



CAPITAL SHORTS:

- Hope that you all had an enjoyable Thanksgiving with your friends and family. I'm back at it and my sympathies go out to all the men out there who have experienced any type of prostate surgery, I can sympathize.
- The fire district election schedule is posted to the web site at www.CAFDA.net
- At the November meeting the attendees lead by Vice President John Meehan, elected the following officers for 2026; President Tom Rinaldi, Vice President Ellen Martin, Directors: Les Bonesteel, Joyce Petkus, Skip Smith, Art Hunsinger and Ed Woehrle.
- LODD and civilian fire death data are now available

and have been updated in this Bulletin.

- Congratulations to one of the nicest people I have known, Bill Davis on your retirement from OFPC after 18 years. You left it in better shape than you found it. Best of Luck.
- State Association of Fire Districts Region 4 Director (Southern Tier) Ryan C. Alo, 42, of Waverly passed away on Friday, November 14, 2025, at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York surrounded by his family and friends. Ryan was a secretary/treasurer of the Chemung Fire District, member of the Chemung Fire Department, Greater Valley EMS, Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Fire Fighter Association of the State of New York. Memorial donations may be made in Ryan's name to the Trevor Project or the Chemung Fire District.

LEARN WITH CAFDA – OUR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

WWW.CAFDA.NET

1. **NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** Saturday, January 3rd and will feature a breakfast buffet. Officer/Director installation will take place at this meeting. Please join us.

ZOOM LINK FOR THE January MEETING: will be published at a later date.

2. **CAFDA IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THE DATES FOR CONFERENCE '26 IN HISTORIC LAKE GEORGE.**

April 9th, 10th and 11th, 2026 plan on joining us.

3. **CAFDA will be offering two Fire Service Financial training 2 day sessions in 2026**

At Rombout Fire Department, Fishkill, Dutchess County on March 13th & 14th and at McNeil Insurance in Cortland, Cortland County at on March 27th & 28th. Training is provided by trainers from the Office of the State Comptroller. Continental Breakfast and Lunch will be included.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR FINANCIAL TRAINING ON-LINE AT CAFDA.NET

4. **Commissioner Training will be held at 6 locations in 2026 including:** Averill Park February 7th, Verdoy February 21st, Clifton Park March 7th, Niagara Engine Co #6 in Schoharie March 21st, Berkshire Fire District, Gloversville March 28th and Warrensburg Fire District April 4th. The Day after the scheduled dates has been reserved as a snow day if necessary. Open to all newly elected commissioners and Chiefs. This training is required under Town Law Section 176-e. \$85 for members, \$95 for non-members includes continental breakfast and lunch.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR COMMISSIONER TRAINING ON-LINE AT CAFDA.NET

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

THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

Eight fire service-related bills are yet to be signed by the Governor, she has until the end of the year.

Are You PESH Prepared?

Fire Departments **must** keep a "Log and Summary of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses" even if the number is zero. They must post **the Summary page (OSHA Form 300A), as required by OSHA**, in the workplace on February 1. **They must keep the Summary posted for three months.** Forms are available at:

<https://www.osha.gov/recordkeeping/forms>

THE LATEST FROM WASHINGTON

Embattled Acting FEMA Administrator Resigns Amid Furor over TX Flood Response

The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency resigned Monday after pushback over his leadership, including the agency's response to flooding in Central Texas in July that left 130 people dead.

David Richardson had drawn repeated scrutiny during his time leading FEMA. Former staff had told news outlets that he did not seem fully aware of the hurricane season and once suggested Republican states should get disaster relief ahead of Democratic ones.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security commended Richardson's record with the agency and said FEMA Chief of Staff Karen Evans would take over the agency Dec. 1.

About CFSI

Whether you are a member of the fire and emergency services, a public safety coalition, or the fire service industry, the United States Congress is more aware of your concerns because of the Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI). Established in 1989 as a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy institute, CFSI is designed to educate members of Congress about the needs and challenges of our nation's fire and emergency services to help them understand how the federal government can support the needs of our local first responders.

About The NVFC

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides critical resources, programs, education, and advocacy for first responders across the nation.

Our Vision

The NVFC strengthens volunteer and combination fire and emergency medical services to advance excellence, ensure safer communities, and enhance the quality of life across America.

Our Mission

The NVFC unites and supports volunteer and combination fire and EMS organizations through education, advocacy, leadership development, and collaboration. Guided by professionalism and innovation, we provide the tools and resources needed to protect communities, advance responder health and safety, and prepare leaders for the future.

What We Do

The NVFC accomplishes its mission and provides meaningful support to fire and EMS organizations through a wide range of services and programs:

- [Representing](#) the interests of the volunteer fire, emergency medical, and rescue services at the U.S. Congress, federal agencies, and national standards setting committees
- Focusing on [health](#) and [safety](#)
- Helping departments recruit and retain [Fire Service](#) and [EMS/Rescue](#) personnel
- Providing [training](#) on topics that matter to you
- Assisting departments in establishing [support programs](#)
- Fostering the [next generation of firefighters](#)
- Offering an [array of programs](#) to support the volunteer emergency services

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES

Local Government and School Accountability Contact Information:

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

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

NYS-OSC Fire Service Audits

Town of Elmira Fire District No. 1 – Long-Term Planning

[HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE A LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN, OR A VEHICLE REPLACEMENT PLAN, AND LIVE BY IT?]

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

Did Town of Elmira Fire District No. 1 (District) officials establish long-term capital and financial plans?

AUDIT PERIOD

January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2024.

We extended the audit period back to January 1, 2007 to determine Board-estimated replacement costs, January 1, 2020 to analyze reserve balance trends and forward to April 2, 2025 to estimate vehicle replacement costs, useful life and the creation of a new capital plan.

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIT AREA

A fire district (district) should have written long-term capital and financial plans to balance capital priorities with fiscal constraints while also transparently communicating a district board's (board's) intentions to taxpayers, residents and other interested parties.

The District is governed by an elected five-member Board of Fire Commissioners (Board), responsible for the general management and control of the District's financial operations including adopting annual budgets and establishing long-term capital and financial plans. The Fire Chief (Chief) oversees all firefighters and other administrative staff and is responsible for providing budget input and information for operational and capital needs to the Board.

The District's budgeted appropriations for 2025 totaled \$920,505 and the District's vehicle capital reserve (Reserve) fund balance totaled \$971,000 as of December 31, 2024.

AUDIT SUMMARY

District officials did not establish or adopt up-to-date long-term capital and financial plans. As a result, the Board did not convey long-term goals to taxpayers, residents and interested parties in a transparent manner.

The District had five vehicles at or beyond their useful life estimates in 2025. We estimated that the total vehicle replacement cost of these five vehicles was approximately \$2.3 million¹ in 2025. However, the Reserve fund balance totaled \$971,000 as of December 31, 2024. ***If all five vehicles at or beyond their useful life estimates were replaced in 2025, the District may face a shortfall of approximately \$1.3 million.***

Because District officials did not maintain a long-term capital plan for vehicles or plan for future financial operations, the Board's ability to effectively manage the District's finances was hindered. Therefore, potential large increases to real property tax levies may occur when assets are needed in the future. As a result of our audit, the Board and Chairman of the Board (Chairman) created a new capital plan that projected reserve contributions, vehicle replacement costs and useful life through 2054.

The report includes two recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the District's long-term capital and financial planning. District officials generally agreed with our recommendations and indicated they have initiated corrective action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board and District officials should:

1. Develop a written long-term financial plan to help ensure financial resources are available to replace capital assets, such as vehicles, in a timely manner.
2. Annually review, update (as necessary) and adopt long-term capital and financial plans.

SEE FULL AUDIT REPORT HERE:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/elmira-town-no-1-fire-district-2025-51.pdf>

Richburg-Wirt Fire District – Board Oversight

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

Did the Richburg-Wirt Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) provide adequate oversight of financial operations? Located in Allegany County in the Town of Bolivar.

AUDIT PERIOD

January 1, 2023 – April 29, 2025

We extended the audit period through October 6, 2025, to review fiscal training records.

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIT AREA

Fire districts are district corporations and political subdivisions of the State of New York (State), distinct from the municipalities in which they are located. Fire districts are generally governed by an elected board of fire commissioners (board) that is responsible for providing adequate oversight to ensure proper financial management. This includes developing and adopting required policies, conducting financial activity in a transparent manner, reviewing financial records, completing training in a timely manner and complying with purchasing requirements.

The District's average annual budgeted appropriations for the 2023, 2024 and 2025 fiscal years was \$102,007.

AUDIT SUMMARY

The Board did not provide adequate oversight of financial operations. Specifically, the Board did not:

- Develop and adopt required policies, including an investment policy, a procurement policy and a code of ethics.
- Use reserve funds in a transparent manner and could not support that transfers totaling \$36,611 were adopted through Board resolutions and that public hearings were held, when required.
- Audit the Treasurer's records in accordance with New York State Town Law (Town Law) Section 177.
- Ensure all of its members completed mandatory oversight training within the required time period. For example, one Board member, the Chairman, completed the training more than 900 days late.
- Use competitive bidding for the purchase of an off-road utility vehicle (UTV) for approximately \$28,000 as required, and as a result, may have paid more for the UTV than necessary. For example, we found a local vendor who offered a similar UTV for approximately \$8,000 (40 percent) less than what the Board paid.

Because the Board did not provide adequate oversight of financial operations, it cannot ensure that District activities remained free from favoritism and the appearance of impropriety and cannot ensure District assets were adequately safeguarded from potential misuse, loss or theft. In addition, three of the five Board members did not respond to our requests to discuss the audit.

The report includes nine recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the Board's oversight of financial operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Board members should:

1. Adopt required investment, procurement and code of ethics policies.
2. *Attend training that addresses their required oversight responsibilities, including what policies should be developed and adopted.*
3. *Attend training that addresses their fiscal oversight responsibilities, including their requirements when using reserve funds.*

4. Ensure reserve transactions are carried out in a transparent manner by adopting resolutions prior to spending or funding reserve funds and holding public hearings when required by applicable reserve statutes.
5. The Treasurer should comply with Town Law Section 177 and annually submit all books, records, receipts, claims and canceled check images to the Board.
6. The Board should ensure it receives the Treasurer's records needed to comply with Town Law Section 177 and perform an annual audit of the Treasurer's records and reports.
7. *Board members should complete mandatory oversight training within 270 days of their first day in office.*

SEE THE FULL REPORT HERE:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/richburg-wirt-fire-district-2025-73.pdf>

Newark Valley Fire District – Audit Follow-Up

PURPOSE OF REVIEW

The purpose of our review was to assess the Newark Valley Fire District's (District) progress, as of September 2025, in implementing our recommendations in the audit report *Newark Valley Fire District – Board Oversight* (2020M-30), released in May 2020.

The audit determined that:

- There were control weaknesses in the community hall rental process.
- Documentation of compliance with the procurement policy was incomplete.
- Although monthly financial reports were accurate and reliable, the Board did not perform an annual audit of the Secretary-Treasurer's (Treasurer) records for 2017 and 2018.
- The Treasurer did not file required annual update documents with the Office of the State Comptroller as of the end of our audit.

The audit included five recommendations to help the Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) improve their oversight of the District's financial activities.

BACKGROUND

The District is a district corporation of the State, distinct and separate from the Town of Newark Valley in Tioga County. The District provides fire protection and emergency rescue services to approximately 4,000 residents over 57 square miles. The elected five-member Board governs the District and is responsible for its overall financial management. The Board appoints a Treasurer who acts as the chief fiscal officer and is responsible for receiving, disbursing and accounting for District funds and preparing periodic financial reports.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Of the five audit recommendations, two recommendations were implemented, one recommendation was partially implemented, and two recommendations were not implemented. Until all recommendations are implemented, the Board cannot ensure District assets are fully safeguarded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation 1 – Controls Over Community Hall Rentals
- Recommendation 2 – Investment and Procurement Policies
- Recommendation 3 – Documentation of Quotes or Bids
- Recommendation 4 – Annual Audit of the Treasurer's Records
- Recommendation 5 – Annual Financial Report Filing

READ THE COMPLETE REPORT HERE:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/newark-valley-fire-district-2020m-30-f.pdf>

Lexipol launches Grants 2.0: A unified platform for grant discovery, writing and management

Lexipol has officially launched **Grants 2.0**, a comprehensive upgrade to its grant services platform, bringing together three powerful tools — GrantFinder, GrantWriter and GrantManager — under a single, unified brand.

