



CAPITAL SHORTS:

- There will be **NO BULLETIN ON NOVEMBER 22**, it is going to be a medically busy and stressful week for me, we will continue the following week.
- The recent CAFDA Fall Training Seminar at the Verdoy fire station was lightly attended but it was a very lively group who asked a lot of questions. CAFDA thanks all those who attended and for Verdoy Fire Department for hosting the event again this year. We'll be back again providing high quality education to our members.
- Both the fire district election schedule and the budget development schedule are posted to the web site at www.CAFDA.net

During the October meeting the attendees nominated the following for 2026; President Tom Rinaldi, Vice President Ellen Martin, Directors: Les Bonesteel, Joyce Petkus, Skip Smith, Art Hunsinger and Ed Woehrle. The body discussed the need for two vice-presidents and decided to leave one of the positions vacant for further evaluation and discussion. Elections will take place at the meeting on November 13th. John Meehan and Fred Richards chose not to run for their positions in 2026.

- Terry Bradford the campaign development manager is reaching out to police and fire departments across the Capital Region to join us for this year's Big Climb, happening Saturday, April 18th at the Corning Tower. The event challenges participants to climb 42 stories—800 steps—in support of blood cancer patients and research. Our first wave of the day is going to be our First Responders Wave where teams will climb in uniform to get us started and we're trying to spread the word amongst all of the fire departments in the area to be represented. Please send any correspondence and donations to:

- LLS Northeast Connecticut – Hudson Valley
- PO Box 22470, New York, NY 10087
- It has been brought to our attention that Deputy State Fire Administrator Bill Davis is leaving State Service as of November 19th. It has been a pleasure to work with Bill since he joined State Service and wish him all the best as he begins his new work as grandfather in charge.
- Ending the LOSAP program for City of Mechanicville firefighters has failed at the polls, 71% voting no.
- The Melrose Fire District is having a capital project vote on the 9th of December for the replacement of the current Fire Station at 784 NY-40. Public Hearing: There will be a public hearing on the 18th of November. The vote is open to all residents within the Melrose Fire District service boundaries. We encourage everyone to come out and vote yes.
- Chrysler is recalling more than 320,000 Jeep plug-in hybrid vehicles due to a faulty battery that can fail and lead to a fire, U.S. traffic safety regulators said. Chrysler is aware of 19 reports and 1 injury potentially related to the issue. Owners of the vehicles, which include 228,221 Jeep Wranglers model years 2020-2025 and 91,844 Jeep Grand Cherokees model years 2022-2026, are being advised to park the vehicles outside and away from structures until a remedy for the problem is determined.
- Congratulations to my old friend from Halfmoon Fire Department Earl McMahon on being recognized as the Town of Halfmoon's Hero. Earl has over 50 years of service and has been a New York State Fire Instructor teaching many firefighters over the years. Congratulations Earl, well deserved!
- LODD and civilian fire death data are unavailable this week due to the continued disfunction in Washington!!

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WWW.CAFDA.NET

1. **NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday November 13th, in person or Zoom in. 7PM. Election for 2026 Officers and Directors will occur.**

ZOOM LINK FOR THE NOVEMBER MEETING: CAFDA November General Membership Meeting Time: Nov 13, 2025 06:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88171243348?pwd=rvkK8ojfyrbisyd8rz4PvLm63WuTuZ.1>

Meeting ID: 881 7124 3348

Passcode: 602778

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.

4. **Commissioner Training will be held at 6 locations in 2026 including:** Averill Park February 7th, Verdooy 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.

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

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

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

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

THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

Governor Hochul Announces \$8 Million Awarded to Local Governments for Efficiency and Shared Service Initiatives

Funding Awarded through NYS Department of State's Local Government Efficiency Grant Program

Projects Include Planning and Implementation Projects Designed to Lower Current and Future Costs for Municipalities

Implementation of Shared Services Help Municipalities Join Forces to Incentivize Affordability and Save Taxpayers Money

Governor Hochul has announced \$8 million in grant awards for 21 projects that are designed to create efficiencies and lower costs for local governments across New York State. The funding is administered by NYS Department of State through its competitive Local Government Efficiency Grant (LGEG) Program which incentivizes New York municipalities to engage in partnerships that aim to make New York communities more affordable by reducing municipal costs through consolidations, shared services, and internal efficiencies. The opportunity creates both short- and long-term savings for counties, cities, towns, villages and other governmental entities.

