



Capital Area Fire District's Association  
*THE WEEKLY CAFDA*

# BULLETIN

May 24th, 2025

Editor, Tom Rinaldi, [Tom@rinaldi1.com](mailto:Tom@rinaldi1.com)  
Serving the fire service community since 2004

## CAPITAL SHORTS:

• Memorial Day, a time of remembrance and reflection on those heroes that didn't come home to their families the way they left. We sincerely thank them and their families for their service and may God bless them all! Freedom has never been free.

• See the new OSHA information in the Supplement!!

• CAFDA is happy to announce the dates for **Conference '26** in historic Lake George, April, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026 plan on joining us.

• Help needed, is there a District/Company that accepts EMS applicants only. What are your requirements for those members that respond to EMS calls only, but are still considered firefighters for VFBL or LOSAP purposes?

Contact me at my email address, asking for a friend.

• Join us in person or Zoom in, General Membership meeting on Thursday June 12<sup>th</sup> at 7PM

• Extrication expert, David Dalrymple, longtime FDIC instructor, Fire Engineering author, Fire Engineering Books DVD author, and Training Minutes video host, has passed away from complications from pneumonia.

• 🚒 Grant Alert: FY24 SAFER & FP&S Programs Opening Soon

FEMA has announced the FY 2024 SAFER and Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S) grant programs, with a combined \$396 million in funding available to support fire departments and firefighter safety initiatives.

○ 💰 \$360M for SAFER: Supports recruitment and retention of volunteer and career firefighters: <https://bit.ly/3v9wi4c>

○ 💰 \$36M for FP&S: Funds fire prevention efforts and research to enhance firefighter safety, health, and wellbeing: <https://bit.ly/3IAVXG9>

📅 Application period: May 23 at 9 am ET – July 3 at 5 pm ET

• Ladder Retracts; Man Falls to Death; FDNY Probe Underway. As the victim put his right foot on the rung, the ladder retracted, sending him plummeting to the ground. Hussain's family wonders whether the ladder was properly locked into place when Hussain placed his full body weight on it.

## STUFF FOR YOUR BENEFIT, NEED TO KNOW!

[WWW.CAFDA.NET](http://WWW.CAFDA.NET)

**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday June 12<sup>th</sup>, in person or Zoom in. 7PM.**

**SAVE THE DATE: CAFDA FALL TRAINING SEMINAR, Saturday November 1<sup>st</sup> at Verdoy Fire Department**

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

CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063 or EMAIL: [SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET](mailto:SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET)

Financial issues should be addressed to: [TREASURER@CAFDA.NET](mailto:TREASURER@CAFDA.NET)

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

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

## THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

### **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.

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### **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?

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### **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.**

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## **THE LATEST FROM WASHINGTON**

Sanity is slowly returning to the swamp.

- Has anyone thought about how business and government really works, if a program is eliminated, and no one complains about the loss of the program, was the program really needed?
- Many government programs were started to entice voters to vote for one party or another, the problem is this taxpayer funded program never goes away, never gets smaller and never gets any cheaper. The Question is, was the program really needed to begin with?

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### **National Firefighter Registry for Cancer Back Online**

Dave Goldiner, NY Daily News

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. admitted making a “mistake” in slashing the health program that serves Sept. 11 first responders, but dodged questions about whether he would return it to full staffing.

RFK Jr. told Sen. Andy Kim, D-NJ, that firing many staffers at the World Trade Center Health Program was an error made as the incoming Trump administration sought to make deep across-the-board cuts to spending.

“It was part of the overall budget cuts that were going to be painful,” Kennedy said at a Senate committee hearing on Wednesday. “Some of them should not have been made and I reversed that one. We made a couple of mistakes.”

Kennedy said he moved to rescind the job cuts and declared the “program will continue.”

Despite the apology, Kennedy dodged Kim’s question about whether the WTC Health Program will return to full staffing.

He also declined to commit to restore funding for the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer, another key resource for first responders who were sickened after serving at Ground Zero following the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

“On the list of things in this Congress that we think are bipartisan and unanimous...should be supporting our heroes at the World Trade Center,” Kim said.

"Kennedy had the chance to forthrightly and finally tell the public he supports the 9/11 Workers Health Program and will stop collaborating with President Trump to constantly fire key leaders and program workers. But he refused," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told the News.

The 9/11 health program was hobbled for months by cuts of about 20% of its staff after Trump returned to the White House and even after Kennedy agreed to restore the program in March amid bipartisan outcry.

It also was crippled by the administration's failure to fully restore the authority of its director, Dr. James Howard, a step that was taken only recently after Democratic and Republican lawmakers alike spoke out again two weeks ago.

9/11 advocates question whether the restoration of the cuts will be permanent.

"This is a national test of whether we truly meant it when we said 'never forget,'" said Michael Barasch, a lawyer who has represented 9/11 first responders. "Kennedy has the chance to stop the bureaucratic cruelty and make the 9/11 community healthy again."

Dr. Howard and several staffers were fired in March as part of a wide effort spearheaded by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to downsize federal spending.

After a flurry of bipartisan outcry, the White House said at the time that it was reversing the staffing cuts and reinstating Howard.

But it didn't actually take action until early May when a front page Daily News scoop revealed that Howard's status had been left in limbo, new participants were not being enrolled in the program and treatment plans were not being approved. Three FDNY employees were unable to get treatment plans approved for recent cancer diagnoses.

After the fresh round of criticism, the health program resumed enrollments and treatment approvals. Howard was fully reinstated to his post. The workers have been told they will not be fired after all, at least for now.

The program provides health services to about 137,000 first responders and survivors who suffered injuries and illnesses caused by the toxins that swirled around Ground Zero during 9/11 and the weeks that followed.

About 83,000 have at least one certified 9/11 illness from their exposure during and after the terror attacks on the World Trade Center, as well as the hijacked plane crashes near Shanksville, Pa., and at the Pentagon.

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### **Change is coming fast. Is your EMS agency ready?**

Sponsored By Digitech, EMS Billing & Technology

EMS agencies across the country are bracing for impact as a wave of federal reforms could reshape the reimbursement landscape, raising urgent questions about funding, compliance, and operational stability. With budgets under pressure and so much still unknown, EMS leaders are looking for clarity and guidance.

[Join Digitech for a timely and important discussion exploring:](#)

- The current understanding of proposed reforms
- Potential ripple effects of emerging federal policies
- How EMS leaders can think strategically, even when the path ahead is uncertain

You'll hear from industry experts with decades of experience navigating EMS challenges:


This isn't just another policy update. Join us for a real conversation about the future of EMS, offering expert insight, informed speculation, and the kind of dialogue that helps EMS organizations prepare for what's next.

**MAY 29 | 1PM ET**

**RESERVE YOUR SPOT, REGISTER AT THIS LINK:**

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 **Some NIOSH Staff Restored - More Work to Be Done.** Last week, following advocacy from CFSI and many other fire service and outside organizations, some staff at the Department of Health and Human Services National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) were returned to work and their Reduction in Force (RIF) notices were cancelled. This included staff at the following programs:

#### ***The National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer***

- The NFR is a crucial program for collecting data on cancer in the fire service and identifying trends, with the goal of informing policies that enhance firefighter health protections.

- **The Firefighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP)**
- A program that conducts independent investigations of select career and volunteer firefighter line-of-duty deaths to formulate recommendations for preventing future deaths and injuries.
- **The National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL)**
- NPPTL conducts research on all types of PPE effectiveness and innovation, develops best practices and recommendations for PPE, and creates guidance and tools to help employers best use PPE.
- NPPTL is particularly known for its work with respirators, including testing and approving respirators used in U.S. workplaces.
- **The World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP)**
- This program provides medical monitoring and treatment services for 9/11 first responders and survivors.

While CFSI is pleased to see that these programs are slowly being returned, there is still work to be done to ensure these programs receive support in the long-term and to ensure that related programs and services are also returned to functionality.

## FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES

### NYS-OSC Audits

#### FAIRVIEW FIRE DISTRICT – FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

FULL AUDIT REPORT HERE: [www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/fairview-fire-district-2024-138.pdf](http://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/fairview-fire-district-2024-138.pdf)

#### Audit Period

January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023. We extended our audit period back to January 1, 2019 to analyze financial trends.

#### Background

The District provides fire protection and emergency medical services within the Towns of Poughkeepsie and Hyde Park in Dutchess County.

The elected five-member Board is responsible for the general management and control of financial operations including performing the claims audit.

**The Board-appointed District Chief (Chief) is responsible for assisting the Board with the District's day-to-day operations under the Board's direction.** The Treasurer is the chief financial officer and is responsible for maintaining the District's accounting records and reports. The District Secretary (Secretary) is responsible for preparing and maintaining the Board meeting minutes.

#### Audit Objective

Determine whether the Fairview Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) and officials properly managed the District's financial operations and were transparent.

#### Key Findings

*The Board and District officials did not properly manage and oversee the District's financial operations and were not transparent. As a result, there was limited assurance the information used by the Board and District officials to make financial decisions was accurate and complete. We also determined that taxpayers had limited access to financial information to help ensure they could make informed decisions relating to District operations.* As a result:

- ***The Board improperly assigned the duties of the District Treasurer (Treasurer) to an independent contractor.***
- *Unrealistic budgets increased taxpayer burden and resulted in unrestricted fund balance totaling approximately \$1.2 million, or 20 percent of the 2024 appropriations as of December 31, 2023.*
- *Unrealistic budgets increased taxpayer burden and resulted in the District's reserve funds, in total, increasing by approximately \$1.5 million (84 percent) over the last five fiscal years.*
- *The Board meeting minutes did not always contain complete information on formal Board actions and were not made available for public review in a timely manner.*

#### Key Recommendations

The audit report includes 18 recommendations that, if implemented, will help the Board improve its oversight of financial activities.

The Board should:

1. Ensure the Treasurer provides adequate, detailed and accurate monthly financial reports including reports of budget-to-actual revenues and expenditures results, bank balances, and a detailed statement of all money received and disbursed.
2. Ensure that the positions of secretary and treasurer are posted in such a manner that the Board may determine whether a qualified resident of the District is willing to perform the positions prior to annually appointing an individual from outside of the District.
3. Discontinue delegating the duties of treasurer to an independent contractor and appoint an individual within the District to the treasurer's position.
4. Adopt realistic budgets that include reasonable estimates of revenues, appropriations and the amount of fund balance that will be used to fund operations based on historic trends.
5. Discontinue the practice of appropriating fund balance that is not needed or used to fund operations
6. Establish a written policy defining the amounts of fund balance that the District should reasonably maintain and develop a plan, if needed, to reduce the amount of unrestricted fund balance in a manner that benefits District taxpayers.
7. Consult with the attorney of the District to determine appropriate remedial action to ratify the de facto reserve as a capital reserve fund for apparatus.
8. Use a more transparent process when budgeting for the funding and use of specific reserve funds.
9. Adopt a written reserve policy that addresses the objective of each reserve, targeted funding levels and conditions under which reserves will be used and replenished and periodically update the policy
10. Develop a plan to ensure the District generates and maintains reasonable reserve funds.
11. Monitor the budget to prevent overspending and authorize budget transfers prior to the appropriation accounts being overdrawn.
12. Timely review the bank reconciliations.
13. *Develop and adopt a multiyear financial plan and a comprehensive capital plan to establish the goals and objectives for funding long-term operating and capital needs. Monitor and update the plans regularly*

**The Treasurer should:**

14. Notify the Board of any identified financial deficiencies in order to prevent funds or appropriation accounts from being overdrawn.
15. Provide adequate, detailed and accurate monthly financial reports to the Board, including budget-to-actual reports, bank balances reports, and a detailed statement of all money received and disbursed.