This transformation marks a significant milestone in Lexipol's mission to simplify and streamline the grant process for public safety and local government agencies.

INTRODUCTION: A FULL-SPECTRUM GRANT SOLUTION

Grants 2.0 is designed to support agencies at every stage of the grant lifecycle:

- **GrantFinder** helps users discover and track thousands of funding opportunities with smart filters, alerts and collaborative access.
- **GrantWriter** connects agencies with expert consultants who craft competitive applications tailored to their needs.
- **GrantManager** provides post-award support, ensuring compliance, reporting and financial tracking are handled with precision.

Together, these tools offer a seamless experience—from identifying the right grant to managing it after the award—making Grants 2.0 a game-changer for agencies seeking funding in a complex and competitive environment.

GRANTFINDER: DISCOVER FUNDING WITH PRECISION

At the heart of Grants 2.0 is GrantFinder, a real-time, online database that tracks over 15,000 federal, state and private grant programs. Designed specifically for public safety and local government professionals, GrantFinder offers:

- Smart filters and custom alerts tailored to agency needs
- Collaborative access for up to five users
- Expert articles, guides and a self-service knowledgebase
- Personalized content delivery

With GrantFinder, agencies can quickly locate relevant funding opportunities and stay ahead in a competitive grant landscape.

GRANTWRITER: EXPERT SUPPORT FOR COMPETITIVE APPLICATIONS

GrantWriter provides hands-on support from experienced grant professionals who craft high-quality applications tailored to each agency's unique needs. The service includes:

- Eligibility for two to three written grant applications per year
- Full assembly of application elements
- Strategic planning sessions and unlimited consulting
- Dedicated account management and expert review

GrantWriter is ideal for agencies that lack in-house grant expertise or need help navigating complex application requirements.

GRANTMANAGER: END-TO-END GRANT LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT

GrantManager extends support beyond the application phase, offering post-award services that ensure compliance and continued funding success. Features include:

- GrantFinder access and tailored alerts
- Expert grant writing and consultation
- Post-award management for reporting, compliance and financial tracking
- A dedicated point of contact for personalized guidance

GrantManager is designed for agencies seeking a full-service solution—from discovery to post-award oversight.

TECHNOLOGY THAT POWERS PROGRESS

We've upgraded our technology to deliver a faster, smarter and more seamless grant experience. These enhancements mean:

- Clean user interface
- Timely email alerts to keep you informed
- Easy online options for subscriptions and purchases

This modern foundation ensures our grant services are ready to support your success well into the future.

State Bill Needed To Move New Fire District Money

Gregory Bacon

Special state legislation will be needed for the money that was part of the former Mayville Village Fire Department to be released to the new department protecting the village.

Mayville created a Fire and Rescue Equipment Reserve Fund back in 2018, which was established to contribute toward the purchase of firefighting and rescue apparatus and was funded through Mayville village taxpayers. It has a current balance of \$569,773.

The village's Ambulance Reserve Fund was established in February, 2024 to contribute toward the replacement cost of an ambulance. It has a current balance of \$58,262.

In September, 2024, the Mayville Fire Department merged with the Hartfield and Dewittville fire districts, which created the North Lake Fire District, which serves the village of Mayville as well as the hamlets of Hartfield and Dewittville.

Mayville Mayor Rick Syper said the state does not permit the village to give that money to the district on its own, since villages cannot give away taxpayer money.

Syper said he has spoken with both state Sen. George Borrello and Assemblyman Andrew Molitor about the issue.

During the Mayville Village Board meeting, board members passed a resolution requesting the state legislature pass a special law to authorize the transfer of the two funds to the newly formed North Lake Fire District Reserve Accounts to be used for the same purposes as they were originally created.

Syper said he was told by the state representatives that the state legislature probably won't take up the legislation until the end of their session, which is in June.

How To Hire A Fire Grant Writer

Jerry Brant

One of the most frequent questions I get asked is, "We haven't been funded by AFG for years, would our department be better off to hire a grant writer?" Some people may think that the answer to that question should automatically be, "yes," but that may not always be the best answer. In fact, hiring a fire department grant writer for the wrong reasons or hiring the wrong grant writer will not **improve your chances of getting your application funded**.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN CONTRACTING OR HIRING A GRANT WRITER

The best reference when searching for a grant writer is your neighboring fire departments. If any of them have used a grant writer's services in the past, this is an excellent place to start. Other possible sources might include firefighter organizations in your county or state or friends with other departments.

Once you have selected a potential candidate or candidates, begin the selection process with an interview and secure a copy of the potential grant writer's resume and a list of references. Next, schedule the interview either in person or via a conference call. Before the interview, contact their references and ask what specific type of grants or services the potential writer provided them.

The most important thing for both the interview and when contacting references is to determine if the potential writer has previous experience in writing for this type of grant and experience in writing for your specific project. Too often, departments are more concerned about the grant writer's winning percentage and less concerned about the types of grants the person has written. There is a big difference in writing successful AFG grants and writing block grants for a community.

There is also a huge difference between a PPE grant for AFG and a 10-department regional grant for **SAFER**. People too often mistakenly think that all grants are the same and if you can write one, you can write all the different types that are available. This is far from the truth and many times, departments are unhappy when the high school English teacher can't get their turnout gear grant funded from AFG.

Another important question to ask the potential writer is "How many applications do you normally write?"

The answer to this question is important because it is a lot easier to manage your grant writing when you are doing only a few applications as compared to trying to schedule 25 or 30 applications to be completed by the deadline. You should also determine if the person you are interviewing will be writing your grant or if they

subcontract their work out to other writers. If they do subcontract, you need to know exactly who will be writing your grant and their level of experience.

HOW MUCH DOES A GRANT WRITER COST?

A grant writer should be able to tell you in writing exactly how much their grant work is going to cost. The cost of a grant writer depends on the writer's experience, the complexity of the grant application, the time it will take to complete the application and the overall scope of work you're asking the grant writer to complete. They should also have a contract detailing their responsibilities and your department's duties available for you to review before hiring them. Make sure to closely review the contract and have the contract reviewed by your department's legal counsel or advisor before signing.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN HIRING A GRANT WRITER

Once your department has reviewed the potential writer's previous experience, there are other factors to consider.

They should also be willing to provide you their EIN number or Social Security number so that your department can provide them with a 1099 form if they are being paid more than \$600. They should also verify that neither they nor their firm are debarred from doing work with the federal government. SAM contains a list of **debarred individuals and companies** if you want to double check their information.

If the grant writer hesitates or won't provide you with these documents, don't hire them. Also, be very suspicious of any grant writer who wants to do the work for nothing or who tells you that you can pay them by buying the funded equipment from them if you get funded. This is illegal.

YES, EVEN WITH A GRANT WRITER, YOU WILL HAVE WORK TO DO

Too many people are under the impression that hiring a grant writer means that the department will not have to do any work for the application. This is completely false. Your department will need to provide the grant writer with background information on:

- Your department
- Your call volume
- Your department's budget
- Why the new item is needed
- Why you can't pay for the new item from the department's funds

You will need to get cost estimates and make decisions on the estimate that you think is the best. You may need to complete certain sections of the application yourself or provide the grant writer with this information so they can do it.

Finally, you need to remember that even with a grant writer, the accuracy of the department's application is your responsibility and not the grant writer's. You should check the entire application before it is submitted. If false information is included in your application, the funding agency will come after your department and not the person who wrote the grant.

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Choosing The Right Altitude: Blending Strategic and Tactical Leadership

Brian Schaeffer

There comes a moment in every fire chief's tenure — whether it's during a line-of-duty death investigation, a contentious labor negotiation or a multi-alarm fire — when the decision must be made: Do I stay at the strategic level or do I step into the tactical details? That moment, often subtle and unfolding in real time, defines the tension between leading from the top of the hill and leading from inside the fight. It's a dilemma that doesn't just test our knowledge or experience — it reveals the depth of our leadership maturity.

We've all known chiefs who live too high in the clouds, untethered from the realities of operations, unaware of the pressures facing crews in the street or the administrative hurdles slowing progress. On the other end, some chiefs can't resist pulling hoselines or editing policies word by word, leaving no room for subordinate leaders to learn, grow or own outcomes. Both extremes are unsustainable. One creates confusion and the other breeds dependency.

The challenge for a fire chief isn't whether to be strategic or tactical; it's learning when and how to move between the two with clarity and purpose.

FROM 30,000 FEET TO IN THE WEEDS

Just like a CEO or top organizational position, strategic ownership never leaves the fire chief. We are accountable for the vision, the mission and the condition of the organization at every level. That responsibility cannot be delegated. However, tactical execution belongs to the professionals we've hired, trained and empowered to act. That trust is foundational, but it must be informed by awareness.

Knowing when to zoom in is not a sign of weakness or micromanagement. It's a function of context. Suppose the organization is facing a pivotal challenge. In that case, whether it's a funding crisis, a recruitment failure or an operational breakdown, the chief may need to step in, ask hard questions and walk alongside the team to stabilize the foundation — then, when conditions permit, zoom back out and return authority to the appropriate levels.

This "altitude shift" requires emotional intelligence, clear communication and steady leadership presence.

STAYING GROUNDED WHILE SEEING AHEAD

Success as a fire chief comes from learning when to lead from the front, when to support from behind, and how to do both without disrupting the rhythm of those around you. That flexibility requires us to have strong self-awareness, trust in the team and a deep sense of the organization's pulse. The reality is messy and fluid. It will change with time and circumstance, making it sometimes turbulent and nearly impossible to navigate. Strategic leadership requires us to look ahead, anticipate potential barriers and prepare for change well in advance of its arrival. But that doesn't mean retreating to an office or surrounding ourselves with plans, graphs and assumptions. The most respected leaders in the fire service are the ones who remain operationally relevant, not because they run calls or handle every detail but because they stay connected. They show up. They walk the bay floors. They sit at kitchen tables. They listen not to respond but to understand.

When our people see that we care enough to be present — not to critique or inspect, but to support — they begin to trust that our strategic decisions aren't made in isolation. That trust matters, especially when difficult choices have to be made down the road. That's the job, and those decisions are rarely easy.

It's equally important to know when not to step in. A leader who intervenes every time something feels off robs the organization of their leaders' ability to grow through experience. Delegation doesn't mean disengagement, but it does require discipline. By giving our people room to lead, we also accept the reality that mistakes may occur. Those moments, when properly supported, often become the most valuable opportunities for development.

On the other hand, when the situation carries high consequences — like when the stakes involve public trust, firefighter safety or organizational reputation — our visibility and presence are non-negotiable. That doesn't mean taking control, but it does mean being available, removing obstacles and providing real-time support. A chief who is absent during critical junctures will find that their authority erodes quickly, regardless of how sound the strategy might be on paper.

The rhythm of leadership in the fire chief position is not steady but rather dynamic. The pace changes, the environment shifts, and what your people need from you today may be very different from what they'll need tomorrow. Our job is to stay in tune, to adjust and to never get too comfortable at any one altitude. After all, we lead best when we stay rooted in reality, grounded in relationships and anchored by the purpose that brought us to the job in the first place.

The fire chief doesn't have the luxury of choosing one lens and staying there. Our leadership must flex, refocus and adapt as the environment demands. That is especially true in today's public safety landscape, where operational complexity, political pressures and workforce expectations collide daily. We are expected to see the whole picture while remaining aware of the details frame by frame.

THE DUAL BURDEN OF COMMAND IN SMALLER SYSTEMS

While the ideal balance between strategy and tactics is often discussed in binary terms, the reality for many fire chiefs, particularly in mid-sized or smaller agencies, is far more complex. In these environments, the fire chief isn't just the architect of vision. They're also frequently the duty officer, the public information officer, the training director and sometimes the board's secretary.

For those positions, there is no luxury of separation. The same leader who testifies before the legislative body about next year's capital improvement plan may also be the first to arrive at a structure fire later that evening, coordinating the initial attack while simultaneously thinking through the political and staffing implications of the incident. This isn't a flaw of the system; it's a reality of the role. And for many, it's where the leadership craft can make or break their effectiveness.

The danger really lies in ignoring the cost of constantly shifting between those roles. Operating with a foot in both worlds demands acute self-awareness. If we're not careful, the operational urgency that dominates our daily calendars can begin to erode the long-range thinking that the organization needs from us. Conversely, living only in the abstract and being preoccupied with plans, data and politics will disconnect us from the credibility that comes from showing up in a real-time when it matters most.