"We are constantly working with our local government partners to make New York State a more affordable place to live, do business and raise a family, and many of our local governments are looking to do the same," **Governor Hochul said.** "These municipalities are joining forces, looking at opportunities to lower costs and ultimately save taxpayers money. We will continue to work together and support measures that result in streamlined services."

New York Secretary of State Walter T. Mosley said, “The LGEG program provides an excellent return-on-investment for New York State as it encourages municipalities to problem solve together to bolster services and amplify savings. Under the Governor’s leadership, this new round of funding will help local governments address both current and emerging challenges, to accomplish what ultimately matters the most: effective municipal services and tax savings for residents.”

The Local Government Efficiency Grant Program provides both planning and implementation funding to local governments that apply to the competitively scored grant program. As modified in the 2024-25 budget, the LGEG program currently awards individual municipalities with up to \$20,000 for planning grants and up to \$250,000 for implementation grants.

Applications are evaluated based on the potential return on investment (ROI), project need, service delivery benefits, operational changes, local and regional capacity, project readiness (ability to complete the project in 5 years) and the comprehensiveness and specificity of the work plan and budget. In this round, priority scoring points were awarded to applications that included one or more of five target functions set by DOS, including: information technology services (ITS) including cybersecurity; emergency management services (EMS); shared code enforcement and planning; water and wastewater management; and climate change initiatives; as well as applications implementing of a previous LGEG planning project or inclusion in a previously adopted or pending Countywide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI) Plan. All awards are reimbursement grants. In recent years, DOS has made 655 project awards through its local government efficiency program opportunities, totaling over \$121 million in award funding. The estimated long-term savings for local government recipients is over \$684 million.

Eligible Local Government entities are counties, cities, towns, villages, special improvement districts, **fire districts**, public libraries, association libraries, public library systems (if they advance a joint application on behalf of member libraries), water authorities, sewer authorities, regional planning and development boards, school districts, and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

Local Government Efficiency Grants may be used to cover costs integral to project implementation including but not limited to: legal and consultant services; capital improvements and equipment; and transitional personnel costs not to exceed three years.

A new Request for Applications (RFA) for the next round of awards is expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

The LGEG grant program is administered by the Division of Local Government Services within the Department of State. The Division provides technical assistance and competitive grants to local governments. For more information on LGEG or any programs administered by the Division, please contact localgov@dos.ny.gov or call 518-473-3355.

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

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

****PrPREPARING FOR THE SELF-INSURANCE PREDICAMENT: INSURANCE RESERVE FUNDS**

Reprinted from Fire District Affairs

Fire districts across New York State continue to face rising insurance costs as claims increase and payouts challenge the economics of providing coverage for emergency service organizations. Initially, these challenges appear as higher premiums, but as deductibles rise and certain claims fall outside coverage, districts must determine how to fund uncovered or partially covered losses. One proactive step a Board of Fire Commissioners can take is to establish an Insurance Reserve Fund (IRF). This fund allows a district to set aside money each year and carry it forward, providing a financial buffer to pay qualified expenses without impacting operating funds. Before discussing how to establish such a fund, it is important to clarify what this approach is not:

THIS IS NOT A RECOMMENDATION TO SELF-INSURE OR TO AVOID PURCHASING INSURANCE COVERAGE.

WHY INSURANCE COVERAGE REMAINS ESSENTIAL

As long as commercial insurers remain available, districts should continue to purchase insurance to protect against significant financial exposure. The current legal environment is increasingly challenging:

- Law firms are actively soliciting lawsuits through advertising campaigns.
- Juries are awarding large settlements and verdicts.
- Legal defense costs have escalated.

Having an insurance company handle the defense and settlement of claims provides critical protection that fire districts cannot easily replicate through self-insurance alone. Therefore, any financial strategy should follow this order of priority:

1. Loss Prevention – Make operational and policy changes to reduce the likelihood of claims.
2. Adequate Coverage – Purchase insurance to cover as much risk exposure as possible.
3. Financial Preparedness – Set aside funds to pay claim costs not covered by insurance, through both current budget allocations and the establishment of an Insurance Reserve Fund.