**The Secretary should:**

16. Ensure Board meeting minutes contain a record or summary of all necessary information.
17. Ensure Board meeting minutes are made available to the public within the appropriate statutorily required timeframes.
18. Post required information on the District's website in a transparent, timely and comprehensive manner

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#### **RHINECLIFF FIRE DISTRICT – BOARD OVERSIGHT**

**FULL AUDIT REPORT HERE:** [www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/rhinecliff-fire-district-2024-154.pdf](http://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/rhinecliff-fire-district-2024-154.pdf)

#### **Audit Period**

January 1, 2023 – June 18, 2024

We extended our audit period to review the timeliness of required AFR submissions for 2009 through 2022, as well as through July 31, 2024.

#### **Background**

The Rhinecliff Fire District (District) is located in the Town of Rhinebeck in Dutchess County and all its members are volunteers.

The District is governed by a Board consisting of five elected Board members. The Board is responsible for the District's general management and financial control with one member elected as chairperson.

The Board-appointed Treasurer is the chief fiscal officer and is responsible for receiving, disbursing and accounting for District funds, preparing financial reports and keeping the minutes of Board meetings.

#### **Audit Objective**

Determine whether the Rhinecliff Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) provided adequate oversight of District financial activities.

#### **Key Findings**

The Board did not adequately provide oversight of financial operations. As a result, the Board hindered their ability to make informed financial decisions and cannot assure taxpayers and other interested parties that the District's financial activities are adequately accounted for and reported. *Specifically, the Board did not collectively complete mandated financial oversight training or:*

- Ensure proper accounting records were maintained.
- *Ensure that the District's required Annual Financial Reports (AFR) were filed for the past 15 years. The 2009 AFR is almost 6,000 days late.*
- *Develop and adopt a code of ethics, investment policy or procurement policy, as required by New York State General Municipal Law (GML) sections 806, 808 and 39, respectively.*
- Ensure bank reconciliations were performed.
- Conduct an annual audit of the Secretary- Treasurer's (Treasurer) records.
- *Develop and adopt written multiyear financial and capital plans.*
- *Adequately audit claims prior to payment.*

#### **Key Recommendations**

- Develop and adopt policies, procedures and plans for the District's financial operations.
- Ensure an annual audit is performed and the required AFRs are properly filed.
- *Complete mandatory fiscal oversight training.*
- Ensure that claims are properly audited and approved before payment.

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#### **Caledonia Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. – Board Oversight**

##### **Audit Objective**

Did the Caledonia Fire Department (Department) Board of Directors (Board) provide adequate oversight of financial operations? Audit Period January 1, 2023 – January 8, 2025

##### **Understanding the Program**

The Board must provide oversight to ensure financial operations are properly managed. This includes ensuring comprehensive records are maintained, duties are appropriately segregated or compensating controls are implemented to safeguard funds, and reviewing records and reports to detect discrepancies.

The Department is composed of volunteer members and is governed by its bylaws and seven-member Board. The Board is responsible for managing the Department's financial activities.

The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining custody of, disbursing, depositing and accounting for the Department's financial activities and preparing financial reports. The booking coordinator oversees hall rentals and certain fundraising events.

The Department's disbursements totaled \$174,302 from January 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024.

##### **Audit Summary**

***The Board did not provide adequate oversight of financial operations. In addition, our previous audit report, Caledonia Fire Department – Internal Controls Over Financial Operations (2013M-356), released March 2014 had similar findings and recommendations concerning the Board's lack of oversight. Because the Board did not implement adequate corrective action to address these findings, the same deficiencies exist.***

The Board did not:

- Ensure that the financial review committee conducted an annual review of the Treasurer's financial records or that all 325 claims paid between January 1, 2023 and May 31, 2024 totaling \$174,302 were reviewed, approved and properly supported. The Board also did not ensure that the Treasurer:
  - Maintained accurate and complete financial records,



- Provided the Board with adequate financial reports, bank statements, canceled check images and bank reconciliations to monitor operations.
- Ensure that officials safeguarded and properly supported hall rental and fundraising revenues. From January 1, 2023 through May 31, 2024 deposits, including those for hall rentals and fundraising, totaled \$211,917.
- Adopt:
  - Written financial policies to establish a system of internal controls that ensure oversight of financial activities, transactions are authorized and properly reviewed and Department resources are adequately safeguarded,
  - The required code of ethics policy to establish reasonably expected standards of conduct, or
  - A conflict-of-interest policy that requires officials to disclose any interests that conflict with official duties.

**The lack of oversight of financial operations increases the risk of theft, potential liability and waste of Department resources.**

**The Board should:**

1. Review and update the bylaws and adopt and enforce written policies and procedures, including a code of ethics and conflict of interest policy, to provide adequate oversight and clear guidance of financial operations. This should include implementing effective compensating controls over the Treasurer's unsegregated duties, such as regular reviews of financial records and reports, bank statements with canceled check images and reconciliations.
2. Provide the annual director's report for Department members every year.
3. Ensure the financial review committee annually audits the Treasurer's financial records.
4. Conduct a thorough and deliberate audit of each claim, prior to approving payment including reviewing a list of bills to be paid and verifying that the purchases were authorized, agree with the checks and are adequately supported including a documented specific Department purpose.
5. Ensure that the booking coordinator and Treasurer obtain, retain and make available supporting documentation for all revenues, including hall rentals, bar and food sales and fundraising events.
6. Ensure the Department's 2023 federal tax filing is corrected. The Treasurer should:
7. Maintain accurate and complete financial records, which may help ensure accurate annual tax filings.
8. Prepare and submit accurate monthly financial reports to the Board and membership that include detailed information for revenues and disbursements, a list of bills to be paid, bank statements with canceled check images and reconciliations.
9. Ensure that all disbursements are adequately supported and approved prior to making payment.
10. Obtain and retain supporting documentation for all Department revenues to support deposits. The booking coordinator should:
11. Maintain detailed supporting documentation for hall rentals and fundraising events and provide them to the Treasurer Department officials agreed with our recommendations and indicated they have initiated corrective action. Appendix C includes our comment on the Department's response letter.

**FULL AUDIT AT THIS LINK:**

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/caledonia-volunteer-fire-department-inc-2025-12.pdf>

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**Local Government and School Accountability Contact Information:**

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

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

**STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE**

**How fire chiefs can better serve their members: Insights from the line**

FireRescue 1 Staff

The effectiveness of a fire chief isn't determined solely by their ability to lead from the top – it's shaped by how well they connect with and support their team on the ground. But it's also important for chiefs to listen to what the members have to say so they know how best to focus their energy.

As part of our **What Firefighters Want survey**, members of the FireRescue1 community shared candid feedback about how chiefs can better serve their departments. The perspectives shared highlight key areas of improvement, including leadership and communication, training and professional development, fairness, technological adaptation, and advocacy.

Here's what firefighters want their chiefs to know about stepping up and making a difference.

### **1. LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATION**

Many respondents emphasized the need for the fire chief to improve leadership qualities, including being more approachable, transparent and effective in communication across all ranks. This includes the desire for the fire chief to lead by example, be more present and engaged with line personnel, and improve general communication skills to ensure clear understanding of departmental goals and activities.

- "Be more in touch with line personnel, share knowledge he has gained, have more trust and faith in members, explain wants and needs instead of just expecting results."
- "The fire chief could do better with communication across the ranks. Often what he is doing to better the department is not known because he is not very approachable."
- "Be more of the 'face' of the department and not just stay in the office."
- "Communicate with front line personnel, quit playing favoritism, maybe be seen once or twice a year meeting with the guys."
- "He could realize that we all function and think differently when it comes to making decisions."
- "Provide researched and educated responses to inquiries from the field and not generalized, no information, responses. Show the field how you are representing them to the politicians and fighting for us."

Following in the footsteps of a WWII commander who exemplified how to prioritize both the members and the mission

### **2. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Several responses highlighted the importance of continuous training and professional development, both for the fire chief and the department as a whole. This encompasses the call for additional certifications, more comprehensive training programs, and the encouragement of learning and growth opportunities to enhance firefighting and leadership capabilities.

- "Lead by example, seek additional training, just do the job."
- "More experience and training. Does not have strong on-scene abilities, and should stay off the scene."
- "He needs to set clear standards in writing. He also needs to establish a vision and lead people into that vision through prioritization, delegation and accountability."
- "Our chiefs need to seek professional development in working with elected officials, communication, budgeting, project management and engaging stakeholders to build a comprehensive CRR coalition."
- "More training for himself, work on succession planning for his replacement."

With the right investment and buy-in, mentorship programs can facilitate skill development, career advancement and improve firefighter retention

### **3. FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY**

A recurring theme is the call for fairness and equality in treatment among all members of the department. This includes concerns about favoritism, the need for consistent discipline, and ensuring that opportunities and recognition are distributed equitably, irrespective of tenure or personal relationships.

- "Stop catering to younger members over long-time members."
- "Hold those that don't do their jobs accountable, even if it is his deputy."
- "Be fair to all employees and hold them all accountable for their actions and not discipline some but not others."

Recognizing the differences among the many generations in the fire service can help identify skills and talents to improve team dynamics



When an organization underreacts, it can give tacit permission for inappropriate behavior; overreacting can waste resources and even damage trust and morale

#### 4. TECHNOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

Some respondents pointed out the need for the fire chief to be more adaptive to technological changes and to consider traditional as well as modern methods of operation. This includes balancing digital communication with traditional methods, especially in areas where technology may not be reliable, and revisiting basic firefighting principles and strategies.

- “There are some aspects of our operations that need to be updated, as they are driven by tradition instead modern best practices.”
- “Our department has pushed many policies and trainings to an online format which now everyone is just going through the motions rather than learning something. We also don’t do well with training vs. drilling (learning something new/reviewing something already taught).”

Just like an overgrown rose bush, if your department’s policies, procedures and practices have not been evaluated for efficiency, you will experience a lack of growth in all areas

April 08, 2025 10:58 AM

#### 5. SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

There is a clear desire for the fire chief to be more supportive of and advocate for the needs of the department and its members. This includes fighting for better pay, benefits, staffing levels and equipment; engaging in succession planning; and being more involved in contract negotiations and interactions with political entities to ensure the department is well-resourced and prepared for future challenges.

