP). Creating a structured plan with clear expectations, goals and timelines for improvement.
- Temporary reassignment. Placing the firefighter in a less critical role while the individual develops necessary skills.
- Medical or psychological evaluation. If the incompetence may be linked to a medical or cognitive condition, an evaluation may be warranted.
- Termination for inability to perform. If all remediation efforts fail and the firefighter remains unable to meet job requirements, termination may be the last resort.

Unlike misconduct, incompetence should not be viewed as disciplinary in the traditional sense. It is a performance issue, meaning that legal standards, such as "just cause" for termination, may require the department to exhaust reasonable efforts to support improvement before taking an adverse action.

FAIR & CONSISTENT APPLICATION

Fire service leaders must be careful to evaluate each situation fairly, ensuring that firefighters are not wrongly accused of misconduct when incompetence is the issue or vice versa. Mistakes can lead to improper discipline, grievances, legal challenges and damage to department morale.

For instance, if a firefighter struggles with a new piece of equipment due to inadequate training, treating that individual's difficulty as insubordination rather than a training gap would be unfair and counterproductive.

Likewise, if a firefighter disregards safety protocols out of defiance rather than lack of understanding, it would be inappropriate to treat the issue as a mere training deficiency or incompetence.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

From a legal standpoint, differentiating between misconduct and incompetence is critical. Termination for incompetence requires documentation of performance deficiencies and evidence that the firefighter was given opportunities to improve. Conversely, termination for misconduct generally requires evidence of willful violations.

Fire officers have a responsibility to ensure that firefighters receive the training and support that's necessary for them to succeed. Rushing to punish those who lack the necessary skills, rather than providing education and mentorship, undermines the integrity of the department and can lead to unnecessary turnover and low morale.

INTEGRITY & GROWTH

Understanding the difference between misconduct and incompetence is essential for fire service leaders when addressing personnel issues. Departments that clearly distinguish between these two issues can maintain high standards while ensuring fairness and supporting the development of their personnel.

This approach not only protects the integrity of the fire service but also fosters a culture of growth and professionalism, ensuring that firefighters have the tools and knowledge necessary to serve their communities effectively.

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

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

How To Start A Successful Junior Firefighting Program

Blaize Levitan

One of the most rewarding things I've ever done is junior firefighting, both as a participant and later as an advisor. I can't imagine my youth without the service and experience of junior firefighting, which profoundly affected who I am today.

Every department with the will and resources should start a program. And if you're ready to do so, but don't know where to start, you've come to the right place.

WHY START A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM?

Junior firefighting programs allow teens, usually between the ages of 14 and 18, to join their local fire department. When done properly, a junior firefighting program is an incredible opportunity for your community. Here's why:

- Teens that participate will have the chance at one of the most unique and rewarding life experiences. They develop leadership skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives, inherit important values of the fire service, build lifelong relationships, explore career opportunities, and have a chance to serve their community.
- The department will benefit by having a group of young people who are willing to assist with a variety of tasks and responsibilities, access to this great recruitment tool and, as their training progresses, additional on-scene support.
- The community benefits by having young adults engaged with public safety agencies and exposed to opportunities for social development, as well as benefiting from the community services participants can help sustain.

Watching young people transform into adults by passing on the knowledge and traditions of the fire service is well worth the time. Making a lasting impact on a young adult is a powerful and priceless experience.

ARE YOU READY TO COMMIT?

This is the most important question: Are you and your department ready to commit? To do this right, it won't be easy, but it will be worth it. It will take countless hours. When working with young people, there can be unique, time-intensive challenges. Keep this in mind as you proceed. That said, this is the fire service and you're not alone. You will need the support of department leadership and a dedicated team committed to this program.

HOW TO START THE PROGRAM

The most successful way to approach the structure of a junior firefighting program is to essentially treat it as its own fire company, with its own drill times, meetings, events, training schedule and even its own junior leadership. You'll want to integrate the program into the fire department, but the program requires independence to operate. Let's review how to make this work.

Establish a team of advisors: First, the program needs adult leadership to serve as "advisors" to the program. This team will establish the structure of the program, training guidelines and schedules, and handle the administrative work. They will also serve as the liaison between the department and the program. A variety of firefighters can be called upon to assist with specific training and events, but you want a dedicated crew to lead the program on a day-to-day basis.

Create program policy or guidelines: The first assignment for the Advisor Team is to establish the governing policy creating the program. To start, rather than address every detail of the program, focus on who and how decisions will be made. Often, volunteer departments will need to consider bylaw amendments.

There are many factors to address in this process:

- **Membership:** How will junior firefighters fit into the structure of your department? Volunteer departments often have different classes of membership with certain benefits and requirements. Do you want to establish a junior firefighting class of membership?
- **Application process:** What steps do you envision to apply?
 - **Program eligibility:** Who do you want in your program? There are several factors to consider here:
 - Age: Standard participation range is 14-18; however, some programs allow participants to remain until 21, while others don't let participants join until 16.
 - Residency: There is value in allowing non-resident participants to join your program, especially if there is no alternative in their community.
 - Participants: The program should be co-ed. Junior firefighting programs can be a great way to reverse the fire service's abysmal record on gender diversity.
 - Health: Consider requiring a doctor's note, as many school sport programs do.
 - Academics: Consider collecting high school report cards and requiring academic intervention if participants drop below a certain grade point average. Participation in junior firefighting should help develop young people into healthy and successful young adults, not inhibit academic achievement. Advisors or even fellow program participants can tutor those in need.
 - Criminal history: Do you plan to conduct background checks for program advisors?
- **Advisor onboarding:** Will you onboard advisors so they understand appropriate behavior when dealing with minors? Dating or any type of relationship with participants outside of the program must be strictly prohibited.
- **Discipline:** Who will be responsible for issuing discipline? This is important to navigate, as there is the Advisor Team as well as Department Leadership.
- **Sign-offs:** Who is approving the minor's participation? Participation by minors requires forms for parent/guardian sign-off, which should also include approvals for photo use on the department website or social media accounts.
Note: It is also important to leave some decisions for the program participants to make.
- **Start recruiting:** Recruitment can be a challenge – but it will get easier with time. Websites and social media are easy ways to advertise and a great place to start.

Engage with the local public school system, which will have multiple options to connect you with interested participants. For example, you may be able to speak at an orientation event for students entering high school or you could include a flyer in the new year materials handed out to students. My former department used to park an apparatus in front of the high school on orientation days, and some of the junior firefighters would wear their gear and discuss the program with interested students.

Further, ensure your presence or inclusion in regular department recruitment operations, such as tables at farmers markets or community and department public events. Eventually, word of mouth will become one of the primary methods of recruitment for your program. Invite those interested to come and watch a drill or two to see what it is all about.