Harvard's Ron Heifetz, in his work on [adaptive leadership](#), points to this tension. He argues that effective leaders must learn to "get on the balcony" to rise above the dance floor and see the larger patterns at play while still being willing to step back onto the floor when necessary. That movement, in and out of the action, allows leaders to stay responsive without becoming reactive and visionary without becoming detached.

In the fire service, that balance is more than theoretical. Our people know when we're engaged and when we've drifted. They know when we're showing up to understand versus when we're appearing to direct. Presence must be genuine, and timing is crucial. Some moments demand your full attention, and there are times when stepping back is the most powerful statement of trust you can make in your team's competence. There's no universal rule for when to step in or out, but there is a discipline to checking in with yourself. Are you defaulting to the comfort of tactics because strategy feels intangible? Are you clinging to the safety of vision because the operational messiness of today is harder to face? Neither posture, in isolation, will serve the organization well.

The best chiefs that I've learned from can talk on the radio *and* to the state legislature with equal comfort. They know when to take the buggy to the call and when to stay behind to build the next five years. They don't romanticize the fireground, nor do they become enamored with titles. They lead in real time, guided by presence, timing and relevance.

LEADING WHERE IT COUNTS

So, whether you're leading a department of 20 volunteers or 2,000, the expectations don't change. Strategy matters. So does action. The strength of a fire chief is rooted in their ability to move between both with intent. This isn't balance for the sake of balance. It's awareness of when your team needs vision and when they need proximity. When they need silence and when they need your voice. When they need a leader on the balcony and when they need one in the street.

The one thing we all realize when we leave shift work is that there will always be more work than hours in the day. For the fire chief, the pace of change will continue to accelerate, and that list or stack of work will never disappear. But if we stay rooted in our mission, grounded in service and responsive to the needs of our people, we can lead with the kind of clarity that outlasts our tenure. The kind that doesn't just move the organization forward but makes it stronger long after we're gone.

That is the work. And it's worth every step.

STEP INTO THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

****Step Up and Lead: Dealing with Subordinate Problems (the 3U Method)**

Frank Viscuso

Ask any fire service leader if he or she has had problems with a subordinate, and you will likely receive a look that sarcastically implies, "Are you kidding me?"

It is inevitable, when a group of individuals with different personalities spend any significant amount of time together, that those personalities are going to clash and problems will surface. This is especially true in the fire service, where it is not uncommon for a group of individuals to spend 24 hours together. Put five different personalities together in a room for that long, and there are going to be challenges. Some may appear to be minor problems, such as the avoidance of daily housework duties or a sudden lack of interest in the job. Others are much more serious, such as refusing to obey orders around the firehouse, or worse, on the fireground. Minor problems are sometimes the by-product of a personal issue that has surfaced in the individual's life;

however, whenever problems like this occur in the fire service, they must be immediately addressed by the subordinate firefighter's supervising officer (fig. 1). By doing so, we can begin to determine the reason for this change in behavior and identify any issues that can be resolved before they grow to become major problems, which will inevitably end up in the chief's office, or worse.

When you, as a leader, find yourself in a situation where you must step in to resolve a more serious issue, a private conversation between you and the individual may promptly escalate to the dreaded "meeting with the chief." If you thought being on the receiving end of the subordinate. When you, as a leader, find yourself in a situation where you must step in to resolve a more serious issue, a private conversation between you and the individual may promptly escalate to the dreaded "meeting with the chief." If you thought being on the receiving end of the subordinate interview could be intimidating, just wait until you find yourself on the delivery end. After all, this isn't a mere job interview we're talking about. This is a legitimate problem that needs to be dealt with and corrected without delay; otherwise, it would have never made its way into your office. interview could be intimidating, just wait until you find yourself on the delivery end. After all, this isn't a mere job interview we're talking about. This is a legitimate problem that needs to be dealt with and corrected without delay; otherwise, it would have never made its way into your office.

This section will help guide you through the fact-finding process when interviewing a subordinate worker. Let's begin by defining the words *subordinate* and *insubordinate*.

sub-or-di-nate *adj.*

- Belonging to a lower or inferior class or rank; secondary.
- Subject to the authority or control of another.

in-sub-or-di-nate *adj.*

- Disobedient to authority

THE SUBORDINATE INTERVIEW

Organizational leaders in management positions must learn to deal with subordinate issues, such as conflict resolution or substandard performance. There is no shortage of information about how to conduct a formal subordinate interview and address serious problems, but I want to share the basics of conducting such an interview. I will preface this section by encouraging anyone in the fire service who has to take disciplinary action against an individual that goes beyond a written reprimand to consult with a governing body and/or seek legal advice before doing so.

Here are the basic components of a subordinate interview as it would occur within the fire service in a simple format.

- 1. Gather facts.** Review all pertinent information (including the personnel files of all individuals who are involved or who witnessed the incident at hand; also review incident reports if necessary).
- 2. Get it in writing.** Have those who are involved provide written reports of what occurred and why. This includes third-party witnesses.
- 3. Schedule a meeting.** If you suspect that disciplinary action will be necessary, the individual(s) should be provided with the option of having union representation.
- 4. Conduct the meeting.** Begin by putting the firefighter at ease. State the purpose of the meeting. Discuss positives about the individual before stating the problem at hand. When you do discuss the problem, use facts to support the reason this was brought to your attention, and explain why it's inappropriate behavior.
- 5. Get the individual's side of the story.** Use open-ended questions to gather facts. Probe for answers and show empathy.
- 6. Look for an underlying problem.** Don't discard the possibility that circumstances in the individual's personal life may be affecting his or her behavior, especially if behavior is uncharacteristic.
- 7. Determine which of the 3Us you are dealing with (unaware, unable, or unwilling).** This is the main reason for the interview. The actions you take will be determined by which of the 3Us the individual falls under. I will cover the 3Us thoroughly in the next section.
- 8. Discuss progressive discipline (1. verbal reprimand, 2. written reprimand, 3. suspension, 4. fines, and 5. termination).** Any time you take disciplinary action, you should explain what the next step may be if another issue arises.

9. Develop a solution together and implement it. You will achieve better results if the individual feels like he or she is playing an active role in determining what actions can be taken to correct the situation. When discussing solutions, take training (NFPA, organizational procedures, sensitivity training, specific training) and counseling (employee assistance programs, critical incident stress debriefing, etc.) into consideration.

10. Summarize. Recap the key points and the solution to ensure clarity.

11. Set a follow-up meeting. Stress that improvements need to be made within the specified time frame. Whenever appropriate, a strong leader will also ensure that what occurred in the meeting will remain confidential and that you have an open-door policy if the individual needs to discuss related issues.

12. Inform the individual of the appeal process. Discuss due process if the individual feels the actions taken to correct the situation are too harsh.

13. Close on positive note.

14. Document and report. Document in writing what occurred in the meeting and inform your superior of such.

15. Monitor and evaluate the individual's progress until the next meeting.

That is a brief overview of the subordinate interview process that is often followed in the fire service. As discussed in step 7, the main reason for the meeting is to determine which of the 3Us you are dealing with.

THE 3US

This section is about helping you ascertain whether the problem is serious.

The goal of a fact-finding interview is to determine what the problem is and attempt to develop a solution. This can only be accomplished after concluding if the individual is unaware, unable, or unwilling (otherwise known as the 3Us). If you fail to make this determination, whether informally or formally, you will not be able to take the appropriate corrective actions.

Here is a brief description of the 3Us:

- **Unaware.** Not aware or not conscious of what is going on.
- **Unable.** Lacking mental or physical capability or efficiency; incompetent.
- **Unwilling.** Boldly resisting authority or having a defiant attitude (insubordinate).

Consider it your job, as a leader, to determine if the individual is unaware that there is a problem, unable to fix it, or unwilling to fix it.

As you gather facts, you should begin contemplating your course of action. You can do this by thinking:

- If he or she is *unaware*, I will . . .
- If he or she is *unable*, I will . . .
- If he or she is *unwilling*, I will . . .

After determining which category the subordinate falls into, implement the appropriate solution. As previously mentioned, within the fire service, the solution may include some form of training, counseling, and/or a variety of other possibilities, all depending on the issue(s) at hand. Here's an illustration of how to deal with each of the 3Us individually. Consider the following example.

A third-year firefighter has been displaying uncharacteristic behavior. He is considered to be an ambitious and enthusiastic firefighter; however, over the past few weeks he has been repeatedly showing up late for work, performing below standard, and complaining frequently about various issues in the firehouse and on the fireground. After receiving complaints from other firefighters, you bring the firefighter into your office to speak with him about the way he has been acting. You begin to ask the right questions and probe for answers.

Depending on the response(s) you receive, you should be able to determine which of the 3Us you are dealing with. *Note:* Although these are serious issues, this is an informal fact-finding interview, and the information you discover during this process may lead to a serious underlying problem that will require you to take firm and immediate action.

If he is *unaware* of his actions, perhaps the talk will be enough for him to take the appropriate corrective actions. You should still schedule some form of training, such as reviewing any related policies and procedures the individual may be violating. You should also discuss what you expect from the individual and have him acknowledge it, so there is no misunderstanding. The key word here is *awareness*. If the problem persists, you will no longer be dealing with a person who is unaware. You will now have to address the issue based on the

understanding that the individual is either unable or unwilling to correct the situation. After a meeting of this nature, be sure to document the incident for your records.

If he is *unable* to change his actions, you have a more serious situation on your hands. This individual will be showing signs of incompetence. It is tough to generalize how to deal with this situation, but there are some basic steps you should begin taking. First, the actions outlined in the previous paragraph must be repeated to ensure the person is, in fact, aware of what is expected of him. If it becomes clear that he is unable to fix the problem(s), or if this is a repeat offense, you will have to make your superior(s) aware of the situation. Again, your organization's policies and procedures should be followed at this point, but be sure to document the actions you have taken so far. You may have to refer to your notes at a later date. Be sensitive to the possibility that the person may be dealing with a personal issue that is leading to his inability to function at an acceptable level. If this is the case, private counseling may be the answer. Either way, if this is a repeat offense, you should have the individual write a special report explaining what is happening.

If he is *unwilling* to change his actions, more drastic measures must be taken. In this scenario, it is assumed that you have already ruled out the possibility that the individual is *unaware* or *unable*. You are now dealing with someone who is boldly resisting authority or who has a defiant attitude. This person is insubordinate, and the situation must be immediately bumped up the chain of command. There may not be much you can do to a person who complains, but there are definite actions a department will have to take when a person consistently shows up late for work or otherwise performs below an acceptable standard. Once again, your organization's policies and procedures should be followed, and your actions should be documented. Your report, along with the special report completed by the individual, should be immediately sent to your superior. Whenever you bring an individual into your office to address issues of concern, and it becomes obvious the individual is at fault, disciplinary action is necessary. Don't be fooled into thinking that this always mean you have to "drop a hammer." This simply means that the five steps of progressive discipline should be followed. They are, in order: verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension, fines, and termination.

If, in fact, the issue at hand requires more than "a talk" with the individual in question, the appropriate solution should be determined by the head of your organization and only after proper counsel.

CRITIQUING OTHERS

As with any profession, there will be times when a firefighter will perform at an unacceptable level. This can occur in the firehouse or out in the public's eyes (which in many ways, is far worse). When these incidents are witnessed and/or brought to your attention, they must be addressed. The majority of the time, constructive criticism will be needed. Critiquing, when done correctly, falls under the same category as constructive criticism. Many times, critiquing the actions of an entire crew on the training ground will benefit an entire team. In this instance, it's wise to remember that you are simply trying to fine-tune the overall performance of the team. However, in order to skillfully critique an individual, you should understand that, unlike praise, which has a greater effect when done in front of others, critiquing should be done privately. If it is a serious matter, firefighters sometimes want some form of support (such as a union representative or a senior firefighter) in the room. If that's the case, they are entitled to have all the support they want. Otherwise, the correct action to take is to meet with the individual one-on-one. After you choose a private setting, use the following proven format that is used both in the fire service as well as corporate America.

Jury Awards \$31.5M to Family of Fallen Sterling, IL, Firefighter

Charlene Bielema

A Whiteside County jury has awarded \$31.5 million to the widow and two young daughters of a Sterling firefighter killed in the line of duty four years ago.