- “He needs to place his employees first and go to bat for them when negotiating pay, benefits, equipment acquisition.”
- “Stand up against the administration for his men and women.”
- “Publicly stand up for his crews. Stop trying to please people and attempt to get the help/support the line guys need.”
- “Fight the politicians on budget cuts, increase staffing.”
- “Advocate for department improvements, especially infrastructure, apparatus and maintenance.”

### THE ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

#### *When Establishing a Jr. Member Program, Remember the Following*

1. Jr. FF’s are probably not insured by VFBL until they become members. How are they covered if injured? Speak with your insurance agent.
2. It should be required that two adults are present when Jr. FF’s are at the fire house or in training.
3. The subject of purchasing Abuse or Molestation insurance coverage should be discussed if not already in place.

#### *Former Unionville, MI, Fire Chief Charged with Embezzlement*

Melissa Frick, mlive.com

A former fire chief from Michigan’s Thumb area has been accused of embezzling thousands of dollars from his fire department.

Nicholas Sakon, 35, of Unionville, is facing a felony charge of embezzlement of over \$1,000 but less than \$20,000 from a nonprofit or charitable organization, according to Michigan State Police. He was arraigned Thursday, May 22, in Tuscola County District Court. MSP said Sakon worked at the Unionville Fire Department for 18 years, including 10 years as fire chief.

In December 2024, the fire department realized its non-profit 501c account was missing funds, MSP said. The department suspected Sakon had been using the account for personal use, according to the State Police.

State Police conducted an investigation and determined Sakon had stolen over \$5,000 from the department for personal purchases since May 2023. Sakon faces up to 10 years in prison and/or a \$15,000 fine for the felony embezzlement charge, according to MSP.

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

### POSITIVE OUTCOMES

#### Montana Governor Vetoes Contentious Butte Firefighter Bill

MIKE SMITH, The Montana Standard, Butte

After months of political wrangling in Butte and the Statehouse, Gov. Greg Gianforte has vetoed a bill that heightened decades of feuding between paid and volunteer fire departments in Butte-Silver Bow County.

The bill backed by Democrat state Sen. Derek Harvey of Butte and top Butte-Silver Bow officials ultimately passed with bipartisan support in the Montana House and Senate.

But some state lawmakers said it was a Butte-only fight that didn't belong at the Statehouse in Helena, and volunteer departments in Butte-Silver Bow vehemently opposed it, saying it would strip away their autonomy. Gianforte said House Bill 547 would remove statutory protections for volunteer departments in consolidated city-county governments such as Butte-Silver Bow and create legal uncertainty about their status and responsibilities.

"House Bill 547 raises more questions than answers, and it introduces instability into the operations of rural fire districts, the backbone of Montana's emergency services network," Gianforte said a veto letter dated Friday. He said the bill could ultimately erode rural fire protection statewide but also raised points some lawmakers made in opposing the bill, namely that it was a Butte problem that had no business in the legislative arena.

#### Official Proposes Joining Lewis Co.'S EMS Squads Together

Thomas Cafarella

We've heard from multiple North Country EMS squads about the difficulties they face. In Lewis County, the head of one ambulance company thinks joining all the county's squads together could be the answer. Lewis County Search and Rescue Chief of Operations Josh Levesque says emergency medical services in Lewis County are in crisis.

Levesque gave a presentation to a county committee to highlight the need for personnel. He showed stats of declining medical first responders statewide, leading to slower response times. Levesque says a solution to both is to zoom out. "How can we get all parts of the county repetitively, successfully, and what I proposed is a county-wide system," he said.

A county-wide EMS system where all EMS personnel would be part of the same organization in Lewis County, Levesque says, would allow first responders to work from out of any rescue squad in the county, cutting down on response times. "When you have a paramedic in a township that is not affiliated with Lyons Falls, they cannot get into the Lyons Falls ambulance and perform at the paramedic level," he said. He says his proposed uniform approach would help bring more job benefits to employees, hoping to make EMS in the county a long-term career choice. "Within this plan was to open up and extend out the pay and benefits for staff," he said.

Levesque believes that Lewis County Search and Rescue would be the organization to make a county-wide system a reality. He's asking for \$3.5 million from the county, which would help cover the costs associated with the proposal, which includes training, maintenance, repairs, and more. "I wrote a budget that would be a sustainable model for a countywide system, which would be 4 ambulance staffed at all times. It has two central, one north and one south.

The recommendation from lawmakers is for an outside entity to conduct an EMS study in the county.

### FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

### **As Fire Truck Prices Hit \$2 Million, US Firefighters Demand an Antitrust Probe**

The largest firefighters' labor union in the U.S. is demanding antitrust authorities investigate the companies that make fire trucks, saying industry consolidation has led to skyrocketing costs and years-long wait times, endangering fire fighters and the public.

The U.S. Department of Justice and Federal Trade Commission should probe the fire and emergency vehicle industry, where three companies — REV Group, Oshkosh, and Rosenbauer — together make up around two-thirds of the market, the International Association of Fire Fighters said in a letter.

Truck prices have doubled in the past decade, with ladder trucks now costing as much as \$2 million each, while fire departments are facing backlogs as long as four years, said IAFF, which represents fire and emergency workers in the U.S. and Canada, and American Economic Liberties Project, an antimonopoly group.

"It's really a critical hazard in public safety," IAFF President Edward Kelly told Reuters.

Oshkosh spokesperson Lisa Barwick said the company is investing in manufacturing capacity, technology, and process improvements to meet demand.

"Global supply challenges, unprecedented demand, and significant inflation since the pandemic started in 2020 have resulted in extended delivery times and increased prices," she said.

A REV Group spokesperson also cited demand, labor shortages and cost increases as driving price increases and delays.

"In response, we have increased production of our fire and emergency vehicles by nearly 30% in the last two years, introduced new lines of semi-custom trucks with faster ship times, and continued to invest in training programs for skilled talent," the spokesperson said.

Rosenbauer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

IAFF and AELP said high prices and long waits are endangering public safety in communities facing natural disasters, citing reports that dozens of fire trucks were out of commission during the wildfires that devastated two Los Angeles communities and killed at least 29 people earlier this year.

From Atlanta, to Houston, to San Francisco, cities and towns are facing a crisis where demand for new fire trucks outstrips availability and funding, Kelly said.

On top of long wait times, fire departments are being pushed into contracts with "floating" pricing structures, where the final price of a truck may go up after an order is placed.

"We are paying the price for all these corporate decisions. It serves the investor well, but it doesn't serve the public when you call 911 and the ladder truck is out of service," Kelly said.

The DOJ or FTC should use their authority to investigate the industry, and the FTC should launch a study of how consolidation is affecting fire departments' access to a broader range of parts and services, they said.

Fire departments are seeing the effects of consolidation on everything from dispatch software to personal protective equipment and vehicle parts, Kelly said.

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### **Fire Chiefs Present Funding Model For Paid Firefighters**

Ryan Kelly, Mt Airy News

The Surry County, North Carolina Board of Commissioner held the annual budget planning retreat Wednesday at Nana-Mac Meadows in Pinnacle with Pilot Mountain rising above the tree line just outside the window.

The day was chock full of presentations on the county's finances, long term objectives, and previously tabled business — including a proposal to add paid firefighters to the county's fire departments.

The new fiscal year begins on July 1 and budget talks with department heads will begin in earnest in early April. Vice Chairman Mark Marion noted that there is a strong likelihood that the next budget's total will eclipse \$100 million for the first time.

On issues of public safety, the board heard from Jonathan Sutphin and the Surry County Fire Chief's Council about a proposal they have for adding additional paid staff to area volunteer departments. With fewer and fewer candidates interested in joining the ranks of volunteer fire departments, the Chiefs Council said adding one paid staff member to a fire station would improve response times and reduce non-response rates.

The board approved in early 2022 the addition of five full-time firefighters and the chief's council decided to place one each at Bannertown, Central Surry, Jot-Um-Down, Pilot Knob, and Skull Camp Volunteer fire departments. Before the end of that year Sutphin had reported to the board, "You can see the difference in

the times that the person on staff responds to calls and gets on scene compared to the time if no one was there.”

He stood Wednesday before the board with the council’s latest idea and sought the board’s permission to have a 1-1/2 cent property tax increase added to all county residents. Doing so would garner \$810,000 which would be enough funding to add another full time fire fighter to each of the 16 volunteer fire departments.

Sutphin said to add 1-1/2 cents onto property tax would be an equitable way to raise funds for all the volunteer fire departments and improve service at all as well. They are requesting the change, he said, “Because we need to help every department, not only a few. We want to add quality staff to each station.”

The Chief’s Council was told that only the Board of Commissioners can establish a service district and that it could not be put on the ballot for voters to decide. According to Commissioner Eddie Harris, that may be for the best as he said residents in his district may balk at the prospect of a tax increase regardless of what it may be for.

The statute says, “The board of commissioners may establish a service district if the board finds that... there is a demonstrable need for providing in the district one of more services listed,” which include fire protection, rescue, and ambulance service.

Commissioner Bill Goins felt the best move would be to bring in an outside consultant to look at the county’s volunteer fire department system and advise the county on the best course of action. “We need to look at this and make a plan,” he said.

Sutphin queried and was told neither the Chief’s Council nor the fire departments themselves would be on the hook to pay a consultant.

Adding the five paid firefighters “really hasn’t solved anything” Goins said and wanted to make sure before moving ahead with a new service district. The board also expressed some level of concern that area rescue squads may follow with a similar request to levy a countywide service district tax.

“The current system is broken,” Commissioner Larry Johnson added. “These smaller fire districts are not going to grow like the bigger ones, like Bannertown which has Holly Springs and three of the top ten tax paying employers in the county. This is a novel solution to an ongoing problem.”

“I try not to raise taxes, when possible,” Chairman Van Tucker said. “Arguably, some people will say it’s great but it’s not an overwhelmingly popular thing to raise taxes.”

The board agreed to bring in a consultant, as the commissioners were told Yadkin County had recently done, to look at the numbers and make suggestions. Sutphin asked what he should tell the Chief’s Council and was told that the matter would be back before the commissioners in timely fashion.

Members of the board thanked the Chiefs Council for producing the proposal and reminded the community that they are not entertaining any notion of eliminating the five full-time positions that were added in 2021.

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### **[After Deadly Fire, Captain Injured, Champion Township, OH, Chief Sounds Alarm](#)**

#### **Working short staffed!**

Susan Nicol

Champion Township fire chief has stepped up his [plea for additional staffing](#) following a deadly house fire Wednesday. “We had a police chief throwing ladders, trying to get people out of the house...” said Fire Chief Tom Dempsey.

Bob Antonelli, 72, died in the fire while Capt. Brandon Quiggle sustained second-degree burns on his face, neck, and chest. “I talked to him last night and this morning. He’ll be out a couple of weeks, but he’s in the process of healing,” the chief said.