If a claim results in a judgment that exceeds available coverage and reserves, the district may also need to fund the budgetary judgment category to satisfy the obligation.

AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH AN INSURANCE RESERVE FUND

Under New York General Municipal Law (GML) § 6-n, a fire district may establish an Insurance Reserve Fund. The statute provides: *“The governing board of any municipal corporation may establish a reserve fund to be known as the insurance reserve fund. Upon the creation of the fund, the municipality may make expenditures from the fund for any loss, claim, action or judgment for which the municipal corporation is authorized or required to purchase or maintain insurance...”* — N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law § 6-n(2)(a) (McKinney)

For the purposes of this statute, a fire district is included within the definition of a “municipal corporation.”

FUNDING THE INSURANCE RESERVE FUND

The law allows specific sources for funding an IRF:

“There may be paid into such fund:

- a. Amounts provided by budgetary appropriations;
- b. Transfers from other authorized funds by resolution subject to permissive referendum; and
- c. Other legally appropriated funds.” — N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law § 6-n(3)

Deposits into the fund are limited each fiscal year to the greater of \$33,000 or 5% of the district’s total annual budget (GML § 6-n(4)). Given the potential for future uninsured or underinsured claims, it is prudent for Boards to begin building their IRF gradually over time. Importantly, amounts budgeted for an IRF are exempt from the fire district spending limitation under Town Law § 176, which states:

“The foregoing limitations on expenditures shall not be applicable to appropriations to or expenditures from... [reserve funds established pursuant to GML §§ 6-d through 6-n]...” — N.Y. Town Law § 176 (McKinney)

If your district is considering funding an IRF through the 2026 annual budget and has already adopted a proposed budget, you may still adjust the final budget before approval. The restriction on post-hearing budget increases applies only to capital reserve funds, not to insurance reserves (Town Law § 181).

PERMITTED EXPENDITURES FROM THE FUND

No expenditure should be made from an IRF without consulting district counsel. Under GML § 6-n(9), allowable expenditures include payment of:

- Judgments;
- Court-approved settlements or compromises;
- Claims approved by a Supreme Court Justice in the district’s judicial district;
- Uninsured property losses arising from eligible risks; and
- Professional or expert services related to the investigation, adjustment, or settlement of claims. For smaller settlements (under \$25,000), the governing board may approve expenditures without judicial approval (GML § 6-n(11)).

The statute defines “judgments,” “actions,” and “claims” as those that arise from risks for which the municipal corporation is authorized to maintain insurance under subdivision two of the same section.

PURPOSE AND RESTRICTIONS

The New York State Comptroller’s Local Government Management Guide describes the purpose of an Insurance Reserve Fund as follows: *“To fund certain uninsured losses, claims, actions or judgments for which the local government is authorized or required to purchase or maintain insurance.”* It may also cover professional services used in managing claims. However, an IRF cannot be used for losses related to:

- Life, health, or accident insurance;
- Workers’ compensation or volunteer benefit insurance;

- Fidelity, surety, or credit insurance;
- Title, mortgage guarantee, or residual value insurance; or
- Payments in lieu of unemployment contributions under the Labor Law.

If a local government already maintains another reserve fund for the same type of risk, it may transfer any unexpended balance to the IRF, subject to statutory limitations. (See the full Comptroller's Guide at: www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/reserve-funds.pdf)

FINAL NOTE

Once an Insurance Reserve Fund is established, all proposed expenditures should be reviewed with district counsel before funds are released. Proper use of the IRF can provide critical financial flexibility and long-term protection, but compliance with statutory requirements is essential. Please consider the State Comptrollers publication on this subject at www.osc.ny.gov/files/localgovernment/publications/pdf/reserve-funds.pdf. Again, we emphasize that once you have set up such a fund you review expenditures from the fund with counsel before they are made.