The verdict in favor of Brittney Ramos, suing in connection with the December 2021 death of her husband, Lt. Garrett Ramos, found that former Rock Falls Fire Chief Cris Bouwens and Rock Falls Fire Chief Ken Wolf, who was a deputy chief at the time of the fire, were each 50% to blame for Ramos' death. The city of Rock Falls also was a defendant in the case.

Ramos, who had been fighting the fire from inside the burning home, was heading out of the home to get his air supply replenished when he fell through a hole in the floor and into the basement about midnight Dec. 4, about an hour after the fire began.

Brittney Ramos filed a civil lawsuit in December 2022, claiming Bauwens and Wolf, who was the accountability officer at the scene, showed a willful and wanton disregard that caused her husband's death. The city of Rock Falls, Bouwens, and Wolf countered that Ramos was partially responsible for missteps that contributed to his own death. Defense attorney Michael Kujawa said Ramos did not maintain crew integrity because he was not with his firefighting partner at the time he fell, and that he should have left the home sooner to get air, as other firefighters had. Kujawa also questioned why Ramos did not provide his name, location, or problem when making the mayday call.

Fire Chief's Wife Allegedly Flashed 14-Year-Old Volunteer Firefighter— And Said She Wanted To Have Sex When He Turned 18

Patrick Reilly

A fire chief's wife allegedly flashed her boobs and privates at a 14-year-old junior firefighter — and told him she wanted them to have sex when he turned 18, according to police.

Nathan Turner, the then-chief of Fair Oaks Volunteer Fire Department in Leet Township, Pennsylvania, was busted alongside his wife, Stephanie Ann Turner, after investigators found disturbing text messages they shared about their inappropriate behavior, according to court documents obtained by WPXI. *The boy, a volunteer junior firefighter*, had treated the chief and his wife like parents — until the wife started hitting on him and discussing hopes they'd eventually have sex, according to the documents.

She also once walked around topless when the boy visited their Leet home — and even yanked down her pants and flashed her privates, according to court documents that said she joked about it with her hubby.

"You literally took your pants off in front of him," the fire chief texted his wife last summer, according to court documents obtained by WPXI. "Yes, I did," she allegedly admitted.

The incriminating texts were allegedly found when Nathan Turner's phone was seized as part of the investigation of a theft from the Sewickley Water Authority, where he worked before the fire department. *The Turners were both charged with corruption of minors, unlawful contact with a minor, indecent exposure, harassment, open lewdness and criminal conspiracy.*

The fire department said it has "no comment" regarding the allegations, which it described as "concerning and serious." "Mr. Turner and his wife are no longer associated with the department and no longer participate in any capacity with the department," the Fair Oaks Volunteer Fire Department said in a statement.

"Mr. Turner resigned as Chief in August of 2025 and has not participated in any capacity in the department since his resignation."

For information only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. The opinions expressed are the opinions of the individual author at the time the facts were presented and based on the law then applicable. The information contained in these opinions is not guaranteed to be up to date. The information provided is not legal advice. Since legal advice must be tailored to the specific circumstances of each case, and laws are constantly changing, nothing on this site should be used as a substitute for the advice of competent legal counsel. The authors assume no responsibility to any person who relies on information contained herein and disclaim all liability in respect to such information. You should not act upon information in this publication without seeking professional counsel from an attorney admitted to practice in your jurisdiction.

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

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Columbia (SC) Pumper Driver Cited After Deadly Crash

A Columbia (SC) firefighter has been issued a traffic ticket after the pumper he was driving hit a car in July, killing the driver and injuring her passenger, postandcourier.com reported.

Bryan Richardson, an engineer with the fire department, was charged Oct. 28, 2025, with driving at a speed greater than is reasonable under conditions, according to Richland County court records, the report said.

The pumper and a Nissan Sentra collided on July 12, 2025. The pumper was traveling 69 mph in a 40 mph speed limit zone and against the flow of traffic on Two Notch Road, according to a South Carolina Highway Patrol investigation.

The car driver, Carolyn “Cee Cee” Collins, 64, died at the scene, according to the report. Her passenger, Leitha Williams, was taken to a hospital with suspected serious injuries. The crash occurred while Richardson and four other firefighters were responding to a structure fire, with emergency lights and sirens activated, in northeast Columbia, according to the South Carolina Highway Patrol investigation.

Senator Gallivan Presents NYS Senate Liberty Medal to Clarence Teenager

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan, (R-C, Elma) awarded the New York State Senate Liberty Medal to Brody Kaufman, a student at Clarence High School, credited with saving a man from drowning while on vacation in Florida. The medal presentation took place at Harris Hill Volunteer Fire Co., where Kaufman is also a junior volunteer firefighter.

Back in April, Kaufman was on vacation in the Florida Keys with his family when he noticed a kayaker had flipped over in the water and was being swept away by a powerful current. With the help of others, Kaufman used ropes from a nearby fisherman to secure the kayaker and drag him to safety. Once on shore, emergency crews arrived to treat the man.

“Brody’s quick and selfless actions were nothing short of heroic,” Senator Gallivan said. “His willingness to help others prevented what could have been a real tragedy. I thank Brody for his bravery and leadership. I am proud to recognize him for his actions.”

Kaufman credited his firefighting training for knowing what to do and how to respond in an emergency.

The Liberty Medal is one of the highest civilian honors that a New York resident can receive and is awarded to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts and achievements on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers.

IL Department Takes Delivery of New Apparatus in 111 Days

Jonathan Miller

The Sangamon Valley Fire Protection District in Fisher, Illinois, recently introduced its new Engine 555, also known as “Triple Nickel,” a rig it received in 111 days, according to a [Facebook post](#) by US Fire Apparatus.

“Congratulations to Sangamon Valley Fire Protection District on the purchase of its new commercial tanker from US Fire Apparatus,” the post said. “From signing of contract to delivery, this order took only 111 DAYS!”

Engine 555 fills two needs at once, a pumper and a tender, Sangamon Valley FPD said in a [Facebook post](#).

The pumper-tender has a 1,500-gallon-per-minute (gpm) pump and a 3,000 gallon water tank.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

For All You Fire Investigators

Kia and Hyundai are recalling thousands of vehicles in the U.S. because of an issue that could cause fuel tanks to melt. The recalls affect approximately 250,547 Kia K5 sedans from model years 2021–2024 and 85,043 Hyundai Sonata vehicles from model years 2020–2023, all equipped with 1.6-liter turbocharged engines, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) said in notices issued this week. Both automakers report the issue stems from a purge control system check valve that can wear out over time, causing air to become pressurized in the fuel tank, according to the NHTSA.

State Audit Faults Fire District For Lacking Transparency For Major Purchases

Todd Bender, Mid Hudson News

An audit of procurement procedures for the Hyde Park Fire and Water District indicates the district lacks transparency and did not purchase large assets cost-effectively and transparently, according to the New York State Comptroller’s Office. The report covers purchases, including a property acquisition, between June 2021 and February 2024.

The District provides fire protection services within a portion of the Town of Hyde Park, located in Dutchess County. The five-member Board, elected by the public, governs the District and is responsible for its overall financial management.

The Chairman of the Board, Ray Davis, also serves as the Treasurer of the Department. Davis won the town-wide election earlier this month to become the town's next Highway Superintendent. The District Secretary assists the Board with the District's day-to-day operations and serves as the Board-appointed purchasing agent. The district has long been considered secretive by many residents in town, who point to the district's voting rules. The Hyde Park Fire and Water District only allows property owners within the district to vote on the district budget and candidates seeking a seat on the board. Individuals who reside in rental properties in the district are prohibited from voting.

KEY FINDINGS BY THE COMPTROLLER

The Board did not:

- Seek competition when entering into a contract to purchase a ladder truck for \$1.9 million or maintain written support to demonstrate that the District properly used an exception to the competitive bidding requirements set forth in General Municipal Law (GML), Section 103(16) and the District's procurement policy (Policy).
- Obtain quotes when purchasing six goods and services totaling \$41,316 and did not request proposals for one professional service contract totaling \$19,043, as required by the Policy.

Also, one Trustee did not publicly disclose, in writing, his interest in a contract when the District purchased property from a separately incorporated Fire Department (Department) for \$160,000. The property, with a structure is located immediately to the north of the firehouse on Albany Post Road, and the district is seeking tenants looking for space to rent.

Board Chairman Ray Davis responded in writing to the audit, making a minor clarification to the auditor's findings regarding the ladder truck purchase. "Aside from this point of clarification," Davis wrote, "the Board and the District agree with the findings presented in the draft audit and are committed to working collaboratively to implement the necessary corrective actions."

Despite the fact that NYS OSC dislikes the use of Sourcewell...

The NYS Contract reporter lists Sourcewell as a four-year contractor for Information Technology – Consulting & other services administrative and technical, consulting and other services for all New York State Counties. The prohibition by OSC and Sourcewell needs to be clarified and settled once and for all.

Concan Texas Fire Department Station Burns

The Concan Fire Department caught fire after "a spark from welding" ignited from inside the station.

The department says they've been finishing up construction work and during that process, a spark from welding ignited a "small fire" NOT! within the station.

No injuries were reported as officials say the fire was limited to their property only and crews were able to contain the blaze quickly. The metal building and equipment suffered extensive damage.

The responding departments included Uvalde FD, Sabinal FD, Knippa FD, Utopia FD and Uvalde EMS. **[EDITORS NOTE; WHAT NO FIRE WATCH POSTED]**

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT



Does your fire or EMS department need more volunteers? The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is here to help! Use the FREE department portal from the NVFC's Make Me A Firefighter campaign to access tools and resources to help you find and keep volunteers.

Get started:

- Register for free at portal.nvfc.org.

- Post your volunteer opportunities so potential recruits can find and connect with your department at [MakeMeAFirefighter.org](https://www.makemeafirefighter.org).
- Customize recruitment materials with your department's details using the materials generator.
- Share your message with ready-to-use flyers, PSAs, social media content, and videos.
- Track your applicants and follow up with ease using the recruit tracking tool.

Plus, access additional resources to help with recruitment and retention, including:

- "What to Expect" Guide for the Families of New Recruits
- Volunteer Retention Research Report
- Volunteer Value Calculators
- Recruitment and Retention Guide
- Recruitment and Retention Online Training
- And Much More!

GET STARTED NOW AT THIS LINK:

<https://tracking.police1.com/t/9495565/187515077/7816037/1/1006865/?b44ed14b=YmY5NWQ4NzktNW RmOC00MWJkLTkzMDctNzg0Y2VhZTNjMzYy&x=1ee5e8f9>

****Firefighter Retention: If You Build It, They Will Come**

Andrew Hagenburg

Anyone who has spent any amount of time around the fire service or public safety has heard the terms "recruitment and retention." These topics are so crucial to building a successful fire service that federal grant funding is directly awarded to support recruitment and retention campaigns.

Often, thousands of dollars are poured into fire service recruitment efforts. Billboards, community job fairs, and high-budget social media campaigns are just a few examples of how departments dedicate resources to attracting new firefighters. A common misconception is that recruitment is only a challenge for the volunteer fire service, but this issue spans both career and volunteer departments. The decline in eager, entry-level firefighters leads many of us who love the job to wonder: who *wouldn't* want the self-proclaimed best job on earth?!

Recruitment will always be a critical component of building a successful fire service. Bringing compassionate, hardworking, and dedicated individuals is the backbone of any thriving organization, regardless of the industry. But too often, we forget that recruitment and retention is a two-step process—and retention frequently takes a back seat.

In 2025, retaining quality firefighters is just as important—if not more important—than recruiting new ones.

Decision makers in fire service organizations have more tools at their fingertips than they may realize when it comes to retaining members. But to truly succeed, they must take an outside-the-box approach.

Retention doesn't always require a financial investment. In many cases, it simply requires an investment in your people. If we shift our mindset to prioritize retention first, recruitment often follows without any additional effort.

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

Retention is a direct result of strong, intentional leadership. A fire chief's ability to build an environment that people want to be a part of—while also meeting the often-unrealistic expectations of city hall—is a balancing act that few have perfected. But when it happens, success is evident across the board.

So, what do firefighters want? The answer is often simpler than expected: **firefighters want to be firefighters.**

It really can be that simple—build an organization that your members want to be part of, and you'll naturally build an organization that others are drawn to. When people feel valued, supported, and connected to the mission, retention follows, and recruitment becomes easier.