[He explained how voters turned down a measure that would have boosted ranks in the fire and police departments.](#) “Nobody wants new taxes. I understand that, but I also have a job to do, to identify the deficiencies in my department,” the chief added. “I don’t know if it would’ve turned out different yesterday. That was a quick-moving fire, an intense fire,” Dempsey added.

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### **[Officials Quiet On Reason To Ban Va. FD From Responding To Calls](#)**

By Heather Price Ives, The Daily Progress

GREENE COUNTY, Va. — The Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company in Greene County has been closed and its firefighters have been banned by county supervisors from responding to any emergency calls. That leaves only the Stanardsville and Dyke volunteer fire companies in Greene to respond to fires in the 157-square-mile county.

Few details have been disclosed regarding the sudden closure of the Ruckersville operation, only that an outside agency has been contracted to review and investigate unspecified claims against the operation. “We will not be discussing ongoing reviews in the media, in public, or online,” Greene County Board of Supervisors Chairman Steve Catalano told The Daily Progress via email.

The board made the decision to shutter the fire company in a closed-door meeting on May 13. Two days later, the board informed the fire company it could no longer respond to emergency calls. It was days later that most of the public learned of the development. “The Board of Supervisors was trying to keep this quiet,” a source close to the matter who spoke under the condition of anonymity told The Daily Progress. “It looks like the fire company did something wrong. But the supervisors allowed the citizens of Greene to live without a fire company without telling them. The supervisors really thought people wouldn’t notice.” Catalano acknowledged that the decision to close the fire company had not been effectively broadcast across the county.

“We appreciate the concerns the public have raised regarding information released to the media from outside officials [sic] County government channels, but all decisions made by the Board of Supervisors are made with due diligence and with the public’s well-being foremost,” he said.

Catalano promised that the loss of the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company would not imperil the lives of Greene County residents — even though Ruckersville’s was the only fire company in the county with a ladder truck capable of reaching higher stories.

“The public is not at risk as Stanardsville Volunteer Fire Company [sic] and Dyke Volunteer Fire Company are arranging their staffing to handle call volumes from Ruckersville’s first-due area. There is the same level of protection as before,” said Catalano. “Surrounding jurisdictions have been notified and we hold Mutual Aid Agreements with them to respond to calls in our County.”

Harold Richards, now the former president of the Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company, disputed Catalano’s claim. “Our mission is and always has been to protect life and property. This decision adds minutes to response time when seconds count,” Richards told The Daily Progress via email. Richards also did not say why the fire company had been shuttered, but did say he was sorry to see 77 years of service end this way.

“While we are forced to comply with their decision and we are working to resolve any questions, we are saddened and concerned for the life and safety of the community we have served since 1948 and for the citizens that have supported us and we have cared for every day,” Richards said.

The Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company was the first fire department in Greene County. The Ruckersville Volunteer Fire Company operated under the management of a board of directors. Complaints are typically brought to the attention of the company’s board as a first step in addressing concerns. “Their first step was to put lives at risk by stopping the fire company from operating,” the anonymous source said, referring to the Board of Supervisors.

## **FF HEALTH AND SAFETY – TAKING CARE OF OUR MEMBERS!**

*IN 2025 WE HAVE EXPERIENCED 33 FIRE FIGHTER LODD’S*

*According to FirefighterCloseCalls.com\**

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

**DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A FATALITY-JUST A DIBILITATING INJURY, YOU JUST NEVER KNOW!**

- Cleveland fire cadet, Symeon Williams, 39 dies following medical emergency during training. Paramedics from both Cleveland Fire and EMS provided immediate aid and took him to MetroHealth



Medical Center, where efforts to revive him were unsuccessful. He leaves behind two sons, Symeon Jr., 12 and Syme, 2.

- Emergency Vehicle Driver Charles Mudra suffered a catastrophic medical emergency at the city's fire academy while he was participating in a skills-based training.
- The Laurel County, Kentucky Fire Department shared in a statement Saturday morning that Major Leslie Roger Leatherman "was fatally injured during his response to the devastating tornado."
- A 35-year Mesa firefighter died on duty last week, it was announced. Mark Keller, 62, who lived in Gilbert, was found dead the morning of May 6. Details of his death were not released.
- Firefighter/EMT Michael "Mike" McCarty. He was found deceased in his home yesterday, May 21, 2025, after a house fire off Caloosa Trace Circle in San Carlos Park, Florida.

### **FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK**

- Two firefighters with Central Surry (NC) Volunteer Fire Department were injured after a fire apparatus overturned as the responded to a call. Both firefighters were transported to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. It's not clear what caused the fire apparatus to overturn, but it appears the truck went off the road and the driver tried to over correct and the truck landed on its roof.
- Two firefighters with the Albemarle County (VA) Fire Rescue were injured recently when their pumper was sideswiped while they were responding to a call on a highway, Thanks to built-in safety measures, damage was limited.
- A fire apparatus overturned in Anderson County, South Carolina, the accident occurred on Fire Station Road in Easley as firefighters were responding to a house fire, one firefighter has minor injuries, but is expected to recover.
- On Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at approximately 1:30 pm, Bridgeport Ladder 5 (utilizing Spare Ladder 26) was responding to an inside odor of gas when they were involved in a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of North Ave and Lindley St. Ladder 5 immediately reported their accident to dispatch and requested an extrication assignment to the scene. Engine 1, Ladder 10, Rescue 5, Safety Officer 1, Battalion 1, and Battalion 2 filled out the assignment, with Car 3, Admin-1, and Maintenance 2 also responding. Rescue 5 utilized their tools to extricate the driver of the car, who was transported to the hospital for evaluation of minor injuries. No members of BFD were injured in this accident. The Bridgeport Fire Department and Bridgeport Police Department are investigating this accident.

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### **\*\*Beloved Firefighter Battling Stage 4 Cancer — His Only Clue Was One 'Very Benign' Sign**

Tracy Swartz, NY Post

Baltimore firefighter Steve Dorsey had the worst Valentine's Day — but he's feeling the love now.

Dorsey, 56, was diagnosed on Feb. 14 with Stage 4 esophageal cancer that spread to his lymph nodes and liver.

The 21-year department veteran is on medical leave, undergoing chemotherapy in the hopes of shrinking his tumors, as his colleagues rally around him. "My co-workers in the Baltimore City Fire Department have been nothing but just outstanding and supportive," Dorsey told The Post. "The love that I've gotten out of them has been amazing."

Esophageal cancer is an aggressive, deadly cancer often caught in advanced stages. The five-year survival rate is low — especially for Stage 4 patients. ***Dorsey is sharing his story to encourage first responders to be proactive about their health. The father of four is also trying to get fire departments nationwide to offer Lucid Diagnostics' EsoGuard DNA test to detect abnormal esophageal cells before they progress to cancer.*** "My mission is to bring awareness to esophageal cancer ***[since firefighters have a] 63% higher [risk]*** than the general population. It's right there with testicular cancer and mesothelioma," Dorsey said. "And also bring awareness, too, that there is testing available."

*Dorsey said he underwent routine check-ups every six months, with high blood pressure his only concern. Everything was fine until January, when he started to have trouble swallowing. The difficulties were "very benign" at first — sometimes he'd have to drink some fluids to wash the food down. "It progressively just*



started getting worse, where it was very difficult to eat anything, basically, without regurgitating it back up,” Dorsey recalled.

A series of tests revealed masses in his lower esophagus, lymph nodes and liver. Chemotherapy began in March and is expected to last into June. “I will have a follow-up CT scan done to see what the tumors look like,” Dorsey shared. “We’re hopeful that they’ve shrunk down, and if the chemotherapy and immunotherapies are successful in that, then we’ll just keep moving forward with that.”

In the meantime, Dorsey has been making regular trips to the firehouse to see his pals. The longtime pump operator, assigned to Engine 57 in Curtis Bay, misses the camaraderie. In one recent visit, he was the first to back a new firetruck into the firehouse, a symbolic tradition in the fire service. “Firefighting is one of those jobs where you absolutely love the job,” Dorsey said. “I like to say being a firefighter in Baltimore city is the best job in the world and probably one of the worst places you can do it.”

Dorsey is a third-generation Baltimore firefighter. He had long dreamed of being on the front lines and decided to go for it at 35 as his oldest son graduated from high school. While he knew about the physical dangers, he wished there was a better understanding of the long-term health risks when he joined the department in 2004. Firefighters endure toxic chemicals, smoke, extreme heat and loud noise while saving lives, raising their risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, heart disease, respiratory illnesses and certain types of cancer.

Beyond battling blazes, *Dorsey said he was constantly exposed to diesel exhaust at the firehouse due to inadequate ventilation.* Even his protective gear exacerbated the problem.

“When I came to the fire department in 2004, firefighters were only issued one set of turnout gear,” he said, noting that dirty gear used to be a badge of honor. “Changes have been made over the years. We’ve been issued a second set of turnout gear — the coat and the pants — and so after a fire, we actually send those in and they get laundered, and we switch into our second set of gear.”

*Dorsey said the city recently agreed that his cancer is a line-of-duty illness. Esophageal cancer is a relatively rare cancer, accounting for only 1% of all cancer cases in the US. The Firefighter Cancer Support Network reports that firefighters have a 39% increased risk of dying from esophageal cancer.*

Lucid Diagnostics, headquartered in Manhattan, hopes to catch cancer before it develops.

*EsoGuard* is a non-invasive test that uses a swallowable capsule to collect cells from the lower esophagus for analysis. The test, which launched commercially in 2019, looks for genetic markers associated with Barrett’s esophagus (esophageal precancer) and esophageal adenocarcinoma (cancer). “A lot of fire departments across the country are partnering with EsoGuard to offer this testing to their members. Baltimore city was not one,” Dorsey said. Lucid said it has screened over 10,000 firefighters. In New York, it’s held small events with the FDNY. “We have been engaging with the 9/11 WTC foundation to add this as a covered benefit, but do not currently have an active policy,” Lucid told The Post. “We remain optimistic that the clinicians see the value for this high-risk group and we’ll be able to fully implement it at the NYC WTC in the coming months.”

As he spreads awareness about the importance of cancer screenings, Dorsey is being celebrated by his community for his impact and resilience. Two fundraisers have been set for the summer to help pay Dorsey’s medical expenses. Over \$9,700 has been raised via GoFundMe. Eventually, his sick leave will turn into medical retirement. The grandfather of five had planned to retire in six or seven years — not like this.

“I didn’t expect it to happen this early or happen this way,” Dorsey said. But as he reflected on his career, he noted that, “It’s been a great ride.”

## BUILDING A NEW STATION, NEED TO KNOW

### *Developing a Fire Station Report Card*

Marcus Gibbon, Peri Sutton

Fire departments across the country face a growing challenge: aging fire stations and limited funding. Many stations are more than 40 years old and have significant deficiencies that affect safety, operational efficiency and firefighter health. Departments can benefit from an objective method to assess their facilities and to justify funding needs.