- **On-board your members:** On-boarding is important. If you're investing time and money into the participants, you want to be sure they clearly understand the commitments. Be upfront about the commitment and expectations. This is not just any club or organization; the members will be representing one of the most respected organizations in their community.

Start by developing a standard agenda or checklist that can be reused, then set up a meeting with the interested participant. By doing this, you can not only explain the program but also learn more about what they hope to achieve. Through this process, you may also learn that they have special skills that can benefit the department, such as social media engagement or website graphic design.

A good friend of mine in a neighboring department was highly adept in video editing as a high school student and made multiple amazing videos for his department while serving as a junior firefighter – and he's a lieutenant now!

RUNNING THE PROGRAM

The specifics of every department's junior firefighter program will be just as unique as every fire department in this country. Here are some general aspects to consider:

- **Develop a schedule:** When does the organization meet? My suggestion is to pick one night per week, with three drills and one monthly meeting. If this is too frequent, consider every other week.
- **Participant leadership:** The organization should have its own leadership structure. This is key for participants to develop leadership skills. They should hold an annual or biannual election to elect officers (e.g., president, vice president(s), treasurer and secretary, at least).
- **Monthly meetings:** The club should hold an administrative meeting once per month that follows Robert's Rules of Order, and requires reports from each officer to the membership, and minutes, too.
- **Program finances:** The program should have its own budget, managed by the treasurer, with guidance from an assigned advisor who has actual signing authority. The department will need to make a financial commitment to start the program, and then through fundraising, the program can help sustain itself. Firefighting gear, insurance and similar expenses should be covered by the department. T-shirts, banquets and the like can be funded through a thoughtful budget and then fundraising events.

DRILL TIME

One of the most rewarding aspects of running a junior firefighting program is designing training. Training for junior firefighters should focus on the basics, fully preparing members to excel in Firefighter I training, if they so choose.

Here are some ideas to help get started:

- **Hydrant operations:** This is what we trained on more often than any other topic. We set up hydrant relay races and held timed hydrant challenges.
- **Ground ladders:** Practice throwing ladders over and over, a key skill that junior firefighters can provide on a fireground.
- **Equipment location:** This is a good one for quizzes and mock responses.
- **Equipment use:** Try Jenga or stacking cups with extrication equipment.
- **Major fire history:** It's important that new members know fire service history.

Encourage participants to attend and or participate in regular department training, too, especially if they are going to be responding to calls with firefighters. This helps build a positive rapport with firefighters.

Other training events include holding joint drills with other junior firefighting programs in the region. One exciting training event is to have competitions with other junior firefighting programs, relay races or muster challenges. For over a decade, the Connecticut Fire Academy has hosted an annual muster for junior firefighters from across the state. Also, Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts has hosted a historic firefighting muster challenge for junior firefighters, with a bucket brigade and hand-drawn pump.

RESPONDING TO EMERGENCY CALLS

Responding to calls is by far the most exciting aspect of the experience. If properly implemented, it is also a huge benefit to the department. Juniors don't get complacent in firefighting basics because they are constantly training on them. It's likely a junior firefighter can dress a hydrant and get water to a scene more efficiently than a 10-year veteran who may have not dressed a hydrant in years.

How junior firefighters respond to calls will depend on the design of your program. Clear standards must be met to allow for response eligibility. Develop a set of competencies that must be attained before response is allowed. Utilizing the concept of Firefighter I and Firefighter II, set different levels for participants to attain.

For example, a Level 1 junior firefighter must prove their competence in a basic set of competencies. Create a checklist that each participant can use to track their progress. Have an advisor sign off, confirming when each skill has been successfully demonstrated. Once the checklist is fully signed off, consider performing a final overall spot test. If they pass and have demonstrated character and discipline in line with expectations, they should be approved to start responding. Send a notice to ensure that they're introduced to the rest of the department.

Level 2 can include a set of more advanced skills to encourage additional development. This level could come with extra benefits, such as an extended time of response or maybe some tools or a pager. Interested participants should be encouraged to become certified EMTs or emergency medical responders.

It's important to consider participant ages and local, state and federal work rules. While you may allow participants to join at 14, it may be beneficial, based on labor rules, to wait for the emergency response age to be 16. Most states have guidelines and rules that apply to minors working or volunteering in the fire service. Further, ensure that junior firefighters understand the confidentiality of what they may be exposed to on scene, as well as protocols regarding cell phone use and social media.

Remember, these are teens responding to potentially serious emergencies. There may not be a need to expose them unnecessarily to disturbing or traumatic situations. For example, there was an emergency in which a routine garage fire turned out to be a suicide, with a deceased individual that had barricaded themselves in the garage and then set fire to it. We didn't need the junior firefighters on scene for body removal. If they are exposed to trauma, include them in critical incident stress debriefing. It's best practice to reduce the exposure to trauma for anyone, especially young adults. Instill a positive approach to mental health in junior firefighting programs, and start their fire service career on a strong footing.

BOY SCOUTS EXPLORING

One cannot consider starting a junior firefighting program without discussing [Exploring](#), the national program affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) that seeks to "teach important life and career skills to young people from all backgrounds through immersive career experiences and mentorship." Exploring is implemented through local BSA councils and an interested organization can form its own post or club. Establishing your program as an Exploring Post is like buying ready-to-assemble furniture. It will provide you with operational guidelines, basic policy and a model structure. Notably, exploring programs provide some basic insurance, training for adult advisors, and background checks.

This all comes with a cost, though. There is a per head fee for both explorers and adults, as well as insurance fees and some minor costs depending on your local BSA chapter. Your program will also be affiliated with the BSA, which comes with its rules and policies, as well as to some extent, its branding. I recommend considering a Post at the start and then rethinking its value as the program stabilizes.

IT'S WORTH IT

There is no single right way to start a junior firefighter program. It's not easy, but it is worth it. When I contemplate my years as a young adult, I can't imagine them without the profound impact junior firefighting had on my life, as a participant and advisor. I carry this experience wherever I go. Even in my career outside

of the volunteer fire service, I find myself leaning on the leadership skills and values I developed as a junior firefighter. That is surely something worth creating for others.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

Rekindle Spreads in St. Pete Beach, FL, Shopping Center

Crews were called about 2:45 p.m. to 4685 Gulf Blvd., which is the CVS store in the Dolphin Village shopping center, according to Pinellas County's active 911 call page. The page showed more than 40 units responded to the fire Tuesday afternoon.

Reports on Tuesday night, including this from Spectrum Bay News 9, said that the fire had "reignited" and spread to other businesses, including a Publix.

Fatal WI Mother's Day Fire Revives Debate Over Mandating Sprinklers

Dan Landrigan

The deadly Mother's Day fire at the Highland Court Apartments in Milwaukee that **killed five people** is reviving the idea of mandating that building owners retrofit their properties with sprinklers.