The solution to "letting firefighters be firefighters" isn't as complicated as it might seem. Some may hear that phrase and immediately ask: How is that possible in today's fire service? With the decline in fires, the increase in administrative demands, and in many departments the growing responsibility of EMS—how do we preserve the core identity of being a firefighter?

Training is—and will forever be—the backbone of the fire service. We must develop training programs that keep our members *engaged, informed, and sharp*, but we must do so in a way that keeps them bought in.

Of course, there are boxes we must check when it comes to training. Annual qualifications, continuing education, and mandatory refreshers will always be a part of the job. But our training cannot stop at simply “checking the box.” *Building a culture where training feels less like a chore and more like a welcomed, meaningful part of the day is one of the simplest ways to let firefighters be firefighters.*

THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

Yes, training in the firehouse is crucial to maintaining competency—but we also need to think beyond the four walls of the station. Too often, we hear firefighters talk about being denied access to outside training opportunities, despite the fire service being rich with them.

The network of fire service education is vast—local training academies, regional conferences, private instructors, and online platforms offer a nearly endless stream of opportunities to grow and improve.

Sure, funding is always a factor. But outside of cost—what’s the real reason we’re telling firefighters no? If we want them to be better, to feel like firefighters, and to stay engaged, we must give them the chance to grow.

The next time you attend a training seminar or conference, take a look around—notice how many guys and girls are there on their own dime because they were told “no” by their administration.

Let that sink in: firefighters who love the job so much, they’re willing to pay out of pocket just to get better at it. That level of passion and commitment is rare—and any administrator should be doing everything in their power not just to retain those members, but to reproduce them. Invest in your firefighters. Let firefighters be firefighters.

CHANGE AND CULTURE

They say the only thing firefighters like less than the way it is... is change.

But the truth is, the fire service is always changing. *Our tactics evolve, our equipment improves, our call volume shifts—and so must our culture. If we want to solve the recruitment and retention crisis, it starts with changing the way we lead, the way we train, and the way we support our people.*

This isn’t about lowering standards or reinventing the wheel. It’s about returning to what made us fall in love with the job in the first place—and protecting that fire. Firefighters want to be challenged. They want to learn. They want to make a difference. And they want to do it in a place where they feel valued, respected, and heard.

The solution won’t come from a billboard or a social media ad. It’ll come from inside the firehouse—from the kitchen table, the training ground, and the conversations between company officers and their crews. If you build the right culture, they will come. And more importantly, they will stay.

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH & SAFETY; PROTECTING OUR OWN

70

LINE OF DUTY FIREFIGHTER DEATHS FOR 2025

In 2024 we experienced 64 LODDs reported nationally.!

Overall, 2024 was one of the safest years on record for U.S. firefighters with 64 on-duty deaths recorded, down from 74 in 2023 and reflecting a steady decline in annual fatalities in recent decades since a high of 174 in 1978. (The trend calculations don’t include the 340 firefighters who died in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.)

DOES’NT HAVE TO BE A FATALITY-JUST A DIBILITATING INJURY, YOU JUST NEVER KNOW!

- A first responder was paralyzed in a dunk tank accident at a community picnic in Soudan, Minnesota, this past summer. Tower Ambulance Director Dena Suihkonen was taking a shift in a dunk tank fundraiser when the seat malfunctioned, flinging her backwards. The fall severed her spinal cord, leaving her paralyzed.

- Gaston County, Florida EMS reports paramedic Mary Jolly, 27, died at a Florida hospital was fatally injured when she was stopped to help at a multi-vehicle crash in Florida, according to investigators. Jolly was in the center lane offering assistance when she was hit by a vehicle, driven by a 30-year-old man from Coronado, Florida, officials said.
- Dana Turner, a wildland firefighter who works as a supervisor at the South Fork Forest Camp in the Tillamook State Forest, was working with her crew, cutting down a 70-foot Noble fir, when it twisted, landing on her leg. Turner was life-flighted from the site, and underwent surgery. She's expected to be out of the hospital in a few days.
- A Northampton fire captain, who suffered a cardiac issue following a swim, died earlier this month. Capt. Michael Boone, 57, collapsed Oct. 25, after completing a 200-yard swim during a water rescue course.

FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK

- On November 14th an Ellenboro (North Carolina) Firefighter was seriously hurt while responding to a structure fire. The rig driver tried to avoid a deer in the road and rolled over around 0330 hours. The driver was airlifted to a hospital in Spartanburg and is in serious but stable condition. No other vehicles were involved
- On November 15th members of the Weathersfield and Claremont Vermont fire departments were driving south on Weathersfield Center Road for an event at the town's Center Church when the ladder truck's front right tire caught a soft shoulder on the road's edge. The driver attempted to correct the vehicle's course, but the shoulder couldn't bear the truck's weight. The truck left the roadway and came to rest in a wooded area where it remained until it was recovered. The vehicle's occupants were wearing seat belts, and no one was injured in the accident.
- On the evening of November 15th around 7:10 p.m., a 2012 International Firetruck carrying two occupants was traveling west in Norris, Anderson County, Tennessee, when it failed to maintain its lane and veered off the roadway to the right. The vehicle then swerved back onto the road, crossed it, and rolled over, coming to an uncontrolled final rest on the left side of the roadway. The 50-year-old driver, who was not wearing a seat belt, sustained injuries, while the passenger, who was wearing a seat belt, was uninjured.
- A Summitville Volunteer Fire Department pumper crashed into a telephone pole. The firefighters were returning from a call when the rig hydroplaned on a wet road, struck a car and slid into the utility pole. No injuries were reported in the crash , but the pumper incurred severe damage.

****Collapse Zone, Personnel Accountability Cited in Binghamton, NY, Firefighter LODD**

Susan Nicol

Personnel accountability, strategy and tactical issues as well as dangers of vacant buildings were among factors that led to the death of Binghamton firefighter earlier this year, [NIOSH](#) investigators have determined. Binghamton Firefighter John Gaudet, 40, was hit and killed by debris when walls collapsed at an arson fire on Feb. 12.

While responding, officers noted that there was a warning on dispatch software that the two structures had been deemed unsafe following a fire prevention bureau inspection. Firefighters were alerted not to enter. An exterior attack was launched. When the walls collapsed, Gaudet and two other firefighters were struck by debris.

While the other firefighters were injured, Gaudet was heavily trapped under the concrete.

Following interviews with firefighters at the incident, investigators made the following recommendations:

- Establish and enforce collapse zones when a defensive strategy begins.
- Educate fire officers and firefighters in building performance under fire conditions and the potential for structural collapse.
- Establish divisions/groups with a supervisor or use multiple safety officers for fireground management and risk assessment at geographically complex scenes, as early in the incident as possible.
- Ensure a rapid intervention team/crew is dedicated, assigned, and in place during structural

firefighting operations to immediately respond to a firefighter emergency.

- Use a personnel accountability system to identify the location and function of all operating personnel.

They also said local, state, and federal officials should ensure the delegated zoning or code enforcement authority, law enforcement agency, and fire department collaborate to proactively remediate vacant and abandoned buildings to reduce arson.

FIRE APPARATUS

****Define Emergency Speed First!**

Bill Adams

Tankers/tenders account for many of the apparatus crashes that occur. Although there are a variety of reasons for the incidents, some people have suggested that they should not “respond lights and sirens.” This month, we asked Bill Adams and Ricky Riley, *“Should tankers/tenders be driven at emergency speed?”*

Recent fire apparatus accidents including those involving tankers/tenders are no doubt the impetus for this question. I thought this could be easily answered: “Depending on road conditions and weather, common sense should be used when driving any emergency vehicle including tenders/ tankers at emergency speeds.”

Common sense, aka good judgment, is hard to define. Exercising good judgment is hard to prove in scenarios resulting in damage, disciplinary action, or litigation. Additionally, there is no single definition for the term emergency speed.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1900, *Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Vehicles, Automotive Fire Apparatus, Wildland Fire Apparatus, and Automotive Ambulances*, in Chapter 3 Definitions, Section 3.3.176 Mobile Water Supply Apparatus (Tanker, Tender) defines this apparatus as: “A vehicle designed primarily for transporting (pickup, transporting, and delivering) water to fire emergency scenes to be applied by other vehicles or pumping equipment.” Obscuring the issue is that the NFPA does not establish the requirements for one.

Accidents, more appropriately called incidents, are not solely caused by excessive speed. Besides operator error, there could be sudden unforeseeable mechanical issues with the vehicle, unexpected failure of the roadway, or other motorists’ actions. All three can affect the emergency vehicle operator’s reaction.

TRAINING

Emergency vehicle operator (aka chauffeur and driver) error can be attributed to the lack of common sense, negligence, or improper or lack of training. Proper training is essential, and I defer to fellow writer Ricky Riley, whose byline includes being president of Training Traditions, LLC. It is also addressed in Chapter 10 of the former NFPA 1002, *Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator*, which was recently incorporated into NFPA 1010, *Standard on Professional Qualifications for Firefighters*.

LIABILITY EXPOSURE

I’ll address the question from the perspective of NFPA 1900. Why? *If an accident or incident occurs where liability and legal charges are possible, the fire department may find itself defending—under oath—the apparatus involved. Did you purchase the proper apparatus?*

Visualize after an incident with your apparatus operator being questioned by law enforcement or testifying in court and being asked questions such as the following: Do you know what a tanker/tender is? Is there a maximum amount of water it should be carrying? What was your vehicle classified as? Is there a maximum speed your vehicle is limited to? Was your vehicle designed to be operated off-road? Is there a difference in road handling characteristics between oval, semielliptical, and square water tanks? Do you know what the fire service rating means on the tires on your vehicle? Common sense or a lack thereof might not help you.

NFPA 1900

The following are my interpretations of NFPA 1900. Remember, it is the written word that counts.

- NFPA 1900 Table 8.1 Requirements by Apparatus Type specifies a minimum 1,000-gallon tank capacity (including all suppression liquids such as foam and water) on mobile water supply apparatus.

- NFPA 1900 does not mandate specific tank configurations for “large” water tanks on mobile water supply apparatus. Although it does require specific accoutrements for tanks larger than 1,000 gallons, it does not mandate extraordinary baffling for tanks that size.
- *NFPA 1900’s only restriction on speed for all apparatus, including mobile water supply apparatus, is based on gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). Note it is for the rating and not the actual weight—laden or unladen.*
- NFPA 1900 does not address “emergency speed.”
- Bear in mind NFPA 1900 is an accepted voluntary nationwide consensus standard, unless your department or its governing political subdivision has adopted it as law. Have they?

SPEED RESTRICTIONS

- *NFPA 1900 Chapter 7 under Highway Performance, Section 7.16.2* says: “The maximum top speed for any fire apparatus with a GVWR over 33,000 lb (15,000 kg) shall not exceed either 68 mph (109 km/hr) or the manufacturer’s maximum fire service speed for the tires installed on the apparatus, whichever is lower.”*
- NFPA 1900 Chapter 7 under Highway Performance, Section 7.16.3 says: “If the combined water tank and foam agent tank capacities on the fire apparatus exceed 1,250 gal (4732 L), or the GVWR of the vehicle is over 50,000 lbs (22,680 kg), the maximum top speed of the apparatus shall not exceed either 60 mph (95 km/hr) or the manufacturer’s maximum fire service speed for the tires installed on the apparatus, whichever is lower.”
- NFPA 1900 Annex A, Section A.7.16.2, says: “Special fire service tire ratings could apply that are different from the sidewall rating on the tire. The purchaser might want to consider the tire manufacturer’s rating documentation. Fire service ratings are based on the assumption that the truck will never drive at this speed for more than 50 miles (80 km) (1 hour for some manufacturers) without stopping to cool the tires. If longer responses or trips are anticipated, fire service ratings should not be used.”
- NFPA 1900 Chapter 3 Definitions, Section 3.3.90 Emergency Vehicle, defines one as: “A fire apparatus or other vehicle that is permitted by law to call for the right-of-way while responding to an incident affecting the public safety and to block the public road while at the scene of such an incident.”

I have two observations from the Section 3.3.90 definition. First: calling for the right-of-way means you are asking for the right-of-way. Be prepared to react if other motorists at their own peril decide not to grant it. The second is that calling for the right-of-way does not say the speed limit can be exceeded to achieve it. Unless there are local laws or established written protocols on exceeding posted speed limits for emergency vehicles, the operator is on his own.