A Fire Station Report Card, with grades that are assigned based on measurable criteria, provides a structured, data-driven approach to evaluating a station’s condition. Via objective evaluation, subjective opinions can be replaced with quantifiable facts. By identifying deficiencies, the building can be evaluated for code, life-safety,

welfare, layout functionality and design shortcomings. Categorizing stations based on urgency and overall condition helps in the realm of prioritization. Through support of phased upgrades or replacements based on financial constraints and community growth, strategic planning and budgeting are bolstered. Making the case for investment with data-driven insights strengthens justification for funding.

## SCORING & ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES

Each category of the report card starts with 100 points. The number of points that are deducted is based on the severity of the deficiencies:

- Minor issue: 2–5 points deducted (e.g., minor wear and tear, minor inefficiencies).
- Moderate issue: 6–15 points deducted (e.g., outdated systems, moderate deficiencies).
- Major issue: 16–24 points deducted (e.g., safety/code noncompliance, significant operational concerns).
- Critical failure: 25 points or more deducted (e.g., structural failure, nonfunctional systems, severe health/safety risks).

The final score translates into a letter grade of A, B, C, D, F or FF.

LETTER GRADE SCALE

SCORE RANGE	Letter Grade
90-100	A - Excellent
80-89	B - Good
70-79	C - Needs Improvement
60-69	D - Deficient
50-59	F - Failure
Below 50	FF - Critical Failure

A well-developed Fire Station Report Card evaluates a minimum of the six key categories that are listed below. (Additional categories may be included in the assessment to fit the unique goals of a department or municipality—for example, sustainability and energy efficiency, future-proofing and adaptability, public and community services, etc.)

1. **Site & Accessibility.** This includes response times and evaluates station location relative to coverage area and road networks. Apparatus bay access is checked in terms of clearance, turning radii and ease of vehicle ingress/egress. Parking and site circulation assesses firefighter parking (enough for shift change) and visitor parking, security, and separation from apparatus traffic. The inclusion of a backup generator ensures that emergency power is sufficient for current and future needs.
2. **Structural Integrity & Code Compliance.** This includes the building envelope and examines structural integrity, weatherproofing and insulation. Checking accessibility and adherence to fire, safety and building codes ensures compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other codes. Assessment of seismic and storm resilience evaluates a facility's capability to withstand potential natural disasters.
3. **Building Systems & Infrastructure.** Assessment of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) performance ensures even climate control in living spaces and proper ventilation in apparatus bays, to reduce firefighter exposure to contaminants. Evaluation of electrical and IT infrastructure ensures sufficient power, capacity for system upgrades, emergency backup and modern communication capabilities. Assessment of plumbing and the water supply includes fixtures, water pressure and fire suppression systems.
4. **Health & Safety Considerations.** Assessment of contamination control focuses on the separation of Hot and Cold Zones to prevent carcinogen exposure as well as ensures proper storage areas for PPE and firefighting equipment away from living spaces and sunlight. The category also assesses compliance with NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program, other safety standards and security measures, such as access control, surveillance and overall station security.
5. **Operational Efficiency.** This category includes response time efficiency, taking into account station layout to ensure quick circulation from the living spaces to the apparatus bays. Dispatch and alerting systems are reviewed in terms of functionality, audibility and integration with emergency response technology. Evaluation of apparatus bay size and configuration seeks to confirm that the space

accommodates current and future apparatus, including in terms of height, width and maneuverability. The size of the opening of the apparatus bay doors is assessed (14 x 14-foot or larger is preferred) as are the condition, speed and reliability of the doors.

6. **Living Quarters & Crew Accommodations.** Sleeping quarters are evaluated in terms of privacy, noise control, climate regulation, lighting, and capacity for current and future staffing needs. Assessment of restrooms and showers ensures adequate facilities, including gender-inclusive accommodations. The kitchen and dining area are evaluated based on size, the condition of appliances and storage sufficiency for each shift. Analysis of the dayroom focuses on space usability and comfort for downtime, to encourage decompression and camaraderie-building. Fitness facilities are assessed for the condition of equipment and the amount of space for various methods of physical fitness training.

#### 5. Operational Efficiency (20% of Final Grade)

Criteria	Max Score	Point Deductions	Deductions	Final Score	Category Grade
Response Time Efficiency	25	Living quarters are located far from the apparatus bays, requiring firefighters to navigate multiple hallways and a staircase, delaying turnout times.	-20	5/25	<div style="text-align: center;"> <b>FF</b>  <b>CRITICAL FAILURE</b> </div>
Dispatch & Alerting Systems	25	Outdated system with poor speaker placement results in missed alerts, requiring manual notifications. System occasionally fails, creating significant safety risks.	-20	5/25	
Apparatus Bay Size & Configuration	25	Bays were designed for older, smaller fire trucks. Current apparatus barely fit, requiring multi-point turns to exit. Several vehicle scrapes and minor collisions have been reported.	-20	5/25	
Apparatus Bay Doors	25	Doors are too small (10'x10' instead of 14'x14'), causing clearance issues. Opening mechanism is outdated and takes nearly 15 seconds to open fully. One bay door is non-functional and must remain open at all times.	-20	5/25	

**Total: 20/100**

An example assessment of Operational Efficiency might go like this: Station 17 is a 40-year-old station that's in an urban setting. Originally designed for a smaller department, the station struggles to accommodate modern apparatus, technology and operational demands. Crews frequently experience delays in response times because of outdated infrastructure and inefficient layout.

In conjunction with response time efficiency, the poor station layout significantly delays turnout times. If a renovation isn't possible, converting underutilized space that's near the bays into sleeping quarters could improve efficiency and help to improve the department's ISO rating.

The failures of the dispatch and alerting systems create a serious safety issue. Immediate replacement with a reliable, zoned alerting system is critical.

The size and configuration of the apparatus bay prevents the station from accommodating modern apparatus, leading to dangerous maneuvering. A bay expansion or relocation of the station should be considered. Furthermore, the size of the bay doors is noncompliant with modern standards; one nonfunctional door is a major hazard. Replacement with high-speed, appropriately sized doors is necessary.

In a nutshell, Station 17's operational efficiency is critically compromised. Without major upgrades or relocation, the station poses serious risks to firefighter safety and emergency response effectiveness.

### OVERALL SCORING METHODOLOGY

Each category is graded separately then combined into an overall score. More-critical categories (e.g., Health & Safety) carry greater weight in the final grade.

Sticking with the theoretical Station 17, an overall score of 60.25 (a D grade) reveals that, although the station provides good access, limited firefighter parking and site circulation need attention. In terms of Structural Integrity & Code Compliance, although the structure is sound, it lacks full ADA compliance and storm resilience upgrades. Aging HVAC/electrical systems require modernization to support increased loads. As far as Health & Safety considerations, there's no clear separation between Hot and Cold Zones. The station's Operational Efficiency is problematic because inefficient layout leads to slow response times; alerting system upgrades and spatial reconfiguration are necessary. Limited privacy, outdated restrooms and cramped kitchen facilities negatively affect firefighter wellness.

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

City administrators must balance competing infrastructure priorities. Without structured assessments, fire station needs can be overlooked. The Fire Station Report Card objectively communicates urgency through assigned grades, helps to prioritize phased renovations and capital improvement plans, and strengthens funding applications via a strategic, data-driven approach.

In 2023, the city of Nacogdoches, TX, conducted a comprehensive fire station assessment using a report card approach. The city’s five fire stations ranged in age from 37–75 years, with varying conditions and deficiencies. After an assessment, two stations received an F grade, indicating urgent structural and safety concerns. Two stations received a D grade, requiring significant upgrades or replacement to improve firefighter health and safety. One station (a C grade) needed minor renovations to improve its efficiency and functionality.

With these results, the city developed a 5-year fire station capital improvement plan, prioritizing the immediate replacement of the two failing stations within five years; combining and replacing two of the stations in a more ideal location for response within the city; immediate HVAC and exhaust system upgrades for all remaining stations; and a phased renovation plan for one station to enhance decontamination procedures and living spaces.

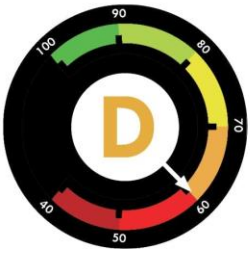
As a result, Nacogdoches successfully secured \$16.75 million from a bond election in November 2023, leveraging the Fire Station Report Card as a data-driven justification for the facility investments.

**DON'T WAIT**

The success of cities such as Nacogdoches demonstrates the power of facility assessments in securing millions of dollars for fire station upgrades. This approach isn’t just about evaluating buildings. It’s about protecting firefighters, improving emergency response and ensuring that stations remain operational for decades to come.

The time is now for departments that have aging stations to implement a Fire Station Report Card to assess facilities before critical failures occur.

**FINAL SCORE CALCULATION & LETTER GRADE**

Category	Weight	Category Score (100 PTS)	Category Letter Grade	Weighted Score	Overall Scoring Gauge
1. Site & Accessibility	15%	85	B	12.75	
2. Structural Integrity & Code Compliance	15%	75	C	11.25	
3. Building Systems & Infrastructure	15%	70	C-	10.5	
4. Health & Safety Considerations	20%	60	D	12.0	
5. Operational Efficiency	20%	20	F	4	
6. Living Quarters & Crew Accommodations	15%	65	D	9.75	
FINAL SCORE: 60.25					

**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	63
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	487
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: <b>960</b>	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
<b>Week 22 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 43 lives PER WEEK, perhaps OSHA should examine that death toll.</b>	
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?	

### **\*\*Firefighter Air Replenishment Systems (FARS) – Do They Belong in Model Codes**

*Jeffrey Shapiro, P.E., FSFPE, Fire Protection Engineer, Lake Travis Fire Rescue*

The fire service has experienced many advances in technology and tactics impacting how we do business since I started my career in the 1970s. Some of these innovations, like widespread use of self-contained breathing apparatus, have become foundational. Others, like the use of fog nozzles vs. smooth bore nozzles, remain unsettled. And still others, such as aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) have come and gone.

*Firefighter air replenishment systems (FARS) currently fall in the middle category.* While the concept has been around for over 30 years, it remains a fringe technology but has gained increased attention after references began showing up in model code appendices: first the Uniform Plumbing Code in 2006, then the International Fire Code (IFC) in 2015, and finally the NFPA Fire Code in 2018 (simply a pointer to the Uniform Plumbing Code Appendix). *Importantly, all of these references are in code appendices*, not the main body of the codes, *signaling that FARS is only intended for jurisdictions that take explicit action to add the appendix to their fire code*, presumably with a lifelong commitment to maintenance, enforcement inspections, and firefighter training to ensure that the systems do not endanger firefighters.