Surveillance footage from the day of the fire shows smoke rapidly filling hallways, leaving little time for escape.

The outcome might have been very different if sprinklers had been installed, Fox 6 reports. Steve Howard of the National Fire Sprinkler Association and former Waukesha fire chief, told the station **sprinklers can get water on a fire faster than any fire department**, buying time for occupants of a building and giving firefighters a chance to tackle the fire before it grows out of control.

"Throughout my entire career, I never saw a fatal fire in a sprinklered building," Howard told the station.

There Should be No Routine CO Calls!!

On Saturday, May 17, 2025, at 3:58 a.m., a resident in the 22000 block of Ventura Way in California, Maryland, called 911 reporting difficulty breathing. This dispatched one ambulance, one medic unit, and the fire department to the scene.

Lexington Park Volunteer Rescue Squad Ambulance 389, staffed by two personnel, responded alongside a medic unit and four firefighters from the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department on Rescue Engine 92. They arrived on scene around 4:04 a.m.

At approximately 4:21 a.m., first responders began experiencing symptoms of distress. Firefighters used a gas meter, which detected carbon monoxide levels of **500 parts per million** (ppm) inside the residence. They requested the incident be upgraded, prompting the dispatch of additional firefighters and emergency medical personnel.

Despite exhibiting symptoms, firefighters began evacuating the residence along with nearby homes and reported that CPR was in progress on an adult male patient. During further investigation of the home, **responders discovered a vehicle running inside a closed garage**. As additional medical personnel arrived, multiple medevac helicopters were requested due to the worsening condition of several first responders.

Maryland State Police Aviation Command responded with Trooper 2, Trooper 4, and Trooper 7, which landed nearby. The helicopters transported four firefighters from the Bay District Volunteer Fire Department and both EMTs to area trauma centers for hyperbaric chamber treatment, further evaluation, or as a precaution. In addition to the six first responders airlifted, one St. Mary's County Sheriff's Deputy, one Bay District Volunteer Firefighter, and one civilian were transported to a local hospital for further evaluation and precautionary care.

All nearby residents and additional first responders were evaluated on-site. **Eight firefighters, four children, and five adults declined transport or did not require treatment.**

After over 30 minutes of CPR, the adult male victim was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Maryland State Police, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office, and other agencies responded to assist with the ongoing investigation. Fire and rescue personnel from St. Mary's, Calvert, Charles, and Prince George's Counties also responded after a Mass Casualty Incident was declared.

FF HEALTH AND SAFETY – TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBERS!

IN 2025 WE HAVE EXPERIENCED 31 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!

- At approximately 12:45 a.m., New Haven, CT Fire Department personnel arrived at the scene of a residential fire. The members of the department rescued two residents who were trapped inside the house. During the fire, 30-year-old Firefighter Ricardo Torres was in trouble and transmitted a mayday. He and his lieutenant were both found unconscious on the second floor of the home. Firefighter Torres was transported to the local hospital and was later pronounced deceased. The lieutenant was also transported to the hospital, and recovered from his injuries.
- Two firefighters were hospitalized while battling a single-alarm blaze in downtown Baltimore, according to city fire officials. One of the firefighters is in critical condition, while the other is in stable condition, according to fire department spokesperson John Marsh. He did not say how they were injured. Lt. Mark Dranbauer of the Baltimore Fire Department, remains in R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center. He suffered a medical emergency while on a ladder and fell backwards down it and at this writing is not expected to recover from his injuries.
Fire Chief Wallace said Dranbauer was approximately 30 to 40 feet off the ground when he suffered the medical emergency. "At this time, we believe he suffered a medical emergency while he was on the ladder," Wallace said. "As a result of that medical emergency, he fell backwards down the ladder but remained on the aerial ladder itself."

FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK

- Fire Truck Crash in Anderson County, SC, Leaves Firefighter Hurt, the chief said the extent of damage will be assessed once the rig is up righted.
- A Sioux City firefighter was injured early Tuesday morning after falling through the floor of a burning home and into the basement while conducting an initial search, prompting a mayday call . A rapid intervention team (RIT) was activated and successfully rescued the downed firefighter who has since been released from the hospital.

BUYING NEW APPARATUS, NEED TO KNOW

Jacking Types, Widths, and Short Jacking Affect Aerials' Functionality

Alan M. Petrillo

Justin Rice, aerial sales manager for E-ONE, says that the company was the first to use crisscross under-slung outriggers on its aerials, like on its most popular model, the HP 100 platform, and its second most popular aerial, the 100-foot aerial ladder. "Our torque box is custom manufactured into a single unit instead of being bolted to the frame rails," Rice points out. "The single unit allows us to use a shorter jack spread, and E-ONE has never had a catastrophic failure tip over."

Rice says the HP 100 platform's four crisscross under-slung outriggers have a 15-foot 6-inch jack spread with a short jacking feature that allows the platform to set up in tight places as well as enhanced leveling capabilities for setting up on grades. "We call it enhanced jacking," Rice notes, "and it enables the platform to short jack at an 11-foot 2-inch spread, and to set up on some crazy slopes."

The shortest standard jack spread that E-ONE offers is on its 100-foot aerial ladder on a single rear axle, Rice says, that comes in at 11 feet fully extended on crisscross outriggers. Its 100-foot aerial ladder on tandem rear axles can have a fully extended crisscross outrigger spread from 12 to 13 feet 8 inches, depending on the tip load, he adds. E-ONE also makes a 137-foot aerial ladder with crisscross outriggers that have a 13-foot 8-inch fully extended stance but that can operate with a jack stance of 10 feet where one side is fully deployed and the other side is short jacked.

Rice says E-ONE uses H-style out-and-down outriggers on two of its products—the HP 75 and HP 78 aerial ladders. Both feature a single set of H-style outriggers with a spread of 16 feet and have an optional short jack feature with a 200-degree rotation and alley mode where the truck is short jacked on both sides.

Jenny Bloemer, senior business development manager for aerial products at Pierce Manufacturing, says that almost all of Pierce's aerials use H-style stabilizers except for its Snuzzle and Sky-Boom products that use A-frame style stabilizers. Bloemer notes that Pierce's best-selling aerial product, the 100-foot Ascendant aerial tower midmount platform, has four H-style outriggers with an 18-foot jack spread that can be short jacked and controlled by Pierce's Command Zone multiplex system. She adds that the rig has integrated ground pads on the stabilizers to streamline setup time, has a 93-foot horizontal reach, and can operate below grade at -20°. Pierce's Ascendant 110-foot Heavy Duty Aerial Platform also uses four H-style stabilizers with a 16-foot jack spread, Bloemer points out, allowing the rig 90 feet of horizontal reach and 110 feet of horizontal reach. "Our shortest H-style stabilizer spread is 12 feet on our ladders like the 100-foot heavy duty aluminum ladder with a jack spread of 12 or 13 feet, depending on the tip load, and our 100-foot heavy duty steel ladder with a jack spread of 12 or 14 feet, also depending on the tip load," she says.