Defined Benefit LOSAP Plan or Defined Contribution LOSAP Plan – That is the Question

Bruce Linger

A Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) is a plan that provides tax-deferred income benefits to active volunteer members of an emergency service organization, such as a fire, EMS, or rescue department. Essentially, this is a way a department can provide a retirement benefit to its members, which both rewards longtime volunteers as well as can serve as a recruitment and retention incentive. The longer a volunteer serves, the bigger their LOSAP benefit will be.

The tax-deferred income benefits for emergency services volunteers come from contributions made solely by the governing body of the municipality or fire district – also known as a plan sponsor – on behalf of those volunteers who meet the criteria of a plan created by that governing body.

Now for the hard question: Should the LOSAP plan sponsor choose a Defined Benefit Plan or Defined Contribution Plan? The real issue is sustainability.

A Defined Benefit LOSAP Plan is what it sounds like – it defines the benefit that will be received at the end of a working period. The risk of the benefit is the responsibility of the plan sponsor. The annual contribution to the LOSAP is typically based on multiple factors, including the promised benefit amount, how long the benefit will last, when the benefit will begin, years of bona-fide service, interest rates and investment performance, annual funding requirements, and sometimes more. All of this needs to be annually reviewed and determined by an actuary. This type of plan has been favored by participants in the past due to the “specified monthly benefit” concept. However, over recent years it has become increasingly difficult for the plan sponsors to maintain these plans because of rising costs and longevity of the participants.

Alternatively, with a Defined Contribution LOSAP Plan the plan sponsor makes an annual LOSAP contribution to the participant's account. The participant is responsible for the investment choice and eventual outcome – this is where this risk has been shifted.

The challenge facing fire departments and other emergency service organizations is to obtain a balance between offering a retirement benefit and the ability to keep the funding available to sustain the retirement program in the long run. Each year the commissioners or LOSAP trustees receive a report on their LOSAP Defined Benefit Plans. The report entails a percentage-funding requirement and a projected shortfall and funding obligation to make the plan financially sound. The commissioners have a fiduciary and moral obligation to address any issues for all members of the plan. The main question is how to meet the obligation without taking too much investment risk (i.e., how the funds are invested) while maintaining the promised

benefit. That said, there are emergency service organizations that are adequately funded and have the assets to meet the obligations.

The trend has been to move existing plans to the Defined Contribution model – which by all means is not a complete solution and has its own set risks. What the Defined Contribution Plan *does* do is control the annual funding requirement issue as there is an annual limit that is allowed for annual per participant funding (\$6,000), but now the potential investment return has been placed on the shoulders of the participants. This can be mitigated in most cases with simplified investment models based on the participant's appetite for risk. But the risk is clearly on the participant.

In the end, decisions need to be made for the good of the whole and sustainability of the organization. Using dollar cost averaging does not ensure a profit and does not protect against loss in a declining market. Also, using this investment method involves continuous investment in securities regardless of fluctuating price levels of securities. Therefore, an investor should consider his/her financial ability to continue purchasing through periods of low-price levels.

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Top Leaders Share Top Traits

Dena Ali

The 2024 What Firefighters Want survey clearly highlighted the need for effective leadership as a major concern, with 76% of the 1,316 respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the leadership in their departments. Furthermore, retention is a widespread issue among fire departments, and when asked about the factors affecting it, *poor agency leadership* was the most frequently mentioned concern, surpassing issues like compensation, staffing challenges and health risks.

Over the past decade, I have studied first responder mental wellness, peer support and suicide prevention. Among the variables affecting wellness, I have found that effective leadership significantly impacts overall wellness and fire department culture. While available research has uncovered numerous examples of poor leadership contributing to mental health issues, there was a noticeable gap in research focused on the leadership traits that foster a positive culture in the fire service.

As part of my Executive Fire Officer (EFO) capstone research, titled “Organizational Leadership and Its Impact on the Mental Wellness of Firefighters,” I sought to identify leaders who exemplify positive leadership traits and to understand their practices. These leaders were nominated by nationally recognized fire service thought leaders. Here we'll review some of the trends and behaviors identified from their leadership practices, and offer recommendations to inform and enhance fire service leadership.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Overwhelmingly, the single most important theme identified by these leaders was the willingness to nurture psychological safety within their sphere of influence. While psychological safety has become a buzzword – even dismissed by some as “soft” leadership – its attributes are fundamental to connection, learning and performance.