At first glance, the premise seems simple and appealing. The Firefighter Air Coalition (FAC), an industry supported nonprofit association that markets FARS, proclaims...firefighters need air, FARS is a standpipe for air just like we provide standpipes for water, “more air, more time,” and FARS reduces firefighter cancer and injuries. While those points sound compelling, but they are just simplistic marketing teasers. The issue is much more complex.

**WHY FARS SHOULD NOT BE IN MODEL CODES** – model codes establish minimum requirements to provide a reasonable level of life safety and property protection, with the IFC going further by specifically mentioning safety to firefighters and emergency responders. What is or isn’t reasonable is determined by a consensus of individuals who participate in the process, including representatives of the fire service, typically weighing cost, benefit, and risk. Codes have a responsibility to reflect good public policy and spend resources wisely, essentially asking the questions, *“Is there a real benefit and at what cost?”* and “how much is enough” when layering additional safety features into buildings that are already considered by the code to be sufficiently safe. On cost, the NFPA Research Foundation published “An Analysis of Firefighter Breathing Air Replenishment Systems” in April 2021. In that document the costs of new installations were evaluated, ranging from \$218,000



for an 18-story building in Texas to \$485,000 for two 8-story buildings in California. The estimated lifecycle cost over 45 years for the Texas building ballooned that figure to \$474,657. Anecdotally, more recent projects in Texas have seen even higher costs, though documentation was not publicly available at the time of writing. *So, what's the benefit? History tells me that it is absolutely zero.* Despite a 30-plus year history with over 500 installations and claimed code adoptions in 26 states, there is a striking lack of evidence showing even a single FARS system contributing to a better outcome. While that may sound surprising, *it aligns with the fact that most high-rise buildings, where FARS is typically installed, are already built to high safety standards.*

**SHOULD FARS BE MANDATED IN HIGH-RISE OR LARGE-AREA BUILDINGS** – In 2016, the FAC Executive Director claimed *“Buildings keep getting taller, more complex, and far more dangerous for firefighters. Yet the safety systems we provide in these buildings remain stuck in the past. We need to do better.”* That is simply not true. High-rise buildings constructed in accordance with current codes are among the safest buildings built today. While there is risk associated with building height, many redundant, overlapping, and effective safety features have been added to codes in the past 40 years and have proven effective, including mandatory:

- Fire sprinkler systems
- Fire detection, alarm, and voice evacuation systems
- Elevator lobbies that are smoke separated from the building or a pressurized elevator shaft
- Emergency Responder Communication Enhancement Systems (ERCES)
- Smokeproof interior stairway enclosures
- Smoke removal systems for salvage and overhaul
- At least two fire service access (hardened) elevators, which were specifically added to accommodate transport of personnel and equipment, including air cylinders, in buildings over 120 feet in height

If FARS is to be mandated, we must ask: where are the incidents that show these buildings failed firefighters due to a lack of FARS availability? None have been brought forward in model code discussions.

With respect to newly constructed large area buildings, the phrase “tilt up – fall down” construction applies. These buildings are fully sprinklered, but typically have no fire resistance for the roof or rack structures. They are not designed with firefighter safety or interior attack in mind, and if sprinklers do not control the fire, the risk of roof collapse increases. Beyond these concerns, there are no good answers to the practicality question of where FARS connections would be located or how firefighters would find them in unprotected areas of smoke logged building.

**WHAT ABOUT KEEPING FARS IN THE CODE AS AN INSTALLATION STANDARD** – In the past, this argument leveraged getting FARS into the UPC and the IFC. However, the approach raises other concerns. *The FARS market is and has been dominated by a single manufacturer with multiple patents to protect proprietary technology.* That manufacturer, or supporting groups such as the FAC, could publish their own installation and maintenance standard without a model code endorsement. When a model code references a product or technology, even in an appendix, it grants a level of legitimacy, which in the case of FARS hasn't been earned by evidence or demonstrated need.

The added legitimacy of being in model codes hasn't been lost on the FARS industry or the FAC, which are investing heavily to promote FARS with sensational videos, donated training equipment, event scholarships, and personal visits by FAC code advocates, seemingly to win the favor of fire service members and organizations, keep FARS in model codes, and sell more systems. According to a public filing, FAC reported \$720,000 in “member dues” in 2022, though no details were disclosed regarding membership composition or donation levels. This lack of transparency raises questions, especially when promotional efforts are tied to influencing code requirements.

**CONCLUSION** – It is a fact that the vast majority of fire departments do not use FARS and operate successfully without it. The idea that “FARS saves lives,” improves firefighter safety, or reduces cancer risk, is not supported or quantifiable by evidence or data. *Trusting that a complex, rarely used system will be properly maintained by multiple building owners over decades is a major leap of faith, especially for equipment meant to be deployed by firefighters in life-or-death emergencies.* In addition, it cannot be ignored that the consequence of model codes endorsing or mandating FARS is flowing money spent on these installations to a single manufacturer.



As model codes are now considering removal of FARS appendices, these are important considerations, and it is my personal view that FARS appendices should be deleted. In my experience, “out of air” incidents are most often related to firefighters becoming disoriented, lost, or trapped, as opposed to not having air available at a staging area that also allows for evaluation, hydration, and rehabilitation after using an air cylinder.

This is not a call to ban the technology, but to ensure that it is vetted thoughtfully and responsibly, with clear-eyed evaluation of both cost and benefit. *Jurisdictions choosing to commit resources to ensuring lifelong inspection, testing, maintenance and firefighter training should remain free to require FARS if they choose—but model codes should not lead them there without compelling data and justification.*

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### ***\*\*\*\*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 that 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.

### **GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE**

#### ***Southwest Airlines Will Require Chargers Be Kept out While in Use Because of Battery Fire Concerns***

Josh Funk, AP

Passengers on Southwest Airlines flights will soon be required to keep their portable chargers in plain sight while using them because of concerns about the growing number of lithium-ion battery fires in a new policy that other airlines may adopt.

Southwest announced the new policy that will go into effect May 28 and said passengers may have already seen notifications about the rule when using the airline's app. While Southwest is the first U.S. airline to restrict

the use of portable chargers like this, several Asian airlines have acted earlier this year after a devastating fire aboard an Air Busan plane waiting to take off from an airport in South Korea in January.

There is growing concern about lithium-ion battery fires on planes because the number of incidents continues to grow yearly, and devices powered by those batteries are ubiquitous. There have already been 19 incidents involving these batteries this year, following last year's record high of 89, according to Federal Aviation Administration statistics. Some research suggests that portable chargers might be the second-leading cause of battery fires on planes, only behind electronic cigarettes.

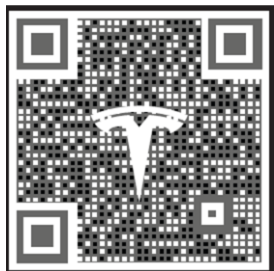
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## **BUYING STUFF FOR YOUR FIREFIGHTERS**

### ***A New Age Of PPE: PFAS, Restricted Substances And Turnout Gear***

Jeffrey and Grace Stull

Likely the most controversial of all changes that went into the new [NFPA 1970: Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural and Proximity Firefighting, Work Apparel, Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus \(SCBA\) for Emergency Services, and Personal Alert Safety Systems \(PASS\)](#) involves per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) and restricted substances. PFAS became a serious topic related to firefighter protective clothing beginning in 2018, following the approval of the 2018 edition of [NFPA 1971](#) – the original standard on protective ensembles for structural and proximity firefighting. At that time, PFAS in turnout clothing was an emerging issue, as individual states were ramping up legislation to mandate at least the disclosure of PFAS in PPE.

Moreover, substances other than PFAS had come under scrutiny over the years for their use in protective clothing; this includes heavy metals like antimony, various brominated and chlorinated fire retardants, plasticizers such as phthalates, and other chemicals that are considered to represent human health and environmental concerns when used in excess in materials and components. The ensuing positions taken by state governments, some fire departments, trade organizations and individual firefighters drove this topic to be addressed in standards.

#### **PFAS REQUIREMENTS IN NFPA 1970**

NFPA 1970 handles PFAS in two ways:

- An optional labeling requirement permits manufacturers of turnout clothing products to make a claim about limited PFAS in their product. This claim is based on independent testing of key materials used in the construction of the item.
- Separate requirements mandate that manufacturer suppliers have their materials and components independently tested for certain PFAS chemicals. The respective materials and components can only be used in the manufacturer of the clothing item when the respective materials and components are shown to be absent or at very low levels of PFAS.

*The optional labeling requirement appears in the following form: "THIS [type of protective element] UPON CERTIFICATION HAS A PFAS (TOTAL FLUORINE) CONCENTRATION OF NO MORE THAN 100 PPM."*

Of note is the fact that the statement does not say “PFAS free” or “No intentionally PFAS added to the product.” These omissions were intentional for several reasons:

- There is no current standardized methodology by which all 10,000+ PFAS chemicals can be analyzed and quantified. This is because there is such a range of different PFAS chemicals that no single analytical technique is capable of their measurement. There are only 100 or so standards for specific quantification of PFAS using appropriate measurement approaches. Some types of PFAS, particularly polymers that are part of moisture barrier films that have historically included PFAS, cannot be directly measured. Instead, the total amount of PFAS in a given material or component is based on the proxy measurement of total fluorine.
- To date, the only commonly available means for representing total PFAS in a solid sample has been the use of equipment called combustion ion chromatography where the sample is fully burned and decomposed into its various atoms allowing the determination of how many of those atoms are fluorine. If the assumption is made that any fluorine atoms are associated with PFAS chemicals, then an overall value can be assigned to that particular material or component. The shortcoming of this analytical technique is that some fluorine may not be associated with PFAS chemicals and instead includes other types of fluorine, such as fluoride, a common component found in toothpaste and drinking water. Thus, the total fluorine number may over-report the actual level of PFAS in the product.
- Claiming a product is “PFAS free” is also misnomer because PFAS contamination has become so ubiquitous where very small levels can be found in many products even when not intentionally added. The sources of these residual PFAS levels might include certain raw materials that can be contaminated with PFAS that was not added, some processes for textiles using water that can contain PFAS, and machinery that has PFAS that can contaminate products during the fabrication process.
- The 100-ppm limitation is based on what is considered to be the most significant constraint for PFAS in a range of textile products, including apparel from the California, which, beginning this year (2025), limits total organic fluorine to a level of 100 ppm. According to the same state regulations, that limit will be reduced to 50 ppm in early 2028. Even when a manufacturer cannot or chooses not to make a PFAS-related claim under NFPA 1970, the manufacturer material/component supplier is still obliged to report the total fluorine level.

PFAS has been historically used in two ways for turnout clothing:

- First, as a durable water repellent (DWR) on outer shells, some moisture barriers, and for some other material components. It has also had limited use in very few thermal barriers and other textile components.
- Second, it has been the backbone functional polymer barrier film in the form of expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (ePTFE) for garment moisture barriers and barriers in many gloves and footwear products.