Pierce's Sky-Boom comes in 55- and 61-foot two-section aluminum boom models that use two A-style stabilizers with a 12-foot 10-inch jack spread but no short jacking and a 500-pound dry and 250-pound wet tip load. The Pierce Snuzzle is an articulating boom rig that also uses two A-style stabilizers with a spread of 12 feet 10 inches and no short jacking.

Brett Monahan, aerial specialist for Rosenbauer, says that the company's main jacking uses H-style outriggers on its aerial ladders and platform. "Any ladder or platform more than 70 feet in length uses a four-jack system with two H-style jacks at the rear of the body and two at the center line of the truck," Monahan says. "On the straight sticks, the 100-foot and 109-foot Vipers, and the 102-foot Raptor, the jack spread is 15 feet 6 inches. For our 101-foot and 104-foot rear-mount Cobra platforms, our 100-foot midmount Cobra platform, and our 101-foot King Cobra and 115-foot T-Rex articulating platforms, the jack spread is 17 feet 6 inches. All can be short jacked and controlled by our Smart Aerial system."

Monahan adds that placing the outriggers on the 109-foot King Cobra articulating platform and the 109-foot Viper aerial ladder is somewhat different than standard. "With both of those products, two outriggers are at the rear as typical, but the two forward outriggers are placed just behind the cab to give the truck additional stability," he says. "Also, on our 78-foot Viper aerial ladder, there are two H-style jacks at the center of the truck, and two straight down stabilizers at the front, allowing a 750-pound tip load, wet or dry."

Tim Besser, sales manager for KME, says the company's shortest jack spread can be found on its 103-foot Tuff Truck aerial ladder. "It has a 12-foot jack spread with four H-style outriggers," Besser says. "If you can open the cab doors on the Tuff Truck, then you can fully extend the jacks." KME's 109-foot rear-mount aerial ladder has four H-style jacks with a 14-foot spread, and its 100-foot tractor drawn aerial (TDA) has two H-style outriggers with a 14-foot spread and a lockout on the fifth wheel.

KME's 79-foot rear-mount ladder with a 750-pound tip load has two H-style jacks at the rear with a 14-foot spread as well as two front downriggers, Besser points out, while the 500-pound tip load 79-foot rear-mount ladder only has two H-style jacks with a 14-foot spread.

KME makes a 102-foot rear-mount aerial platform and 84-foot and 102-foot midmount aerial platforms, all with four H-style jacks and an 18-foot jack spread, Besser says. "They all have the ability to be short jacked," he adds, "and we also use deep penetrating outriggers that allow the truck to level and operate on an 11-degree slope. In addition, we offer laser spotters to help with the location of the auxiliary jack pad and magnetized pads that can be attached to the footplate before extending the outrigger."

Randy Hummer, aerial account manager for Spartan Emergency Response, which includes Smeal and Ladder Tower brands, says that all Smeal and Ladder Tower aerial designs use H-style out-and-down outriggers that can be short jacked. "The Ladder Tower 110-foot aerial ladder has a 12-foot jack spread for four jacks for the 500-pound tip load model," Hummer notes, "where if you can open the cab door, you can fully deploy the jacks and have 360-degree rotation. For the 750-pound tip load version, the jack spread is 14 feet."

Ladder Tower's 93-foot aerial platform uses a multispread on its four H-style jacks, with the forward jacks having an 18-foot spread and the rear jacks behind the tandem rear axles a 16-foot spread, Hummer says.

Smeal's ladder and platform designs put the forward H-style jacks in front of the pump house and immediately behind the cab, Hummer points out. The Smeal 100-foot, 107-foot, and 125-foot rear-mount aerial ladders

have four H-style jacks with a 16-foot jack spread, while the Smeal 100-foot midmount and 100-foot rear-mount platforms have jack spreads of 18 feet.

Smeal's 100-foot TDA with no prepiped waterway has a 14-foot H-style jack spread, Hummer adds, while the 105-foot TDA with the waterway uses a 16-foot jack spread. Both are 500-pound rated ladders.

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	37
Last fire death 4/27/25 Queens NYC., 3 Males 45,52 & 67 years old	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	62
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	477
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/45
	#2 NY/37
	#3 IL/29
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2025: 930	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
Week 18 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 51.6 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?	

******Debunking Fire Sprinkler Myths Helps Spotlight The Power Of This Protection**

Chief Marc Bashoor

Picture yourself in each of the following three scenarios, all the while considering what matters most to you in life.

- **Scenario 1:** The unthinkable happens. A pot of food left of the stove has boiled down to a greasy smoky fire. The smoke alarm wakes you up (and also notifies the fire department), and before you can figure out what's going on, a single residential sprinkler head activates, holding the fire at bay. You get your family and pets out and call 911. The fire department arrives, mops up the fire, turns off the sprinkler system and restores the sprinkler head, helps you start the de-watering process, and you call your insurance company. You're out of your house for about 3 weeks while the insurance company cleans up the fire and water damage and gets you back in your home.
- **Scenario 2:** Now picture the same fire with without the sprinklers. A smoke alarm alerts you, your family and your pets of the fire, and you have just enough time to get out before the fire consumes

the kitchen. You call 911 and the fire department is able to save part of the house. You're out of your house for about 4 months while the insurance company rebuilds.

- **Scenario 3:** Lastly, picture it all again, this time without the comprehensive protection. The unattended food on the stove ignites a fire that first burns the cabinets, then the kitchen and ultimately the entire house. You didn't receive any notice, you didn't receive any help – you never knew any of this, though. You couldn't because you're dead. You, your family, your pets – all dead. You didn't have a chance.

None of these scenarios are hyperbole or sensationalism in any way. I've seen each play out in my own community and across the country for as long as I've been a member of the fire service.

While none of the scenarios is desirable, it's clear which one allows for the best chance of survival and property protection. What are you doing to protect yourself, your family and pets, and your belongings? Could you do more?

TRAGEDY AND TESTAMENT

One particular 2012 fire in Glenarden, Maryland, will stay with me forever, not only because I wish we could have done more but also because of the needless loss of a father and three of his daughters. The Price family will forever live in my mind – and I hope yours.

Prince George's County was the first county in the United States to require the trifecta of smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and residential sprinklers in all residential construction built after 1992 (1987 for smoke alarms). None of this applied to the Price family, as their home was older. The home did have smoke alarms, but the family had reportedly taken the batteries out because of the "constant chirping."