Put simply, psychological safety is a shared belief among team members that it's safe to take risks, express ideas and concerns, speak up, and admit mistakes without fear of negative consequences. As author and organizational psychology expert Adam Grant writes in “**Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know,**” psychological safety is not about lowering standards or simply being nice; it's about creating a climate of respect and trust where people can speak candidly.

Additionally, in his book “**The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups,**” Daniel Coyle explained that combining high standards and psychological safety is the “secret sauce” to a healthy culture, as seen in successful groups from Disney's Pixar to the Navy SEALs. A prime example of this type of culture is the New Zealand All Blacks, the most successful professional sports franchise in history. James Kerr's book “**Legacy**” outlines the elements leading to their success, including my personal favorite, Whanau, which emphasizes their “No Dickheads” policy. This principle underscores the importance of character over talent, highlighting that the strength of the pack is found in the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is found in the pack.

After-action reviews (AARs) are the perfect opportunity for leaders to model behaviors that can increase psychological safety by utilizing them as an opportunity to model humility, admit what they did not know, what they could have done better, and demonstrate the value of asking questions. A few years ago, at the Training Days Conference, Assistant Chief Dan Shaw, Fairfax County (Virginia) Fire Department, explained that during AARs, he always led with his mistakes first as the IC, and shared that he believed the four most important words a leader could say are, “I screwed that up.” Through modeling this sort of humility, the leader effectively creates the atmosphere of learning from the top down.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY | HOW COULD THE FIRE CHIEF BETTER SERVE YOUR AGENCY?

- “Do not dismiss ideas.”
- “Listen to ideas and new tactics. Get rid of the good old boy system.”
- “Acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the team, ensuring that all members feel valued.”
- “Demonstrate willingness to learn from others, regardless of their rank or experience. This fosters a culture of mutual respect and teamwork.”
- “Do not bully; show respect for officers and firefighters.”

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Shifting back to the EFO research, the key question posed was, “*What leadership styles dominate your leadership team?*” Each of the leaders interviewed discussed the importance of **servant leadership** for creating a positive culture in their organization.

FDNY Deputy Assistant Chief Frank Leeb shared this feedback: “In our organization, our leaders learn the styles based on our personalities and individual traits. Most people don’t fit neatly into one box. However, when you lead with trust and understanding, your leadership style will create space for them to succeed, and they will do anything for you.”

Baltimore City Deputy Chief Khalilah Yancy shared that her leadership style was built from a combination of “servant leadership, transformational, and leading with love.”

Of course, none of this is easy, as **Indianapolis Battalion Chief Dr. Candace Ashby** underscored: “It’s a grind. It’s not easy. It’s work, day in and day out. Leadership is not a destination that you will ever reach, it’s a grind every single day with how you show up. You have to be the best person you can be every single day.”

Furthermore, **previous research into servant leadership** found that culture is best supported when it blends servant leadership with the components of building community and empowerment.

Servant Leadership | How could the fire chief better serve your agency?

- “Open, clear communication about why policies and decisions are made – servant leadership.”
- “Trust in our abilities to execute tasks, which empowers us and builds confidence.”

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Each of the leaders interviewed expressed the value of modeling those behaviors they wished to see in their members and the organization. While there is a lot of lip service being paid to leadership, the truth is, leadership is not a catchphrase but rather a practice.

In his book, “**High Road Leadership**,” John Maxwell shared, “You can say you stand for integrity while lying and stealing. You can say anything, but what you do shows who you really are. So, the next time you see something you believe to be wrong, don’t make a statement. Do the right thing. And keep doing it. Eventually, anyone who wants to know what you value or believe will realize your life is your statement.”

John Oates, CEO of the International Public Safety Data Institute, explained that the little things go a long way; as a leader, you must model teamwork and respect because when you set the standard, you are better positioned to get buy-in.

Fort Walton Beach (Florida) Fire Department Chief Shannon Stone shared this: “When I make a mistake, I will be humble enough to own it, learn from it, share it and fix it. This is through example. I look for opportunities where I did not make the best decision to say, ‘you know what, guys, I screwed up, let’s talk about what will work better.’”