LOOK OUTSIDE THE BOX

There are commercial entities using all sizes of tankers that cart liquids (fuels, milk, water, LNG, etc.) all over the country. Do they have extraordinary requirements for baffles on large-capacity tanks? Do they have limitations on speeds? On a semirelated subject, are local delivery vehicles carrying, as an example, 1,000 gallons of product prohibited by law or refusing to make deliveries on specific roads (dirt, gravel, single lane, etc.) in your response district that you regularly send fire trucks over all the time?

I asked friend Sarah Atchison, president and CEO of Midwest Fire, if she could offer any insight on how fast tenders/tankers should be driven. She had Newt Johnson, an account representative at Midwest, respond. He says, “I believe it really depends on the situation. We sell tankers to departments that operate on narrow two-lane backroads with sharp curves and steep grades as well as to departments responsible for rural interstate coverage where they may need to drive a 3,000-gallon tanker 20 miles or more in one direction. In my opinion, there’s no single speed or standard that applies universally to every department. Ultimately, it’s the responsibility of each department to provide proper training and education for their members. While everyone wants to arrive as quickly as possible, the priority should always be arriving safely. In situations where every second counts, safety must still come first. Department members driving emergency vehicles while not on a call are required to have the proper license for that type of vehicle.”

Johnson’s response is interesting. I believe there are some federal and state requirements for specific criteria (endorsements) for commercial driver licenses (CDLs) when driving certain tanker-type vehicles. Some fire

departments believe they are immune from such requirements. Does your state require CDLs for fire apparatus drivers? Should it? Johnson says, “The priority should always be arriving safely.” ?

FIRE STATIONS

Getting the Most Out of Your Fire Station Tour for Design Ideas

David B. Sherland

Planning a fire station upgrade or new build requires careful goal setting, detailed scope definition, and inclusive participation. The content advocates for organized station tours, early professional involvement, and continuous alignment with operational priorities to ensure a successful, sustainable project that benefits firefighters and the community.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Use fire station tours to identify operational pain points, gather inspiration, and assess new technologies or firehouse design features.
- Discuss and prepare detailed checklists and collaborate with fire station design professionals to ensure practical and cost-effective solutions.
- Focus on the impact of design plans and how it impacts firefighter safety, morale, and daily operations to create a fire station that truly meets a department's needs.

Embarking on a station renovation or new construction project is one of the most significant decisions a fire department can make. Whether you're planning a simple HVAC upgrade, an addition to your existing facility, or an entirely new fire station, preparation is key. Touring other stations, including those of neighboring departments, is a vital part of that process.

However, walking through a facility without clear goals can lead to missed opportunities. The key to a productive station tour is knowing what you're looking for, involving the right people, and leveraging the expertise of your design professionals to help shape your vision into a practical, efficient, and achievable project.

Although it may appear straightforward, recording your objectives at the outset and adhering to them throughout the process is among the most effective strategies for achieving success.

THE WHY: ESTABLISH YOUR PROJECT GOALS

Before touring another firehouse or reviewing your own, clearly define why you're considering a construction project. What problems are you solving? What day-to-day activities or needs are going unmet in your current station?

Your project goals should serve as a compass throughout the design process, and they shouldn't be complicated. They need to be clear and, most importantly, achievable. Examples include enhancing firefighter safety, strengthening cross-contamination controls, promoting gender equity, addressing sleep deprivation and supporting mental health and well-being, expanding equipment storage, or improving ventilation issues. A recent project with a fire department in Connecticut illustrates how goal setting can direct a project's development. Before starting the design process, the department created a detailed document outlining their goals, which included member feedback. They synthesized this into a summary of project goals for sustainability, privacy and wellness.

This thorough approach not only enabled the design professionals to fully grasp the department's priorities, but also kept all stakeholders aligned as the project progressed. That early investment of time and effort yielded substantial benefits throughout the entire design and construction process.

THE WHAT: DEFINE THE SCOPE AND PRACTICAL NEEDS

Once you've clarified why you're doing the project, the next step is determining what it will entail. What is the refined scope of the project? How will the work affect ongoing fire operations or minimize disruptions in service?

This is where touring your own facility becomes invaluable. Walk through your existing station and identify what's working and what isn't. What are common pain points? What kinds of adaptations have been made that could be considered for a more permanent solution?

Visiting recently renovated stations in your area can also provide insight. Ask neighboring departments what they've learned, including successes and challenges. What technologies are they using? How are they utilizing new decontamination zones? Are new systems, like bi-fold doors or decontamination features, meeting expectations?

Even if another department's layout doesn't align perfectly with your vision, these visits can provide inspiration, practical feedback, and a better understanding of what's realistic for your project.

THE WHO: INVOLVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE

No one knows your station's strengths and shortcomings better than your active members. Make sure every voice is heard, from the most seasoned firefighter to the newest recruit.

Gathering broad feedback ensures your design truly supports day-to-day operations. Consider forming a project committee made up of a mix of department members and leadership. This group can act as "ambassadors" during station tours and help represent the department's diverse needs and perspectives.

Depending on your department you may also find it valuable to have representatives from the community or from the local municipalities. This can be invaluable not only for feedback on the project but also for building support for the project and potential referendums.

It's also crucial to engage your design professionals early. Designers can guide your tours by pointing out design elements you may not have considered. They can also help you identify solutions that balance functionality, cost, and future growth.

THE HOW: PREPARE, ORGANIZE, AND COLLABORATE

Before attending or hosting a station tour, do your homework. Preparation turns a casual walkthrough into a focused, information-gathering session.

Create a checklist ahead of time that includes must-have features, design elements to avoid, questions to ask neighboring departments, and operational priorities. Share these goals and notes with your design team so they can use that information to help you connect design ideas to practical solutions.

It's key to remember these tours are not just about seeing buildings. It's about understanding how design impacts operations, safety, and morale. Even if a particular station doesn't appear to meet your design needs, each tour can provide valuable teaching moments.

CONCLUSION

Whether it be an upgrade, addition, or entirely new facility, each fire station project is a major milestone for any department. The decisions made during planning will create a lasting impact on your firefighters and operations.

By clearly defining your objectives, involving your members, working closely with design professionals, and thoughtfully organizing station tours, you begin to lay the groundwork for a project guided by clear priorities and shared vision. Remember, even if you end up with a visually impressive new station or acquire top-of-the-line equipment or technologies, it won't truly be a win if it doesn't serve the real needs of your department and community.

When done right, these early efforts transform a simple walkthrough into one of the most valuable tools in building a station that truly supports the people who serve within it.

THE CHANGING FIRE SERVICE

Leadership elected for new Clearfield County fire department

Come the new year, two communities in Central Pennsylvania are set to merge.

Sandy Township and DuBois will be merging in more ways than one, but the fire departments are dotting the i's and crossing the t's, making sure everything is done. Monday evening, they elected members to the leadership roles for the new City of DuBois Fire Department.

Members of all nine fire stations voted on who they wanted to lead the department. They voted for a chief, two deputies, and two assistants.

The newly elected chief is Joe Mitchell. According to the DuBois Fire Department, Mitchell joined the department in 2001. He served as captain, lieutenant and was voted in as second assistant chief.

Deputy one is Ricky Johnson, Deputy two is Leo Brooks, Assistant one will be Jon Uren, and Steve Dunlap will be Assistant two.

Mitchell says they will be working with outgoing chiefs to establish procedures into the new year and working to unify all of the fire stations.

Worth another look, thinking outside the box!!

*****FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT AFFECTED BY COSTLY HOUSING***

Peter Sloniewsky

In recent years, both recruitment and retention of new firefighters have declined. According to the Firefighters' Association of the State of New York, membership has declined by about 40,000 firefighters across the state over the last 20 years. In Suffolk County, fire departments like Setauket and Hauppauge are feeling the squeeze, but not necessarily from lack of interest. Rather, *the high cost of living makes it less plausible for volunteer firefighters to stick around*. Both Setauket Fire Department Chief Charles Regulinski and Hauppauge Fire District Corresponding Secretary Louis Marcus said recruitment had been steady but still underwhelming.

"Recruitment for us has become a challenge over the last ten years or so," Marcus wrote to TBR. "It is becoming harder to recruit individuals who are raising a family and trying to make ends meet."

Even when volunteers are recruited, training is not only time- and cost-intensive but also does not always lead to retention.

"The training that new members receive from our department is provided weekly over the first year of service," Regulinski wrote. "If a new member leaves during this first year, we don't see a return on our time investment."

"Training and equipping a new firefighter is an expensive process," Marcus added. "It is always a loss for the department when we lose an active member, especially the younger ones."

In that, both departments cite housing affordability as the top obstacle to long-term volunteer service as costs have risen across Long Island.

"As long as our younger firefighters are living with their parents, we have a good retention record," Marcus wrote. "But once they move out, the cost of living makes it difficult."

"Especially in our fire district, a 'starter house' for a family can be more than \$600,000," Regulinski wrote. "Most younger members are forced to move away."

Both departments also acknowledge programs like the Length of Service Award Program, a deferred compensation plan for volunteer emergency service personnel designed to reward and retain volunteers by providing them with a supplemental retirement benefit based on their years of service. They also recognize the importance of local tax breaks and property tax credits for recruitment and retention.

"While very helpful, it does not change the fact that this area is so expensive," Marcus wrote.

Both firefighters do not view new proposals as enough to be effective. These include a county resolution to reserve 10% of workforce housing for volunteers.

"Most younger members are not thinking about retirement," Regulinski wrote. "They need money now to pay for food and housing. A system that allows fire districts to pay members a modest amount per call would help younger members with the financial stress they have now."

With that said, fire departments have stayed together through a real sense of civic service.

"There is a real pride among most of us at being able to serve the community," Marcus wrote. "There is nothing like the satisfaction of helping victims of a fire or an auto accident or saving the life of a heart attack victim."

"Most individuals that join the fire service are looking for a challenge and to learn new skills," Regulinski added. "They also have a strong sense of community and a desire to help others, even putting those needs before their own."

However, without affordable housing or stronger retention incentives, communities risk losing a vital public safety backbone despite that sense of civic duty.

East Prospect Fire Company

It is with deep regret that East Prospect Fire Company in East Prospect, PA, will cease to operate as a fire company at 1159PM on 12/31/2025. The department has provided 24/7 coverage for many years since it began in 1907. With fewer people willing to volunteer, rising costs, & decreased revenues we have been forced to make this very difficult decision. We wish to thank everyone who has faithfully supported us through the years. Arrangements are being put into place to ensure any calls received in East Prospect and the surrounding area will be handled by our mutual aid partners.

BUILDING CODE ISSUES AND REPORTED FIRE FATALITIES

The New ICC Code-NYS Edition will go into effect on December 31st 2025. The effect of the updated NYS Energy Code on residential occupancies is profound and will drive the cost of homes up extensively.

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	65
Last fire death 11/25/25 West Winfield, Herkimer Co., female 82	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	107
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	976
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/87
	#2 NY/65
	#3 IL /51
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2025: 1835	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
Week 48 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 38 lives PER WEEK.	
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?	

Notice from NYS Building Standards and Codes

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE: Except as provided below, the December 31, 2025 effective date remains unchanged for the 2025 Energy Code and Uniform Code.

Implementation and enforcement of the 2025 provisions of the Energy Code and Uniform Code that prohibit the installation of fossil-fuel equipment and building systems in new buildings, found at 19 NYCRR Section 1240.6 and Subpart 1229-2, have been suspended by Court Order and are neither effective nor enforceable. The Department of State will continue to monitor the case and will provide updates accordingly.

NYS Lawmakers, Rep. Stefanik Call For Full Repeal Of Electric Buildings Act At US Capital

Several Republican members of the New York State legislature stood alongside members of New York's Republican Congressional delegation at the U.S. Capital on Tuesday, calling on Governor Kathy Hochul to fully repeal the All-Electric Buildings Act.

Last week, the State paused the All-Electric Buildings Act as it's being challenged by trade groups in court.

At the same time, the delegation pushed for the new Republican-led "Energy Choice Act", which would prevent state and local governments from banning energy services based on the source of their energy. Congresswoman, and now New York Gubernatorial Candidate Elise Stefanik was joined by fellow New York House Republicans like Nick Langworthy, Mike Lawler and Claudia Tenney. NYS Assembly Minority Leader William Barclay also joined the group, with Capital Region Assemblymembers Mary Beth Walsh, Scott Bendett and Robert Smullen all in attendance.