The fire resulted in both tragedy and a **testament that fire prevention messages do work**. Eight-year-old Tamia Price and her mother survived this fire; Tamia's dad and three siblings perished. Tamia shared that she remembered what firefighters — our firefighters — told her when they came to her school: She made sure she had a second way out and to close the door to her room. She explained how when she realized that there was a fire, she grabbed her mom, closed the door to the room they were in, and went to the window where neighbors helped pull her and her mom out of the burning home. Her father got out as well but went back inside to rescue his other three kids and, ultimately, none of them survived.

We were talking the talk, and Tamia listened, walking the walk and saving two lives.

It was a very difficult and political fight to get the sprinkler legislation, and one of the compromises at the time was to exempt these older homes. I wish we could have found a way to overcome that.

FIRE SPRINKLER ILLUSIONS

We could spend an entire series on the importance of residential sprinklers, but here, I want to focus first on the illusion of fire sprinklers crafted by the anti-sprinkler lobby. *The anti-sprinkler folks are mostly connected to the building industry, although there are also some within our own ranks who don't do us any favors when it comes to advocating for improved safety within our communities.*

Here's a few of the illusions I've personally dealt with:

- "If one head activates, they all activate – you will ruin the entire home." In a deluge system designed that way, sure), but this does not occur in residential NFPA 13D systems. Only enough heads necessary to reduce the heat, actually flow water – usually one or two heads.
- "The cost is prohibitive! Most homeowners can't afford this." The true installation cost in new construction is less than the amount that most people will pay for their granite or quartz countertops. *New construction costs will average between \$1.50 and \$2.00 per square foot, so a 2,000 square-foot home will cost about \$4,000. Retrofit costs run around \$4.50 per square foot.*
- "Most fire deaths are happening in older homes, so sprinkler requirements for new homes don't help there. This is where smoke alarms save lives." They're right, the absence of sprinklers doesn't help – that's why we need to advocate for retrofitting where it makes sense. The data is irrefutable. *Your chances of survival increase by nearly 90% where sprinklers are installed. Bottom line: Smoke alarms give you advance warning, sprinklers give you enough time to get out.*
- "You don't want those ugly things hanging down from your ceiling." Residential sprinkler heads today are recessed with a cover that looks like any other light or electric cover already on your ceiling or walls.

- “The construction trade-offs have created stronger, more structurally stable buildings that don’t require sprinklers.” First, the notion that sprinklers aren’t needed is absurd. *The whole concept of sprinkler protection is to both provide extra time for occupants to get out and to limit fire damage.* Second, under “normal” conditions, the construction trade-offs have provided stronger, less expensive and more stable construction possible. *However, on fire is NOT a normal condition, and the trade-offs are not granted under the presumption the building is on fire. Under fire, these construction trade-offs create firefighter traps that are significantly less stable, especially in the early stages of firefighting operations.*

Now, let’s use data to drive home our case.

THE POWER OF RESIDENTIAL SPRINKLERS

I mentioned the Prince George’s County experience and can personally attest to the first 20 years of that mandate. In those 20 years, there were over 600 investigated fires in sprinkler-protected homes. In EVERY case where there was a properly installed, functioning and maintained sprinkler system, there were ZERO deaths reported. (There were three deaths at sprinkler-protected properties: One was a shooting-homicide covered up by a fire that the sprinkler extinguished; one was in a garage where sprinklers were not required; and one was in an apartment where the system was frozen – not properly maintained). During the same 20 years, there were over 3,000 other fires investigated in residential structures that were NOT protected by sprinklers – incidents that resulted in 69 fire fatalities.

The [National Fire Sprinkler Association \(NFSA\)](#) is our primary industry advocate when it comes to working with the [National Association of Home Builders \(NAHB\)](#) and related organizations to advance residential sprinkler coverage. The [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#) is our primary industry partner for developing and implementing codes nationally.

In March 2024, the [NFPA released a report](#) on the fire sprinkler experience in the United States. The report provides not only key talking points but also the hard data that fully supports the installation of residential sprinklers. Here are some highlights:

- *[Sprinklers reduce the impact of fires.](#) Compared to reported fires in properties with no automatic extinguishing systems (AES), when sprinklers were present, the civilian fire death and injury rates per fire were 90% and 32% lower, respectively. The rate of firefighter injuries per fire was 60% lower.*
- *Most structure fires and fire deaths occurred in homes, but sprinklers were found in only 7% of all home fires.*
- *From 2017 to 2021, sprinklers operated in 95% of fires large enough to activate sprinklers and were effective at controlling the fire in 98% of the incidents in which they operated.*
- *The most common reason that sprinklers failed to operate was the system being shut off at some point before the fire.*

I lived the sprinkler experience and dealt with many of the purported illusions believed (or at least advanced) by some in the building industry. I’ve learned that *a properly installed NFPA 13D system is not only relatively inexpensive, but it is indeed lifesaving and loss-reducing.*

RETROFIT OPTIONS: WALKING THE WALK

We have a lot of work to do for residential sprinklers to become more mainstream. Only Maryland and California have statewide mandatory residential sprinkler requirements for new construction. The District of Columbia and about 400 other municipalities and local ordinances around other states also require residential sprinklers to various degrees. It has been my experience, however, that the anti-sprinkler lobby is continuously fighting to overturn those ordinances and has historically adamantly opposed new fire sprinkler proposals. The NFSA is working with the NAHB to save lives and reduce property damage through sprinklers, but this is a heavy lift.

In construction of my own home in Florida, where there is no statewide nor local ordinance requiring residential sprinklers in single-family homes (only multi-family over four floors), my builder did not offer sprinklers and refused to allow me to install sprinklers or even to lay static piping in the attic before we owned the home. I spoke with company management and asked several times, even offering to showcase how easy it could be, but they had no interest. I was even threatened with trespass if I tried to install pipes in advance.

Working with the NFSA, I got in touch with Wayne Automatic Fire Sprinklers Inc. (Wayne), which sent a team to evaluate the house. Wayne too had no luck trying to convince the builder to allow them to start work. We had 2 years of construction (delayed due to COVID), so once we took occupancy, Wayne's crew was ready with all the permits and necessary municipal flow information to design and install our NFPA 13D system. While we were concerned about the dust and debris of a retrofit installation, it was our only option since the builder had been so anti-sprinkler early in the process. To our delight, when the crew left each day, we barely knew they had been there. While it was not "dust-free" (no construction project will be), their diligence meant there was much less of a debris problem than we anticipated. Fortunately, our municipal system had a static pressure of 50 psi and already has backflow preventers installed on each property.