This modeling behavior helps people lower their guard so they can be open to making both decisions and mistakes. Each of these interviewees also explained the danger of gossip and the steps they take to discourage the behavior.

Raleigh (N.C.) Fire Department Division Chief Preston Gaster added: “Gossip does not build good teams. It goes back to leading by example; if they see that I feed into it, it will continue to grow.”

Positivity | How could the fire chief better serve your agency?

- “Step in to make positive changes.”
- “Recognize both positive contributions and address negative behaviors constructively.”

HUMILITY

There is often a fear that by admitting mistakes, leaders lose respect, but the research found the opposite. In discussing humility, 100% of the respondents expressed that it is a positive trait that should start with leadership. Chief Leeb shared that leaders who model humility become more relatable and therefore approachable. Additionally, Chief Gaster shared, “Nobody knows everything. I know I will screw up, and as a leader, I must model the behavior I expect. When I tell people I don’t know something, they become empowered to help me and help our organization. By asking for help, people feel included, respect you more, and know it’s OK to do the same.” **Atlanta Battalion Chief David Rhodes** said it best, though: “If you build a team where you are the dumbest person in the room and capitalize on people’s talents, you will be more successful.”

John Maxwell recently shared a conversation he engaged in while speaking to C-suite leaders. An attendee approached him afterward to challenge his thinking and said that a leader should never show weakness to employees. Maxwell replied: “You’re working under a misconception. You think your people don’t already know your weaknesses and flaws? The purpose of admitting them isn’t to give them new information. It’s to let them know that you know what they are.”

Humility | How could the fire chief better serve your agency?

- “Show empathy, show humility, show that you care about the rank and file.”
- “Treat people with humility and dignity.”

fire chief in East Hartford, Connecticut, added: “You defeat gossip by being conversational and intentional. Transparency in communication is key. In times of critical change, be deliberate. Rumor-mongering is like an Olympic sport for the fire service. A steady stream of open communication is the way to nip it in the bud.”

Today, the Fairfax County (Virginia) Fire Department is known for its positive culture, which is a direct result of deliberate leadership. I was fortunate enough to interview **Fire Chief John Butler**, who shared some of his department’s strategies to achieve this positive change. In terms of trust and accountability, effective communication was crucial for increasing information flow while reducing gossip. They have utilized multiple mediums for communication, including a quarterly newsletter, health and wellness newsletter, peer support newsletter, battalion chief roundtable, senior leadership meetings, Fire Chief’s Officer Council, Fire Chiefs Equity Council, monthly firehouse visits, information bulletins, social media, a master calendar, and even a podcast where they share new information.

Communications | How could the fire chief better serve your agency?

- “Be more transparent with operational staff.”
- “Develop a strong communication strategy.”
- “Increased frequency and depth of communication. Communicating goals and expectations.”

CARE FOR YOUR PEOPLE

A fascinating finding from my EFO research was the profound level of love these leaders exhibited for their members and the fundamental importance of genuinely caring about people. Chief Leeb stated: “If you’re mindful and truly love your team, it shows in your words and actions. The higher your standard, the higher your bar, the better they will perform, as long as you show them that you care for them and that you love them, they will do anything for you.” Chief Yancey emphasized: “I try to lead with love and treat others as I would want to be treated. If you love your people, it creates a better work environment, and even if everyone doesn’t always agree, we can still care about them.” **Madison (Alabama) Captain Michael Sedlacek** succinctly added, “You have to care about your people, learn who everyone is as an individual, and you have to want to see their success.”

Care | How could the fire chief better serve your agency?

- “Care about ALL your personnel.”

- “Give the job to someone who cares about the department.”

ement strategies in which subordinates must obey commands and follow strict policies/procedures or face consequences despite the potential for improved outcomes obtained by deviating from the rules. Therefore, Mission Driven Culture (MDC) focuses on each mission and allows subordinates more freedom to make life-or-death decisions in face of unforeseen and unfamiliar circumstances.”

MDC disrupts the hierarchy by allowing all parts to make critical life-and-death decisions based on their understanding and commitment to the mission, vision and organizational values. Blume explained that because firefighters make decisions in time-compressed situations with limited information, “we as leaders must focus on reviewing the task, the purpose, and the end state when a decision is made.” Leaders must ask, “what are we doing, why are we doing it, and what is the desired outcome?”