Its use as a DWR on outer shells and thermal barriers has been generally phased out over the past few years by current material suppliers and garment manufacturers. This transition is also occurring in moisture-barrier technology with the introduction of a few moisture barriers during 2024 that no longer rely on ePTFE. With the new requirements in NFPA 1970, along with other changes being addressed by industry, it is expected that additional moisture-barrier materials will be offered that do not rely on PFAS.

It is important to understand that only key materials are evaluated from respective products, and some materials have been excluded altogether. Right now, NFPA 1970 focuses mainly on the major textile-based materials found in each of the five different elements of the ensemble – garments, helmets, gloves, footwear and hoods. Certain materials, such as leather and some plastics, are excluded. This is mainly because effective methods for their characterization for PFAS levels has not yet been established.

An important takeaway from the PFAS restrictions in NFPA 1970 is that manufacturers will still be able to sell PFAS-containing products, though some of the substances will be restricted to very low levels, and manufacturers can make a non-PFAS product claim only when demonstrated. The most important accomplishment in this approach for standardizing this topic is that manufacturers and material/component suppliers are now being held accountable through required independent verification in conjunction with the certification process.

**OTHER RESTRICTED SUBSTANCES**

*PFAS represents only one category of restricted substances that are being addressed in NFPA 1970.* To be more proactive in the safety of gear to the wearer, the new standard also provides for the limitations of hundreds of other chemicals used in textile-based products for apparel. This application is nothing new in the textile industry and, in fact, some companies for years have voluntarily complied with requirements set by specific restricted substance list. These lists arise from a variety of sources globally, focused on the health and safety of products, and address the entire service life of materials, not only in the use, but also in their origin and ultimate recycling or disposal. Table 1 provides the major categories of restricted substances. There are hundreds of chemicals that warrant this level of scrutiny, with the understanding that turnout clothing, unlike much of the consumer apparel, is subject to many rigors of environmental exposure, including repeatedly high heat, UV light, liquid exposure, wear and tear, and laundering.

Table 1: Major Categories of Restricted Substances in NFPA 1970	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acidity/alkalinity</li><li>• A kyl phenols and ethoxylates</li><li>• Chlorinated benzenes and toluenes</li><li>• Chlorinated paraffins</li><li>• Chlorinated phenols</li><li>• Dyes</li><li>• Flame retardants</li><li>• Formaldehyde</li><li>• Heavy metals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monomers</li><li>• Nitrosamines</li><li>• Organotin compounds</li><li>• PFAS</li><li>• Phthalates</li><li>• Polyaromatic hydrocarbons</li><li>• Solvent residues</li><li>• UV stabilizers</li><li>• Volatile organic compounds</li></ul>

The application of other restricted substance requirements works similarly to PFAS chemicals, using the following approach:

- Specific categories and individual chemicals are identified as part of an overall restricted substance list (RSL);
- Material and component suppliers submit their materials to an independent testing laboratory that evaluates supplier products for levels of restricted substances against the limitation requirements in NFPA 1970 using specific or equivalent test methods;
- The independent testing laboratory (what NFPA 1970 refers to as an “attestation” organization) reports the test results for the relevant restricted substances and provide a certificate that states that the restricted substance limitations established in NFPA 1970 have been met;
- For the material and components that are subject to this requirement, end-product manufacturers can only use materials and components that have attestation certificates; and
- If a supplier does not choose to comply with these requirements, the end-product manufacturer can undertake the testing through the attestation organization on their own to permit use of the material.

RSL requirements are complicated because they comprise a variety of chemical oversight practices established by various groups including regulatory authorities in North America, Europe and globally. Fortunately, these requirements have been made easier with the creation of standard RSLs by a couple of organizations. One of those organizations is the Hohenstein Institute, which sets its own RSL standards – OEKO-TEX Standard 100 and OEKO-TEX PPE Supplement. The NFPA task group that put together the RSL requirements pertaining to turnout clothing relied on the 2024 editions of both standards, along with information from a separate RSL known as AFFIRM that is very similar, but not identical, from the American Apparel and Footwear Association. Both organizations are active in keeping their RSLs up to date.

Naturally, given the newness of these requirements, many questions have arisen about restricted substances, particularly how they are identified, how limits are set, and how testing is carried out to ascertain compliance with RSL. In essence, both organizations offer details on how their respective RSLs were developed and are updated. Hohenstein Institute is one attestation organization for which two principal turnout clothing certifications organizations (Safety Equipment Institute and UL Solutions) are accepting material or component attestation certificates for NFPA 1970 restricted substance requirements. Yet, because NFPA 1970 does not indicate the use of a specific attestation organization or laboratory, these requirements can also be demonstrated by other organizations.

**OVERALL INDUSTRY IMPACT**



*The new NFPA 1970 standard is expected to have significant impact on available turnout clothing products beginning in 2025.* It is likely that PFAS and other restricted substance requirements could filter out some current materials that, in turn, affect prior existing clothing products. On the other hand, the fire service will now have a level of awareness for what goes into their gear. With the ever-increasing number of chemicals coming under scrutiny, many firefighters will appreciate how the new requirements attempt to proactively address this topic as it pertains to the manufacture of gear.

Multiple other changes have been made to protective elements, for example, the mandate for particulate-blocking hoods for structural firefighting as well as a series of new requirements that further affect the different parts of the protective ensemble. Regardless of the perception of what these changes mean to the fire service, the turnout clothing is entering a new age where a new series of tradeoffs are now becoming part of the selection process.

#### **ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE FROM CHIEF MARC BASHOOR**

*What has not been widely discussed is the fiscal impact this standard will have on fire departments across the country. Early results from DCFEMS suggest a 50% reduction in service life for non-PFAS PPE compared to current gear. That alone should signal a fiscal red flag for fire leaders everywhere.*

*Manufacturers were careful to hedge on the question of whether ensemble prices would increase for non-PFAS gear. While there is still a testing and certification process to pay for, there is no concrete manufacturing solution to get us there — yet.*

*Manufacturers have confirmed there is no “latest and greatest” material that will provide our current level of protection without the addition of PFAS chemicals. While the manufacturers and Chief Drozd said it more eloquently than I can, this really does feel like a “pick-your-poison” moment in fire service history. But how can we possibly vote for anything other than removing the cancer-causing chemicals from our gear?*

*In addition to the wholesale replacement of our PPE, this will also mean a wholesale change in our training regimen. I recall the time before safety was a priority, when blistering ears were your sign to start thinking about a way out, and taking off a glove to feel the heat gradients was the way we trained. I am not suggesting we return to these caveman days. However, as it stands today, non-PFAS PPE will require us to teach tomorrow’s firefighters much more about thermal balance and how to read their gear and their bodies. While our encapsulation today has allowed us to go further and further into the fire, it’s now clear that came at a dangerous cost.*

### **STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!**

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#### **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>

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**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](https://virtualclassroom.nvfc.org/featured_courses)

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**NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS**

**Au Sable Forks Grand Opening Celebration**

Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 11am, all are invited.

**AU SABLE FORKS FIRE DEPARTMENT**

# GRAND OPENING

**SATURDAY JUNE 7<sup>TH</sup>**

Join us on for a fun-filled day the whole family will enjoy as we celebrate the grand opening of our brand-new fire station! Come take part in this exciting community event featuring special ceremonies, station tours, food, raffles, and activities for all ages. It's a day of tradition, celebration, and community spirit—don't miss it!

**ACTIVITIES TO INCLUDE:**

- Opening Ceremony: Remarks, Blessing, Dedication & Fire Truck Push
- Station & Fire Truck tours
- Hamburgers & hotdogs (by donation)
- Cornhole Tournament
- Raffles: Basket of Cheer, Lottery Truck & Cornhole Board Set

**EVENT SCHEDULE**

**11:00 AM**  
Opening remarks from the Chief, Chairmen & Town Supervisors, followed by a blessing, mission statement, dedication, and traditional fire truck push & hose uncoupling

**12:00 PM**  
Pre-registration for Cornhole Tournament

**1:00 PM**  
Cornhole Tournament & Activities Begin

**3:00 PM**  
Raffle Drawings

FOR FURTHER DETAILS, CONTACT THE FIRE DEPARTMENT AT 518-647-5582 OR SEND US A MESSAGE ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE!

2456 State Hwy 9N, Au Sable Forks NY  
Au Sable Forks Fire Department

### **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.

### **Asking for a Friend**

**Help needed**, is there a District/Company that accepts EMS applicants only. What are your requirements for those members that respond to EMS calls only, but are still considered firefighters for VFBL or LOSAP purposes? Contact me at my email address, asking for a friend.

## **GENERAL INTEREST**

### **The Importance of Mentorship in the Fire Service: Building the Best Damn Team**

Nate House

Mentorship has always been a cornerstone of professional development in many fields, but in the fire service, it takes on an even more vital role. The fire service operates in high-stakes environments where trust, competency, and teamwork means the difference between life and death. For firefighters, mentorship ensures that essential skills, knowledge, and values are passed down to the next generation. It not only enhances operational effectiveness but also fosters personal growth and strengthens the culture of the organization.

In this article, we will explore why mentorship is critical in the fire service, discuss the need for consistent evaluation standards, and highlight how lessons from the law enforcement community—specifically the San Jose model—can serve as a blueprint for success.

## **THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP IN THE FIRE SERVICE**

Mentorship in the fire service is far more than just teaching new recruits how to perform specific tasks. It involves a seasoned firefighter (the mentor) providing guidance, sharing experiences, and fostering a mindset of continuous improvement in a less-experienced colleague (the mentee). This relationship can take many forms, from informal advice to structured training programs, but its goal is the same: to build a competent, confident, and cohesive team capable of handling any emergency.

Some key benefits of mentorship include:

### **1. Knowledge Transfer**

Firefighting is a field where both textbook knowledge and real-world experience are crucial. Many would argue the latter outweighs the former. Mentorship ensures that experienced firefighters pass on their hard-earned lessons to newer members, reducing the likelihood of costly mistakes.

### **2. Professional Development**

Mentors help mentees navigate the complexities of their careers, offering advice on technical skills, leadership, and long-term career planning. Here's an example: Do I test for engineer or not? "Give me some advice."

### **3. Cultural Preservation**

Every fire department has its own culture, built on shared values, traditions, and expectations. Mentorship helps maintain these aspects, ensuring the department's identity remains intact even as new generations join. I say it all the time: If H.R. or a group of nuns saw our group chats or hear how we talk at the table, we'd be lined up at the soup kitchen. We have a culture that most people—including our spouses—seldom understand. Whether we admit it or not, we often take that culture with us every time we leave the firehouse.

### **4. Emotional Support**

Firefighting can be mentally and emotionally taxing. A mentor can provide the support and perspective that mentees need to cope with stress, trauma, and the challenges of the job. At a minimum, mentors must know when to call in the big guns for some help above and beyond what they can deliver. We're not knocking back the booze and washing the demons away anymore. We realized that didn't work so well for us. Instead, we are being proactive with these kinds of things and it's working.