I won't characterize the permitting or installation process as painless or flawless, but the professional sprinkler installation company was able to overcome all obstacles and provide a system that meets all the requirements of NFPA 13D.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK: A CATALYST FOR ACTION

I don't think it's a stretch to say that we become desensitized to the constant drumbeat of safety messages. I get it, we're inundated with rule this and rule that. But isn't it OUR responsibility to preach those safety messages? Isn't it OUR job to work toward safer communities for firefighters and the communities we serve? Of course, it is. And there are several groups that give us the tools we need to succeed in these efforts. It is important that we both talk the talk and walk the walk — just like we did for Tamia, and Tamia was able to do for her and her mom.

****Type III Construction: It's Not Ordinary Anymore**

Glenn Corbett

EVEN THOUGH the ashes hadn't quite cooled in the wake of London's Great Fire of 1666, the movement toward noncombustible exterior walls was underway. While brick and stone walls were already being used in London before the Great Fire to some extent, this monumental fire became a major turning point in building construction. The concept of preventing the lateral fire spread from building to building resulting in a conflagration led to regulations for noncombustible exterior walls and the concept of the fire wall, including the use of parapets. This concept was handed down to us in the United States and lasted for centuries, only to be changed by the model building codes over the past 40 years or so.

More recently, the "sacred cow" of Type III (ordinary) construction—the masonry exterior wall—has been sacrificed to allow the use of fire-retardant treated wood. The model building codes now allow masonry to be replaced by a two-hour rated fire assembly with fire-retardant wood.

The definition of Type III construction in the *International Building Code*™ reads:

"Type III construction is that type of construction in which the exterior walls are of noncombustible materials and the interior building elements are of any material permitted by this code. Fire-retardant-treated wood framing and sheathing complying with Section 2303.2 shall be permitted within exterior wall assemblies of a 2-hour rating or less."

So, noncombustible materials are no longer needed in "ordinary" exterior walls.

The word *ordinary* can be defined as "commonplace or standard." In terms of building construction, the term *ordinary* has been used in the United States since at least the early 1890s. In the late 19th century, most cities were writing their own building codes using their own terms and descriptions—in many cases describing building types as *fireproof* (a legacy of the rebuilding of Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871), *frame* (wood construction), *skeleton* (a recognition of metal framing such as cast iron and steel), *slow burning* (heavy timber), and *ordinary* (traditionally masonry exterior walls with wood structural frame inside).

It's interesting to note that building construction types were first classified in terms of *fire* itself, not just construction "types." They used a "fire classification system," emphasizing the importance of fire itself. For example, a fire classification numbering system was as follows:

- Type 1 Fireproof
- Type 2 Slow Burning
- Type 3 Skeleton and All Steel
- Type 4 Ordinary

- Type 5 Frame

Note, of course, that these aren't exactly the numbers or (in some cases) names that we use today. Yet, it's interesting to see that some names are still what we use to this day.

The emergence of fire-retardant treated wood in Type III construction in the past few years raises some critical laboratory fire testing questions. Two tests are at the heart of this: American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) E-119, *Standard Test Methods for Fire Tests of Building Construction and Materials*, and ASTM E-84, *Standard Test Method for Surface Burning Characteristics of Building Materials*.

ASTM E-119, discussed in this column previously, is perhaps the most important fire rating test in existence. It's also the oldest in existence, dating from the late 1920s, with little substantive change in the past 100 years. A furnace test is used to establish hourly fire ratings for floors, roofs, and walls.

The furnace uses a time vs. temperature "curve," essentially adjusting furnace temperatures to meet a very specific set over time, based on temperatures measured in two attached buildings that were intentionally burned in 1928 in Washington, D.C. So, these two buildings have represented *every building fire in America for nearly 100 years!*

Of course, fires today are different than they were in the 1920s. Beyond that, though, there is another fundamental issue with this test with respect to fire-rated assemblies using wood on the interior of the assembly: The E-119 test always assumes the fire starts on the *outside* of the assembly, not on the inside. So, a fire starting from an electrical fixture wiring within the assembly isn't considered. Such untested fires could develop and spread within a "rated" exterior wall assembly using wood. Obviously, that can't happen with a brick or stone wall.

The other test associated with Type III exterior walls of wood construction is the 1950s-era ASTM E-84. It is a test conducted in an enclosed 24-foot-long *horizontal* "tunnel" to assess flame spread over various types of materials, most notably interior finishes such as paneling and the like. In the case of Type III exterior wall assemblies that are not interior finishes, it can be argued that the test is perhaps being used to assess ignition and spread potential of the fire-retardant treated wood. In either case, I believe the test is inappropriate, particularly given that the rated wall assembly, including the wood, is a *vertical* assembly, not a horizontal one. The E-84 test does not assess vertical fire spread.

What does all this mean? *It means that we now have to deal with Type III buildings built using wood, albeit fire-retardant treated. The days of brick/masonry walls are probably beginning to come to an end. The use of more cost-effective wood has expanded beyond the structural frame inside Type III buildings to the exterior walls around the perimeter.*

The presence of wood in Type III exterior walls, while the building is under construction, presents nearly the identical problems we have when dealing with Type V wood frame structures such as apartment buildings. A massive volume of multistory fire, generating large amounts of radiant heat, embers, and exposure problems, is well known. We now have had more than 100 examples of these Type V buildings consumed by fire over the past several years, causing tens of millions of dollars in damage.

Another issue is that Type III buildings are permitted to have an additional story compared with Type V buildings. So, the Type III buildings are even taller than the Type V buildings, adding even more problems to the situation.

How about the presence of the fire-retardant wood in these buildings? We have already had two Type III apartment building fires with wood exterior walls—the 2017 Fuse 47 fire in College Park, Maryland, and the 2023 Modera Southpark building in Charlotte, North Carolina. The resulting fires were similar to the ones in Type V buildings that we have dealt with already. *In the case of the Charlotte fire, the fire-retardant wood appears to have little effect as the building was consumed.*

Plan for these Type III structures just like you would for Type V structures. Recognize the massive fire potential, particularly when it's under construction.

GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE

Lithium-Ion Battery Causes Devastating House Fire In Binghamton

Erin Lawlor

Cory Grimes just moved into the house last week. He bought an Ebike and was charging the battery under his bed when he heard a large popping noise.

“Apparently, there was a fault or short in the wires, and it ignited the battery and in a matter of minutes the whole room was engulfed and then the rest of the house followed,” Grimes said.

The fire damaged the house next door, which is owned by the bank and is about to be sold. Binghamton Mayor Jared Kraham said efforts are underway to determine whether the property is salvageable.

Grimes told 12 News that the Red Cross is helping the occupants with housing, and there were no injuries from the fire.

Chromebook Catches Fire In Shaker High School In Latham, NY

A Chromebook caught fire on Wednesday morning around 10 a.m. at Shaker High School in Latham. The Latham Fire Department said it was in the J Wing, causing the entire school to evacuate upon fire alarm activation.