To illustrate MDC in action, Blume shared the story of an officer who decided to damage a community’s security gate to reach a cardiac arrest victim. At the time, the organization had a strict policy regarding apparatus accidents, specifically striking stationary objects. However, reviewing the situation from the lens of MDC, the task (to damage the gate) for the purpose (to reach a cardiac arrest victim) created conditions for the end state (a successful resuscitation). Chief Blume noted that under a policy-driven culture, the decision to damage the gate would have been punished; however, following MDC, “we reward this decision by understanding the task, purpose and end state.”

Chief Yancey shared her perspective on MDC: “If people have not bought into the mission, slamming policy down their throat won’t mean a thing. Because while it’s impossible to remember every policy, you can remember the mission and act decisively based on your understanding of the mission.”

And while Chief Butler did not specifically reference MDC, he underscored that a healthy organization trusts each other and the leadership, and does not check boxes simply for accreditation, but rather to lead through equity and inclusivity, which ultimately breeds trust.

Finally, Chief Leeb shared that leaders will at times give up hard-earned credibility and trust if they enforce all policies to the letter of the law. He explained that sound practices have sound reasoning, and while we have to play by the rules, we must speak up to change bad policy.

Mission-Drive Culture | How could the fire chief better serve your agency?

- “Delegate and empower your command staff. Give them authority to make decisions.”
- “Defend our decisions. Be an advocate.”

LEADERS MUST ...

If you’re looking to improve the culture within your organization, the only leader you can change is yourself. While we can’t transform an entire organization overnight, we can start within our sphere of influence, regardless of our rank. For many of us, this will require patience and allowing our leadership ripples to expand gradually.

Here are a few key recommendations from the leaders involved in this project – leaders who are setting the standard:

- Leaders must demonstrate a visible commitment to developing a positive culture by ensuring they are authentic and reliable in ensuring their daily practices match their words, and consistently modeling positive behaviors.
- Leaders shall foster trust through extending trust, modeling reliability and speaking with candor.
- Leaders must be humble about their capabilities and knowledge. They must admit mistakes, commit to learning from mistakes, and create space for others to contribute.
- Leaders must demonstrate curiosity about others by speaking with candor and maintaining awareness of their own biases. This means they must ask questions, learn the why behind decisions, and practice diligent active listening.
- Leaders must adopt a flexible leadership style focusing on building community and empowering members. They must recognize when to shift into an autocratic leadership style.

STEP INTO THE ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

Captain Says Command Staff Made Errors at Scene where Sterling, IL, Firefighter Died

Charlene Bielema, Daily Gazette, Sterling Ill

Aaron Brown knew Garrett Ramos.

Brown, a captain with the Dixon City Fire Department, and Ramos, a Sterling Fire Department lieutenant, had each been hired by their respective departments about the same time — Brown in 2011 and Ramos in 2012. They were their unions' presidents at the same time and often found themselves at the same training sessions. They also ended up in the same place the evening of Dec. 3, 2021, when a fire broke out at 10031 Ridge Road in rural Rock Falls. Ramos was on the first Sterling fire engine that arrived just minutes after the Sterling and Rock Falls fire departments were dispatched to the scene. It was Brown, who went to the scene when the Dixon City Fire Department was dispatched, who would discover Ramos' body in the burning home's basement and lead recovery efforts.

Brown described what he saw and did the night of the fire during his testimony in a Whiteside County courtroom Wednesday, Nov. 5, the second day a 12-member jury heard testimony in a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Ramos' widow.

Brittney C. Ramos is suing the city of Rock Falls; former Rock Falls Fire Chief Cris Bouwens; and former Deputy Fire Chief Ken Wolf, who is now Rock Falls' fire chief, claiming that willful and wanton disregard on their part caused her husband to fall through a burning floor and into a basement, run out of air and die of asphyxia.

If Brittney's legal team can prove that Bouwens and Wolf showed conscious disregard for Ramos' safety through the decisions they made, the jury could award damages. Those damages, for pain and suffering to her and the couple's two children, could reach into the tens of millions of dollars, according to attorneys.