"I also want to thank my colleagues from New York being here," Leader Barclay said. "It's a little depressing that we can't get the things done that need to be done in Albany because of one party rule that we have to come down here, but at least we have great leaders from New York here in Washington."

As she promoted the full repeal and the proposed legislation, Rep. Stefanik continued her critique of Governor Hochul's pause of the All-Electric Buildings Act, saying it was politically motivated.

"She puts a pause on this catastrophic policy until after the election to try to resuscitate her plummeting polling," Stefanik said. "She hopes voters wouldn't notice, but I will tell you, voters have noticed. This is very similar to what Kathy Hochul has done before in the last election cycle, when she put a pause on the congestion pricing, commuter tax, crushing hard working New Yorkers, crushing the working class. What does she do after Election Day? She screws New Yorkers and raises taxes. That's what she wants to do with this gas stove ban. But we are not going to let her, we do not need a politically cynical pause. We need a full repeal of this insane gas stove ban and since Kathy Hochul is incapable of showing leadership and continues pushing New York off the unaffordability cliff, New York House Republicans are joining with our colleagues, our Republicans in the State Assembly, to show leadership."

[EDITOR'S NOTE: THE BASE ISSUE IS THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD NOT BE LEGISLATING CODE STANDARDS THERE IS A VETTING PROCESS THAT THE ICC GOES THROUGH AND THE ICC ENERGY CODE COULD HAVE WORKED JUST FINE AS A PHASED APPROACH TO ENERGY SUFFICIENCY IN NEW YORK STATE.]

GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE

Loudoun County Virginia

From Loudoun County Fire and Rescue: The #LCFR Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) has determined yesterday's fire in the Ashburn District was accidental, caused by an unknown failure of a lithium-ion battery pack while actively charging. Damages are estimated at \$1,252,152.

NY Fire Chief Raises Concerns About Proposed Yard-Sized Battery Storage System

Tim Knauss, Syracuse.com

Syracuse's fire chief today told city councilors that the plans for a 10-megawatt battery storage system on East Brighton Avenue do not comply with the state fire code as the installation is currently proposed.

Chief Michael Monds said his department will continue to work with the developer to see if the battery system can be configured to meet safety requirements. For now, it does not, based on an informal review of the company's plan.

"We told them we're not in support of what was proposed already," Monds said during the Common Council meeting today. "As it sits, the proposal doesn't meet the fire code."

After the meeting, Monds said his main concern is that the installation would not be set back far enough from other structures considering the amount of flammable lithium-ion batteries it would have.

Renewable energy company New Leaf Energy is seeking a special permit to install the battery system, which would cover about 20,000 square feet at a lot that currently serves as occasional storage for dumpsters. The battery energy storage system would charge up at night, when demand for electricity is lowest, and feed the grid during daytime periods of highest demand. That would help reduce the need to operate so-called "peaker" plants – inefficient generating facilities typically fueled by natural gas that only run when demand for electricity is extremely high.

The batteries would store enough electricity to serve 6,000 to 7,000 households.

New York officials several months ago authorized a new round of financial incentives to encourage the development of battery systems to increase the reliability of the electric grid while decreasing the use of fossil fuels. [EDITOR'S NOTE: PASSING INCENTIVES AND REGULATIONS TO SERVE THEIR OWN AGENDA ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND USAGE. SELF SERVING DON'T YOU THINK? MAKE RULES AND THEN PROVIDE FUNDING SO THAT THEY ARE CARRIED OUT!]

The biggest obstacle to siting the facilities is concern about fires.

State fire prevention officials recently approved new safety regulations for lithium-ion battery installations. Those changes were triggered by three big fires at battery energy storage systems in 2023 in New York. The fires occurred in Jefferson, Orange and Suffolk counties. In each case, they took a day or more to extinguish. Monds said his department will take time to carefully analyze the New Leaf proposal, which is the first such battery system proposed in Syracuse. Terrence Nolan, senior project developer, said the company's safety experts will continue to meet with fire officials to discuss modifications of the design.

"I have some optimism that we'll be able to come up with a design that meets his interpretation of the codes," Nolan said, referring to Monds.

Common Councilor Pat Hogan said the council also plans to study the issue further at a committee meeting yet to be scheduled.

New Leaf has discussed the project with community residents at four meetings in recent weeks, Nolan said. Some residents have expressed opposition to the project, but at least a couple have said they support it, Nolan said.

New York currently has about 1.4 gigawatts of battery storage either built or under contract. To accommodate a growing electric system, NYSEDA plans to have 6 gigawatts by 2030 and 12 GW by 2035.

Feds Announce Recall of Tesla Home Energy System Over Fire and Burn Risk

Nathaniel Rosenberg – The Middletown Press, Conn

Are you using Tesla's Powerwall 2 energy system to store power for your home? It might not be safe to do so.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announced Thursday that it would be recalling approximately 10,500 units of Tesla's Powerwall 2 AC Battery Power System because of fire and burn hazards that risk serious injury or death.

"The lithium-ion battery cells in certain Powerwall 2 systems can cause the unit to stop functioning during normal use, which can result in overheating and, in some cases, smoke or flame and can cause death or serious injury due to fire and burn hazards," the CPSC wrote in its recall notice.

The commission has received 22 reports of the system overheating, including six where it began smoking and five reports of fire resulting in minor property damage. No injuries have been reported to date.

The recall applies to units nationwide, including in Connecticut. The CPSC did not specify where the reports it received of the Powerball 2 overheating came from.

Each energy system costs about \$8,000, and the recall applies to units sold between November 2020 and December 2022. On its website, Tesla specified that the recall did not apply to the more recently released Powerwall 3. Tesla did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

For customers of the Elon Musk-owned company who own a recalled product, Tesla has remotely discharged most of the affected units, making them safe. On its website, the company said it was sending technicians to manually discharge any damaged units that were still running.

The company is notifying customers affected by the recall through the Tesla app and will reach out directly to customers to schedule a free replacement over email.

If the Powerwall 2 is part of a larger solar panel system, those panels will continue to generate power, but backup power will be unavailable until the units are replaced.

STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!



BY  **McNeil & Co.**

EMS Essentials: Patient Trauma Assessment, ESIP WEBINAR SERIES

Join us as we return to the basics of emergency care and discuss the steps necessary for performing a high-quality trauma patient assessment.

Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025 at 7PM

REGISTER AT THE FOLLOWING LINK:

<https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=84d8712462&e=781e9a2c81>

Bridging the Gap

Guest Speaker Jeremy Donch, founder of National Fire Radio

Preserving Tradition and Culture One Generation at a Time

The seminar, "Bridging the Gap," focuses on preserving tradition and culture within the fire service from generation to generation.

Sponsored by Arvin Hart Fire Company

Wednesday December 10th, 6:30PM Stillwater High School Auditorium, 1068 Hudson Ave, Stillwater, New York 12170

This event is open to all fire departments within the New York Capital District with pre-registration.

RSVP: Agencies wishing to attend may reserve seats by contacting Assistant Chief Sean Ritter via phone/text at (518) 429-0278 or e-mail at sritter2819@gmail.com.

Attend an NVFC Training Near You!

The NVFC hosts in-person trainings at locations across the country on topics including hazardous materials response, electric vehicle response, leadership, fire service culture, and much more. View upcoming courses [here](#). Don't see a training near you? Consider hosting a training at your department or regional event. View a listing of available courses and request a training [here](#).



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

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

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

The fire company thanks you for your support!! Breakfast will be served starting at 8AM on **Sunday December 21st with a visit from Santa.**

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

See you **Sunday December 7th**. Thank you for your support!

GENERAL INTEREST

Cantankerous Wisdom: How Old Is Too Old, Part 3

Bill Adams

KEY TAKAWAYS

- For many years, volunteer departments have supplemented daytime staffing shortages by employing part-time help.
- Amalgamations of fire departments are becoming more common as a response to staffing challenges.
- Raisin Squad members have mixed feelings on the subject of keeping themselves useful in the fire department.

I thought this last part would be a piece of cake. Wrong again. At a recent social function of past-our-prime players and older but still active volunteers, the “too old” debate intensified. Raisin Squad members added their biased opinions at subsequent morning coffees.

Many of the discussions linked the lack of volunteer staffing with whether or not to keep old people as active interior firefighters. Some inferred that members getting older is the sole reason some departments can’t staff their apparatus. Sure, blame the white hairs because the fire department hierarchy has not objectively looked into the future. The real argumentative people found fault with every proposed and attempted solution, including some that’ve been around since World War II.

[Cantankerous Wisdom: How Old Is Too Old, Part 1](#)

[Cantankerous Wisdom: How Old Is Too Old, Part 2](#)

One young squad member said these articles should differentiate between a mandatory retirement age for firefighters and meeting a department’s minimum physical and mental acuity requirements. He’s right, but its fun to occasionally stir-the-pot.

PART-TIMERS

For many years, volunteer departments have supplemented daytime staffing shortages by employing part-time help—specifically an apparatus driver. Gotta make sure at least one truck gets out the door. Kudos to recognizing the problem, however, having one rig with one person responding and possibly nobody else showing up to fight the fire can be problematic to downright disastrous. Granted, some departments have had career drivers working 24/7/365 that has worked well for them. Those stories should be shared. As daytime volunteer availability has worsened, additional part-timers have been hired—probably to satisfy employment laws and insurance regulations, many are legally employed as laborers, station managers, mechanics, groundskeepers, maintenance workers, IT specialists, janitors or various other monikers. Its feasible only part-timers are crewing responding apparatus during weekdays. I applaud the hiring entities for addressing the situation, but there can be drawbacks.

When volunteer departments first started hiring part-timers they were often older department members, often recently retired from a full-time occupation. Keeping it in the family was a norm. Whether part-timers had to maintain a department’s membership requirements for training, attendance, and physical fitness was—or still is—up to individual departments. I know a lot of old people so no judgment or accusation is made.

This statement will no doubt draw the ire of many older part-timers: *“When the tones drop, if part-timers are going to perform the duties of active interior firefighters (or EMS providers if applicable), they should meet whatever has been established as the minimum qualifications established for that particular department.”*

Career firefighters working as part-timers for surrounding volunteer departments are usually valuable assets, although they could be temporary solutions. Some political subdivisions may not allow their career firefighters to volunteer in other jurisdictions. Getting hurt as a part-timer may jeopardize your career. Bear in mind that professional organizations representing career firefighters may want to represent multiple part-timers in a volunteer department that might actually be doing the work of career firefighters. Hide the hand grenades—I’m not going there.

MUTUAL AID/MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

Mutual aid and mutual assistance should be reciprocal. Old timers will say *“you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.”* The legal profession calls it *“quid pro quo.”* Don’t take advantage of departments *“in better shape than yours”* that have sufficient staffing or even specialized equipment. If it’s one sided, it can end quickly. Politicians and taxpayers will become irate if they’re footing most of the bill for a neighboring fire department’s lack of staffing or equipment. It is nothing against old-timers. It is all about fairness. Don’t expect to always get four SCBA-qualified firefighters *all the time* if you can’t reciprocate. The effectiveness of mutual aid and mutual assistance can also be contingent upon the closeness of neighboring departments. It’s a crap-shoot calling for mutual aid/mutual assistance if your neighboring departments are equally short on staffing. Calling for a lot of help and anticipating you’ll get some that can physically do the job isn’t an effective strategy. It’s like rolling the dice and hoping you win—or playing catch with the hand grenade and hoping you don’t.

EXPLORERS & JUNIORS

I don’t know when junior firefighter, fire explorer, fire cadet or similar type programs were initiated. In my first fire company, the junior program began right after World War II started. Juniors were well-trained but not allowed to operate the apparatus or go inside or on top of a burning building. The intent back then was to replace active members who entered the military service.

A scary thought is some volunteer departments may rely on juniors for a major part of their staffing. What is scarier would be filling out the rest of the crew with old-timers that may require fanny jacks to climb aboard the rig.

AMALGAMATIONS

It’s a sad state of affairs when adequate and well-trained staffing is not addressed until something potentially catastrophic happens. You can’t blame the old-timers and juniors *“when the tones drop and no one qualified shows up.”* Consolidations, mergers, alliances, partnerships or whatever you want to call them are becoming more and more popular as realistic fire officials and astute politicians face reality. It is sensible to anticipate and preplan for eventual staffing problems. Don’t blame older firefighters for continuing to age.