A hall monitor quickly took the Chromebook out of the classroom and outside of the school, per the fire department. To properly contain the lithium-ion battery, the West Albany Fire Department’s hazardous materials team responded.

The fire department also said 14 students were evaluated by the Colonie EMS department for potential smoke exposure, but no one had to be taken to the hospital. The North Colonie Central School District said the rest of the school day continued as normal. At this time, the cause of the fire is under investigation, but the fire department said the battery was experiencing thermal runaway.

There has been a social media trend going around where students insert lead or metal items, such as paperclips, aluminum foil or mechanical pencils, into the USB port of their school-issued Chromebook device, according to the [New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services](#). The action reportedly forces an electrical short circuit and damages the device’s lithium-ion battery.

Tesla Ignites in Montebello (CA) Garage

Firefighters in Montebello are investigating what caused a Tesla to catch fire inside a residential garage early Wednesday morning. The fire broke out around 12:30 a.m. at a home on Loma Road near Lincoln Avenue, KTLA reports. The flames quickly spread to the roof of the garage. Firefighters knocked down the flames before serious damage to the main part of the house. No injuries have been reported. No one was home at the time of the fire.

BUYING STUFF FOR YOUR FIREFIGHTERS

Push/Pull: The Ventilation Evolution

Rich Dzierwa

Lyons, IL, Fire Department (LFD) Fire Chief Gordon Nord Jr. is a proponent of the implementation of positive pressure ventilation (PPV) on the fireground.

“The days of old, when you’d break every window in sight or open every overhead door, are over,” Nord remarks. *“With PPV, it’s best to have one opening to blow into and one opening that’s double the size of the first for the smoke to exhaust from, as this allows the building to hold in the pressure and direct the smoke out effectively.”*

Nord also is a believer in the evolution of the design of PPV fans to operate on battery power.

“They’re quick to put into operation, are very versatile and don’t cause a concern of carbon monoxide,” he says.

However, Nord is concerned about units’ runtime and the onus that puts on members to keep replacement batteries charged. He and others for which this causes trepidation might find relief in knowing of Tempest’s VS Tech Series models. Depending on the brand of battery (models in the series accept DeWalt, Hurst, Milwaukee and the company’s proprietary unit), the fan can be connected to as many as three batteries at once.

As one of the batteries gets to the end of its charge, the system instantaneously switches to the next battery. The user won’t notice the switchover. As a result, for example, the version of the fan that operates on

Milwaukee battery technology (model VS-1.3M) provides an average runtime of 65 minutes when three batteries are loaded into the battery cradle.

Tempest's Sam Jessup says that members of the Fresno, CA, Fire Department have praised the fan's capability to allow them to run the fan at two or three fires without the need for battery recharging.

"When we first started [the development of the VS Tech Series], we were aiming at lower weight" compared with that of corded fans, Jessup explains, "but the biggest draw has been the greater convenience for the firefighters."

Brian Gettemeier, who is an engine company captain with the Cottleville Fire Protection District of St. Charles County, MO, appreciates manufacturer efforts regarding runtime. He also is complimentary of their work to increase power. The Tempest VS-1.3M, for instance, delivers 10,000 CFM.

In general, Gettemeier says, "Battery-powered fans are getting into service faster, and we aren't wondering whether they will start in heavy smoke conditions." He also commends them for their quiet operation, which makes them "better for our hearing, better for fireground stressors and better for fireground communications."

SMOKE EJECTORS

As with the development of Tempest's battery-powered PPV fans, the crafting of Super Vac's P-164 16-inch battery-powered smoke ejector resulted in a reduction in weight. Compared with the 44-lb. weight of the company's comparable electric model, the P-164, depending on brand of battery (DeWalt, Makita or Milwaukee), can be as much as four pounds lighter. Of course, the weight difference is even greater in comparison with gasoline-powered models.

The P-164 was introduced at in 2024, but the company had a demonstration unit in mid-2023, to get reaction to it. That included at the NYSAFC annual conference.

A video of the smoke ejector was captured and posted, and it went viral, Super Vac's Dana Shaffer tells Firehouse. As a result of interest that was garnered from more than 2 million views, "We were forced to pick up our pace of final design and get the P-164 to market as soon as possible," Shaffer notes.

Upon learning of the smoke ejector's introduction, the West Islip, NY, Fire Department replaced the electric smoke ejectors on all of its rigs with the P-164, Shaffer says.

The unit only is offered in a 16-inch version; however, its 6,700-cfm performance exceeds the 5,200 cfm of the company's comparable electric model.

The inherent light weight of battery-powered smoke ejectors and the obvious cutting of the cord are key to the Meridian, ID, Fire Department's (MFD) move away from electric and gasoline-powered models.

"Battery-powered fans offer operational versatility, cost-effectiveness, safety and environmental benefits," MFD Fire Chief Kristopher Blume stated when asked about product improvements that have aided his department's horizontal and vertical ventilation operations in the past 18 months. Firehouse sought Blume's input in particular because of him authoring ["Small Towns, Big Box Retailers: Challenges and Strategies for Firefighters"](#) and ["Pre-Incident Planning for Big Box Fires for Small Fire Departments"](#).

The operational versatility of battery-powered fans (i.e., their portability) makes them ideal for remote or challenging locations, including big box retailers but also in stairwells in a high-rise, Blume believes.

"Although initial costs may be higher, long-term savings from lower energy use and maintenance make them cost-effective," he adds.

MVUs

What's in the offing for the design of PPV fans and smoke ejectors? Tempest's Jessup says his company is looking for other options that will provide further convenience for firefighters, but he stopped short of revealing specifics. He did share that battery power for fans that are larger than 48 inches is something that the company would like to explore.

"We just don't know what that would look like yet," he concedes, citing the technology for a battery that would power such a model and its affordability.

Of course, the size that Jessup notes leads into the realm of the mobile ventilation unit, or MVU, which can come into play for fires at large warehouses and data centers, among other incidents. This prospect appeals to LFD's Nord.

"A battery-powered unit would be a huge improvement in MVU operations," he offers.

“Although an MVU is very effective in removing smoke from large areas quickly, one drawback is the [gasoline-powered] motor creates exhaust,” Nord continues. “Exhaust induced into the air stream from the fan can cause carbon monoxide issues in the building that you’re trying to ventilate. We attach an exhaust hose to the MVU exhaust to try to make the exhaust less of a factor.”

“I could see important uses and implementation opportunity for large metro departments,” Blume adds, “or, more specifically, agencies with high-rise, confined space or big box stores,” a key benefit being, again, the capability of moving a massive amount of air volume without adding additional fuel emissions to the emergency scene. Blume wonders whether the continuing development of brushless DC motors might aid in the development of battery-powered MVUs.

All this said, Gettemeier warns that positive pressure attack shouldn’t be implemented based on one department member reading an article or watching a video. For example, ventilation of warehouses is very challenging, he says.