### **5. Improved Safety**

Well-mentored firefighters are less likely to make critical errors in high-pressure situations. This directly impacts the safety of these individuals, their colleagues, and the community they serve. The brothers and sisters on the floor deserve to work with quality employees. Be it a specialized team or company or a basic functioning member of "C-shift."

## **THE NEED FOR CONSISTENT EVALUATION STANDARDS IN MENTORSHIP**

Although mentorship is invaluable, its success often hinges on the structure and consistency of the program. One area where many fire departments struggle is in the development and enforcement of clear, objective evaluation standards. Without these, mentorship can become inconsistent or ineffective, leaving mentees underprepared and mentors frustrated.

An example: Hop on the TikTok, Reels, or YouTube and watch fireground videos. Naturally, you'll have critiques. We all do. That's fine, but this begs the question: What standard did you apply? It's not what you know, it's what you can prove. Give me something to hang my hat on other than a subjective opinion. You may be right, but don't tell me you're right—prove to me you're right.

Here are some reasons why consistent evaluation standards are so important:

### **1. Ensuring Accountability**

Use the example I just referenced. Clear standards create accountability for both mentors and mentees. Mentors know what they are expected to teach, and mentees understand what they need to achieve to progress.

### **2. Eliminating Subjectivity**

In the absence of standardized evaluations, mentors may rely on subjective criteria to assess their mentees. This can lead to inconsistencies, favoritism, or unfair treatment, all of which can erode trust in the mentorship program. How many times have you inherited the new kid from the other shift and all you have heard about

is how much he or she sucks. Then, low and behold, the individual performs pretty well. You and the rest of the shift are wondering what the hell the other shift is talking about. Which one of the two shifts is right? Subjectivity at its finest.

### **3. Facilitating Fair Progression**

Consistent standards ensure that all mentees are held to the same expectations, creating a fair and transparent path for advancement within the department. There are a lot of laws and rules about this that require that we have fair standards that apply equally to each person being evaluated.

### **4. Promoting Operational Readiness**

Firefighting requires a uniform level of competence across the team. Standardized evaluations ensure that every firefighter, regardless of their mentor, has met the same rigorous criteria before being entrusted with critical responsibilities. Read that again. How nice would it be if you knew all new hires getting off probation, regardless of experience or what shift they're coming from has been trained to the same exact standard by mentors who have some actual formalized training?

### **5. Building Confidence**

When mentees meet clear, well-defined benchmarks, they gain confidence in their abilities, knowing they've earned their place through hard work and demonstrated competence. Do you want to work with the firefighter who has no self-confidence, when things are going sideways?

## **LESSONS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT: THE SAN JOSE MODEL**

The fire service tends to get higher marks from the public when compared to our law enforcement siblings. But the fire service has been missing the mark in one particular area that police have been getting right for decades.

Fire departments seeking to improve their mentorship programs can look to the law enforcement community for inspiration. Since the 1970s, law enforcement agencies have used [the San Jose Field Training Officer \(FTO\) Program](#) as a gold standard for onboarding and mentoring new recruits. This model, first implemented in San Jose, California, has been widely adopted across the United States due to its proven effectiveness. Some of those processes employ significant psychological tactics, and some even go back to the same processes used in determining what makes good aviators in the World War II era.

The San Jose model is built on several key principles that can be adapted to the fire service:

#### **1. Structured Training Phases**

The program divides training into distinct phases, each with specific objectives and skills to be mastered. This ensures that trainees receive a comprehensive education and are evaluated on all aspects of the job.

#### **2. Standardized Evaluation Tools**

The San Jose model uses a daily observation report (DOR) to document a trainee's performance in key areas. This standardization ensures that evaluations are objective and consistent across different trainers.

#### **3. Continuous Feedback**

Trainees receive regular feedback on their performance, allowing them to address deficiencies and build on strengths in real time. The name of the game is helping them succeed. There aren't "gotcha" tricks anymore!

#### **4. Defined Roles for Trainers**

FTOs are carefully selected and trained for their mentorship role. This ensures that trainees receive guidance from competent and committed mentors.

#### **5. Graduated Responsibility**

As trainees progress through the program, they are gradually given more responsibility. This builds their confidence and ensures they are fully prepared before taking on the full duties of the role.

#### **6. Program Accountability**

The San Jose model includes mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of both the program and the individual FTOs, ensuring continuous improvement.

By adopting these principles, fire departments can create mentorship programs that are structured, fair, and highly effective.

## **DEVELOPING A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR THE FIRE SERVICE**

Using the San Jose model as a foundation, fire departments can design mentorship programs tailored to their specific needs. Here's a step-by-step approach to developing such a program:

### **1. Define Goals and Objectives**

Start by identifying what the mentorship program should achieve. This might include improving operational readiness, enhancing leadership skills, or fostering a positive department culture.

## **2. Establish Clear Standards**

Develop detailed evaluation criteria for mentees at each stage of the program. Ensure these standards align with the department's operational requirements and values.

## **3. Select and Train Mentors**

Choose mentors based on their technical expertise, leadership abilities, and commitment to the program. Provide them with training on how to mentor effectively and use evaluation tools. No more need be the days of the mentors being "volun-told." Let's give their role some definition and teeth!

## **4. Create a Structured Curriculum**

Divide the mentorship program into phases, each focusing on specific skills or knowledge areas. Include hands-on training, classroom instruction, and scenario-based exercises. Generally, the fire service has some semblance of this, already, in the form of a new-hire book.

## **5. Implement Evaluation Tools**

Use standardized tools, such as daily or weekly performance reports, to document mentee progress. These tools should be easy to use and focused on measurable outcomes.

## **6. Provide Regular Feedback**

Schedule regular check-ins between mentors and mentees to review progress, address challenges, and set goals for the next phase.

## **7. Monitor and Adjust the Program**

Continuously evaluate the program's effectiveness through surveys, performance data, and feedback from participants. Use this information to make improvements over time. There is no "set it and forget it" with programs like this. They require a finger on the pulse to make sure they're staying both relevant and effective.

## **Overcoming Challenges in Mentorship**

While mentorship offers significant benefits, it also comes with challenges that must be addressed:

### **1. Time Constraints**

Firefighters often juggle demanding schedules, leaving little time for mentorship. Departments must prioritize mentorship and allocate time for it within the workday.

### **2. Resistance to Change**

Shocker, I know. Some seasoned firefighters may be reluctant to embrace formal mentorship programs. At the same time, there is a counterargument that seasoned firefighters don't want to work with slackers. Leadership must emphasize the value of mentorship and provide incentives for participation. You know where we see the most buy-in of the senior folks when implementing this program? When it successfully weeds out those who can't meet the standards who would have remained on the job had this program not been in place.

### **3. Mentor Fatigue**

Mentoring can be demanding, particularly in addition to regular duties. Providing mentors with support, recognition, and resources can help prevent burnout.

### **4. Maintaining Consistency**

Ensuring that all mentors adhere to the same standards requires regular oversight and training.

## **THE NEED FOR MENTORSHIP**

Mentorship is not just an optional aspect of the fire service—it is a necessity. It's necessary for the probie, and imperative for new team members. Some departments here in Michigan are even using this as part of their officer-development requirements, since it's been demonstrated to work time and again. In an environment where teamwork, trust, and competence are critical, mentorship ensures that every firefighter is prepared to meet the challenges of the job, so long as these programs are implemented correctly. By implementing structured mentorship programs with clear evaluation standards, fire departments can foster a culture of excellence, competence, and professionalism.

The law enforcement community's success with the San Jose model demonstrates the value of structure and consistency in mentorship. By adapting these principles, the fire service can create programs that not only prepare firefighters for the technical aspects of their roles but also instill the leadership and resilience needed to thrive in their careers. Every single mentor you, the reader, has had in this job, started somewhere on day one.



Mentorship is an investment in the future of the fire service—an investment that pays dividends in stronger teams, safer operations, and better service to the community. It's time for every department to make mentorship a priority and ensure that every firefighter, regardless of rank or experience, has the opportunity to grow and succeed.

## LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

Relationships are a lot like algebra. Have you ever looked at your X and wondered Y?

## 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](http://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](mailto: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:**

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### **Long Way to Travel? Zoom into the General Membership Meetings!**

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



# CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Business Partner Applications Available At: [WWW.CAFDA.NET](http://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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Certified Public Accountants

Accounting, Consulting & IT Security  
1581 Franklin Ave. Mineola, NY 11501

Kyle Brengel, Managing Partner

516-472-7345

[kbrengel@gblyn.com](mailto:kbrengel@gblyn.com)

## FIRE STATION PEST CONTROL



518-300-4732

431 New Karner Rd Suite 170

Albany, NY 12205

<https://fox-pest.com/albany-ny>



BUSINESS  
ADVISORS  
AND CPAs

11 British American Blvd, Latham, NY 12110

518-785-0134

Queensbury Office 518-792-6595

<http://www.mmbaccounting.com>

Alan W. Clink, CPA [aclink@mmb-co.com](mailto:aclink@mmb-co.com)

Heather R. Lewis, CPA [hlewis@mmb-co.com](mailto:hlewis@mmb-co.com)

## BANKING/FIRE SERVICE FUNDING SOURCES



**JOHN M. LESNIEWSKI**  
Assistant Vice President and  
Senior Business Banking Officer  
Fulton/Montgomery Markets  
12 Fremont Street, Gloversville, NY 12078  
P: 518.775-5205 | M: 518.848-0612  
NMLS ID 915694  
[www.nbtbank.com](http://www.nbtbank.com)



**Don McCormack**  
425 Main Street Catskill, NY 12414  
[www.tbogc.com](http://www.tbogc.com)  
518.943.2600 X607  
[donaldm@tbogc.com](mailto:donaldm@tbogc.com)  
Specializing in Fire Service Financing



**David Farstad, VP-Municipal Banking**  
652 Albany-Shaker Road, Albany NY  
12211  
Ph: 518-730-3120  
Cell: 518-506-0075  
[farstadd@pioneerbanking.com](mailto:farstadd@pioneerbanking.com)



**Ballston Spa National Bank**  
PO Box 70  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020  
Deborah JR O'Connor  
518.363.8119  
[Deborah.oconnor@bsnb.com](mailto:Deborah.oconnor@bsnb.com)

*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](mailto: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	<b>Fort William Henry Hotel &amp; Conference Center, Lake George</b> — <b>Thurs-Sat. April 10-12, 2025</b>
<b>ANNUAL FALL SEMINAR</b>	Verdoy Fire District — <b>November 1, 2025</b> — 988 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham

### SOCIAL EVENTS

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

### 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
<b>General Membership Meeting</b>	<b>Thursday, June 12, 2025</b>
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	<b>www.CAFDA.net</b>
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# OSHA INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

PROVIDED AS A SERVICE FROM THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICT'S  
ASSOCIATION - CAFDA

*NEWEST INFORMATION ALWAYS AT THE TOP WITH RED ARROW*

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

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

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

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