Regardless of the formality of their organizational make-ups, amalgamations appear to be working. Sharing physical resources and communal staffing as well as financial obligations can be beneficial for both career, combination, and volunteer entities. As a start, is it feasible to share the cost of a single fully-staffed apparatus to respond among neighboring departments?

Over the years in my area, a volunteer department with paid drivers and EMS providers just went out of business—closed shop—went belly up. Two commissioned fire districts, one with all volunteers and one with combination career and volunteer staffing, went out of business. The earlier required a new state law because there wasn’t one on the books to dissolve a fire district. Two other commissioned fire districts merged into a new one—with a new name.

In a neighboring county, the commissioners of a fire district in one town with all career firefighters and a few volunteers voted to dissolve and it had nothing to do with older firefighters. According to news reports, the district’s reasoning was *“an anticipated future increase in financial liabilities to provide adequate fire protection.”* The district gave the town a couple months’ notice they were dissolving, but the town could have all the fire trucks and both fire stations. It is unknown if the career firefighters were fired or laid off. The town has been scrambling to contract for fire protection with neighboring fire departments and fire districts.

AN ACTIVE CHIEF

I received an email from a volunteer chief from a couple counties away who I’ve known for years. He wrote: *“On a serious note, age is an issue for volunteer firefighters. Many of our regular responders are well over 70 and one is well into his 80s. It is becoming a challenge as a chief to see the age factor hitting us. I clearly remember the conversation we had a few years ago when you decided it was time to hang up your helmet. You knew your limits and recognized where you were. Unfortunately, I have some members who don’t recognize their limits and have little or no self-awareness. I think their feeling is, ‘if I don’t go and drive the truck who will?’”*

The other side of this is firefighters in their 30s and 40s are not training to drive apparatus because ‘the older guys are driving’ and ‘why should I drive; I like to get in the action.’ The other part for the potential drivers is they don’t want to force out the older guys driving as that is their only place?

We are at a crossroads here on how to handle some of this. Do we wait until something happens? Do we put forth more checklists and driver evaluations? Some of this might not end well with a few guys and they could become bitter instead of casually retiring. The senior members, their experience and knowledge, cannot be replaced and their value is important to our well-being. Most are willing to teach new recruits and they want them to succeed. “I wished him the best of luck. He’ll need it.”

THE RAISIN SQUAD

Raisin Squad members have mixed feelings on the subject of keeping themselves useful in the fire department. Most admire fellow *seasoned* members still wanting to participate in any way they can. Hopefully they don’t put themselves in a position where they—or someone depending on them—can get hurt. Some of us are lucky we can pour a cup of hot coffee without burning ourselves. Raisins don’t belong on fire trucks.

Sane and rational old-timers are observant of the date on our driver’s licenses. We’ve probably made more trips to doctors, hospitals, specialists, and rehab clinics, than the busiest ambulance in town. We’re content bloviating at morning coffee, telling tall tales, harassing each other, passing judgement amongst ourselves, and even rubber necking a close-by fire. When it’s *your* time to pull the plug and leave the active fire department, here’s hoping you’re only put out to pasture and not sent to the glue factory.

REALITY CHECK

Harsh reality is hard to swallow for the purists, idealists, safety gurus, and members in financially stable fire departments with adequate staffing. There are volunteer departments that, at no fault of their own, do not have accessibility to qualified staffing or sufficient funding. Mutual aid/mutual assistance may not be close by or dependable. In some areas, older folks might be the only people that’s available. Don’t deride, demean or criticize them. Hopefully, they don’t hurt themselves. Say a prayer. They probably could use one.

LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

The older I get, the more I realize why the Grinch just wanted to stay home with his dog!!

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

[The Surplused Saratoga County Haz Mat Truck](#)

The County Surplused HAZMAT truck is up for sale on Auctions International. The bidding is open until **12/2/2025, 7:45 pm**. Please post on Auctions International below for full details.

<https://www.auctionsinternational.com/auction/45188/item/2002-hme-1871-penetrator-fire-truck-282692/>

[Opening for Part Time Fire District Treasurer/Deputy Secretary](#)

The **Greenfield Fire District** is currently seeking qualified applicants for the position of part time Fire District Treasurer/Deputy Secretary. Prior experience and individuals residing within Fire District Boundaries given preference. Complete job description and qualifications can be found on the Greenfield Fire District website at: www.greenfieldfd.org. Cover letter/current resume can be mailed to Greenfield Fire District, attn. Joyce Petkus, P.O. Box 103, Greenfield Center, NY 12833, or emailed to Treasurer@greenfieldfd.org, and will be accepted until the position is filled.

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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

We invite our business partners to submit educational information to be included in this Bulletin for district commissioners and chief officers

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

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*The Weekly Capital Bulletin is reaching well over **700+** subscribed fire district members and now other members of the fire service on a regular basis.*

This is a service of CAFDA through the effort of Tom Rinaldi who can be reached at tom@rinaldi1.com for comments and content contributions are always welcome.

BECOME A MEMBER OF CAFDA!

The Capital Area Association has voted to amend its By-laws to allow both individual and regional or county Fire District Associations to join. The updated By-laws are posted to the CAFDA.NET website.

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

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

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NEWEST INFORMATION ALWAYS AT THE TOP WITH RED ARROW

The Latest from Dave Denniston:

As was briefly discussed on the recent NYS Fire Service Council zoom meeting, the group is still in serious discussions and are attempting to formulate an update to the Emergency Service Standard that is not as intrusive as the original proposal. The NFPA standards will NOT be adopted by reference and there is consideration for a modification to the standard for communities with fewer than a population of 5K. A more formal briefing is pending from Chairman Denniston. We thank him for his dedication to this process.

By Dave Denniston NVFC OSHA 1910.156 Taskforce Chair

The NVFC continues to meet with the IAFC and (The IAFC has pulled out of the meetings) IAFF as we wait for next steps from the Department of Labor and OSHA. There have been significant changes in leadership at these organizations. We are under the belief that they continue to digest the large volume of information and feedback offered during the process and are modifying the proposed standard into something that is much more agreeable. The proposed standard as written does not work for anyone, volunteer, combination, or career departments. All three organizations agree significant changes are needed from the proposal. *We anticipate that they will craft a new standard that is technically and economically feasible using what is*

referred to as logical outgrowth from the process. The representatives from the IAFC, NVFC, and IAFF all agree that the best of all worlds would be to remove the NFPA standards by reference, bring a lot of the regulations back to the control of the home state and authority having jurisdiction, and make logical requirements that will help protect our first responders. We continue to monitor progress and are ready to pursue the next steps if the process does not yield a document that we can all live with. *We have also voiced our opposition to a pure exemption of volunteer firefighters as we feel that the move would be counterproductive and further divide the two major factions of our emergency services.* We have long fought for parity in items such as presumptive heart, cancer coverage, workers compensation benefits, equal representation, and firefighter safety. To simply exempt the volunteer fire service would be a huge disservice to these initiatives and leave combination departments in an extremely awkward, if not unmanageable situation. It would also be extremely difficult for municipalities to manage with two different sets of rules.

The three organizations are also hard at work building resources to support emergency services organizations moving forward. These resources include training, sample emergency action plans, risk management plans, community assessment forms, sample policies, and advocacy materials. The right tools will aid everything from a small rural volunteer department with a \$50K budget all the way up to the large municipal all-career city department, and everything in-between. We are very excited by the working relationship being built by these national organizations and all involved in the process feel we are seeing ground-breaking results. If you have any questions or concerns about the process, we encourage you to reach out and get involved in the discussions. I can be reached at 607-423-1636 or ddenniston@afdsny.org. By working together, we can help build a fire service that will serve us well for years to come.

IT IS TIME TO MOVE FORWARD WITH A WORKABLE OSHA 1910.156 REVISION

Dave Denniston, 1st VP AFDSNY

As the process to update OSHA 1910.156 continues, it is important that we understand where we have been, and options for the process moving forward. Since the proposed rule was published for review 18 months ago, there has been a significant amount of input and feedback from stakeholders addressing possible concerns about the economic and technical feasibility of the proposal. Stakeholders from across the country participated in the process and offered suggestions. One of the early possible solutions suggested was to simply exempt volunteers, and other parties, from the proposed rule as written. The mindset was that if it didn't affect "us" it was not our problem. While this concept appeared to be a quick solution, it fell short of addressing the true needs or problems.

The real issue at hand is that the proposed rule as written had challenges for everyone and you would be hard pressed to find any department, career, combination, or volunteer, that could meet the intent of the standard. The proposed standard also took a one-size-fits-all approach. We know that the emergency service agencies across this country are very different. They have different resources, different exposures, different concerns, and different levels of risk. It is true that emergencies, fires, and hazards are the same regardless of the type of responder. What is different is the likeliness that a particular event will occur in any jurisdiction. Local jurisdictions must be required, and empowered, to address significant risk, and the needs of a community, at a local and state level with just enough federal oversight to give it teeth and ensure safety for all of our responders. The bottom line is that the current 1910.156 is outdated and needs significant revision to address the needs and safety concerns of today's first responders. The proposed standard, as written, went too far in trying to address these needs. What we need is a middle ground solution that is designed to relieve significant risk and does so at a level that is economically and technically feasible for local communities, organizations, and the municipalities that govern and fund them.

Some are asking why simply exempting the volunteers is not in the best interest of volunteers across the country. First, by exempting the volunteers, we are failing to address the growing concerns and exposures facing this group of responders. Second, the largest growth area for most of our local fire departments is a move toward combination and career departments. How would it be possible to have one set of rules apply to part of an organization and not the other? Does it make sense to have volunteer responders face one set of

rules, while career responders on the same truck follow another? Are we not all responding to the same emergencies with the same exposures? The approach of exempting volunteers would add both confusion and resentment moving forward. The third part of the issue is that the standard, as written, is just as problematic for the communities that have career departments as it is for those that only have volunteers. We need a standard that brings us all together, not one that drives us further apart.

So, what do the solutions look like? Where should OSHA and the Department of Labor go from here? After pouring through the thousands of comments brought forth during the process, an opportunity is right in front of us. There were a multitude of comments throughout the process that carried common themes. By using logical outgrowth of the process, OSHA now has the opportunity to massage the rule into one that we all can live with, and provide the level of safety they are tasked to provide the workers of this country.

It is now in OSHA's hands to finalize the rule as proposed, make logical changes, scrap it, or go back to the drawing board. During the process, OSHA continuously asked for proposed solutions, and many excellent solutions were entered into the record from those that participated. We would suggest that OSHA and the Department of Labor use the extensive input from the process to make necessary changes to the document and work to finalize the rule. A rule that meets the intent of reducing significant risk in a manner that is reasonable and responsible for our first responders and communities.

Using logical outgrowth, OSHA now has the opportunity to remove the incorporated NFPA standards. Many of the participants and the NFPA itself asked for this to be done in their comments. The incorporation of those standards brought many of the pain points organizations were concerned about. The NFPA standards instead should be used as a tool for compliance, not a weapon of enforcement. By removing the incorporation of dozens of NFPA standards, the rule would also become far less confusing and economically infeasible. The next step is to transfer as much of the obligation of providing safety down to the local jurisdiction and state levels as possible. These are the people that know the nuances of the local responders and hazards in any given area. This, too, was supported by the comments throughout the process. The third opportunity is rather than exempting anyone, to build a baseline standard that applies and protects everyone, and then increase the requirements where the data shows increased exposure and risks. All of these changes are supported by the logical outgrowth requirements and would alleviate most of the pain points addressed by the participants of the process.

Regardless of the solution, we would be remiss if we failed to realize there will be opposition to any action taken moving forward. We also need to realize that any solution, or even no solution at all, will have pain points for some that it will affect. It has often been said that firefighters hate two things, change and the way things currently are. Hopefully, we realize that we are at a historic time, with an amazing opportunity to get this right. This process has been fair and offered plenty of opportunities for those interested in participating to make their opinions and feelings known. It is time to move the ball over the goal line and continue to work together for the betterment of emergency services in this country.

I encourage you to speak to your local elected officials. Let them know there is a workable solution right in front of us, and ask them to encourage the Department of Labor and OSHA to continue this opportunity and finalize a reasonable OSHA 1910.156 that applies to all fire departments, regardless of the composition of their staff.