“Sprinkler operations will create cold, lazy smoke, which is difficult if not impossible to move,” Gettemeier explains. Further, “Given the cubic footage of a warehouse, it’s difficult to pressurize the container to push out or suck out the smoke.”

COORDINATION

Gettemeier isn’t alone when he expresses caution about positive pressure and negative pressure ventilation, whether of the horizontal or vertical variety. Many a training officer spends substantial time stressing the importance of communication and coordination. For instance, roof crews once cut ventilation holes as soon as they located themselves in the proper position, even before interior crews were in place to put water on the fire. However, the result of airflow studies revealing that ventilation without coordination with those who operated on the interior just caused flames and smoke to emit with pressure from the vent hole rather than make the interior environment safer for firefighters operating the attack hose.

“It can’t be stated enough that coordination of ventilation be done through clear and effective comms between command, interior crews and vent crews,” Dave Roberston, who is the fire chief of the Fort Frances Fire Department in Ontario, Canada, emphasizes.

Undoubtedly, the equipment that manufacturers of PPV fans and smoke ejectors have and are developing will aid in the process.

“Whatever people are asking for or maybe that they don’t even know that they need, we’re exploring that,” Tempest’s Jessup guarantees.

STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!



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

HAPPEN'N IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Harmony Corners FD Famous Chicken BBQ

Serving Ticket Holders, **Sunday May 18th**, 3 to 6PM

Route 67, Charlton, NY

Drive Through, take out only, tickets \$16.00 each

Tickets only available in advance from:

- Mail N More, Saratoga Road, Burnt Hills
- McConchie's Campground, North Line Road
- Nate's Snowplow Repair, Route 67
- Smith's Pie Shop, Jockey Street
- Or any fire department member

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

June 15th, at the Gansevoort Fire Station 1870 Route 32N, Gansevoort, NY

ALL YOU CAN EAT BUFFET!, Eggs made to order, omelets, pancakes, French Toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, biscuits with sausage and gravy, Fried Potatoes, toast, cereal, milk, coffee and orange juice. \$12 adults, \$10 seniors & military, \$8 children 6-12.

The fire company thanks you for your support!!

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

See you in October when we start up again.

GENERAL INTEREST

'Don't get in my way': New FEMA chief plans 'Mission Analysis' of nation's disaster management agency

By Gabriela Aoun Angueira and Rebecca Santana, Associated Press

The new head of **the federal agency tasked with responding to disasters** across the country warned staff in a meeting Friday not to try to impede upcoming changes, saying that "I will run right over you" while also suggesting policy changes that would push more responsibilities to the states.

David Richardson, a former Marine Corps officer who served in Afghanistan, Iraq and Africa, **was named acting administrator** of the Federal Emergency Management Agency on Thursday just after Cameron Hamilton, who'd been leading the agency, also in an acting role, was fired.

Richardson has been the Department of Homeland Security's assistant secretary for countering weapons of mass destruction. He does not appear to have any experience in managing natural disasters, but in an early morning call with the entire agency staff he said that the agency would stick to its mission and said he'd be the one interpreting any guidance from President Donald Trump.

Prefacing his comments with the words "Now this is the tough part," Richardson said during the call with staffers across the thousands-strong agency that he understands people can be nervous during times of change. But he had a warning for those who might not like the changes — a group he estimated to be about 20% of any organization.

"Don't get in my way if you're those 20% of the people," he said. "I know all the tricks."

"Obfuscation. Delay. Undermining. If you're one of those 20% of the people and you think those tactics and techniques are going to help you, they will not because I will run right over you," he said. "I will achieve the president's intent. I am as bent on achieving the president's intent as I was on making sure that I did my duty when I took my Marines to Iraq."

HE PREVIEWED WHAT MIGHT BE AHEAD

Richardson also reminded staff that FEMA is part of the Department of Homeland Security: "Don't forget that." In a preview of what might be coming in terms of changes in policy, Richardson also said there would be more "cost-sharing with the states."

"We're going to find out how to do things better, and we're going find out how to push things down to the states that should be done at the state level. Also going to find out how we can do more cost sharing with the states," he said.

This issue — how much states, as opposed to the federal government, should pay for disaster recovery — has been a growing concern, especially at a time of an increasing number of **natural disasters** that often require Congress to repeatedly replenish the federal fund that pays for recovery.

But states often argue that they are already paying for most disaster recoveries on their own and are only going to the federal government for those events truly outside of their ability to respond.

Richardson did not take questions from the staff members, saying he wanted them to first read memos he was going to be sending out later Friday. He planned a town hall next week, when he will take questions from the staff.

A 'MISSION ANALYSIS' IS PLANNED FOR FEMA

In the memos obtained by The Associated Press, Richardson told the agency it would be conducting a "Mission Analysis" of the organization to identify "redundancies and inefficiencies" while also clarifying the organization's "core" mission and "detering mission creep."

He also listed tasks to be accomplished in the coming weeks — including providing internal assessments of the agency's preparedness for 2025; a list of all known gaps "in preparedness or core capabilities"; a list of lessons learned from past disasters; and an overview of "disaster aid before FEMA's existence and the role of states and the federal government coordinating disaster management."

He said he was honored to be in the role, leading an organization he described as an "unwieldy beast."

Richardson arrives at FEMA at a time of immense turmoil and as it prepares for **hurricane season**, an extremely busy time for the agency.

Trump, a Republican, **has suggested abolishing FEMA** and providing money directly to states to manage. He has established a review council tasked with "reforming and streamlining the nation's emergency management

and disaster response system.” The 13-member council is chaired by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Homeland Security has not said specifically why Hamilton was removed from his position. But his dismissal came one day after he appeared before a House subcommittee where he was asked about plans to eliminate FEMA and said he did not believe the agency should be eliminated.

“Having said that,” Hamilton continued, “I’m not in a position to make decisions and impact outcomes on whether or not a determination such as consequential as that should be made. That is a conversation that should be had between the president of the United States and this governing body.”

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked Friday about Hamilton’s firing and suggested it was related to his congressional testimony, but didn’t specify exactly what it was that he said that led to his dismissal.

“This individual testified saying something that was contrary to what the president believes and the goals of this administration in regards to FEMA policy. So of course, we want to make sure that people in every position are advancing the administration’s goals,” she said.

LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy - As soon as you find a product that you really like, they will stop making it OR the store will stop selling it!

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.

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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

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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.

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

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 WORKSHOP	Verdoy Fire District — Saturday, November 1, 2025 — 988 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham

SOCIAL EVENTS

OFFICER INSTALLATION DINNER	Century House, Latham — Saturday, March 8, 2025
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

PROVIDED AS A SERVICE FROM THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICT'S
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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.](#)