Lead Ramos attorney Michael Gallagher has said Bouwens, who was the incident commander, made missteps at the scene that included not asking homeowners if there was a basement under the home and having firefighters continue to fight the fire from within the home even after they knew all occupants were out safe and the home was heavily damaged.

The city, Bouwens and Wolf have countered that Ramos was partially responsible for missteps that contributed to his own death.

Through witness questioning Wednesday, Ramos' attorneys focused on proving that command staff had not been following National Fire Protection Administration protocol after they heard two mayday calls coming from an unknown firefighter.

Brown was called upon to answer questions about how events unfolded shortly after he arrived at the scene about 55 minutes after one of the home's residents at 11:04 p.m. made a 911 call reporting the fire.

Brown said that shortly after he arrived, a mayday call could be heard over radio traffic; a second mayday call would be transmitted a short time later. While the firefighter didn't identify who he was, Brown noted that the firefighter was screaming and mentioned a partial collapse.

Brown said he was near Wolf.

"I said 'Chief, we have a mayday,'" Brown said.

Brown said Wolf was looking at the tracking board but didn't reply. He said neither Wolf nor Bouwens issued a personnel accountability report to immediately account for all firefighters.

Brown said that what should have happened after the mayday call would have been an immediate call for a PAR. He said the incident commander — in this case Bouwens — or the accountability officer in charge of keeping track of firefighters' whereabouts — in this case Wolf — should have issued a call on the radio to have crew leaders prepare for PAR.

The leader of each crew — in this case a leader from each firefighting team — should have reported to the accountability officer as to whether each firefighter on his team was accounted for.

That didn't happen. Brown said that four minutes after the mayday, it was Sterling Fire Chief Mike Dettman who said: "All units give me PAR."

Even though Brown said a PAR should be immediately issued after a mayday call, Ramos attorney Michael Kosner repeatedly played a three-minute portion of a video from the scene that showed no PAR issued within that three minutes — a delay Brown agreed was letting valuable lifesaving moments slip away.

Brown said the PAR was incomplete in that crews weren't being asked to reply with the name of their department, truck number, and number of firefighters in that group and whether they were accounted for.

Instead, Brown said, there was a focus on one firefighter — O'Brien — who was thought to be missing. Wolf at one point said over the radio, "Interior has PAR," according to testimony.

Brown and his crew were sent out to do a 360-degree survey around the outside of the house to see if there was a basement. An earlier interior search of the home, in which all doors were opened, did not turn up any stairs to the basement.

He said that from the outside he could not see if there was one; as it turned out, one basement window was hidden under a deck, and another was boarded up and painted over with paint that matched the foundation. Brown said that upon returning from the search, he asked Dettman, who was an operations commander near the burning home, if the PAR was clear. Dettman replied that O'Brien had been found.

Brown said he was uncomfortable as to whether everyone was accounted for, but he didn't push Dettman on his reply.

It was about 30 minutes later that Brown heard Ramos' partner say he hadn't seen Ramos for a while. Brown said that when he heard that, he asked Dettman to send out another alarm for more firefighters to the scene since he knew there would have to be a search alongside firefighting operations. The alarm was sent out, and firefighters were told to search for Ramos.

He and his crew accessed the basement by dropping a ladder into it. Brown went down the ladder first. When he got to the bottom of the ladder, he was on a pool table. He got to the floor, and after yelling to have firefighters turn down the water being pumped into the building so he could hear, the sound of an alarm could be heard. The alarm turned out to be coming from Ramos' body and was sounding because his tanks were out of air.

Brown said his crew pulled Ramos' body to the pool table and up to the ladder; after two attempts to get him up the ladder, webbing and a carabiner were used to lift his body out of the basement.

Testimony will continue Thursday, Nov. 6.

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

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

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 HEALTH & SAFETY; PROTECTING OUR OWN

DATA SUBMISSION IS ON HOLD DUE TO THE FEDERAL GOVT. SHUT DOWN!!

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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!

- Georgetown, DE, Fire Police Officer Directing Traffic, Hit by Car. The 78-year-old fire police officer was flown to a trauma center after being struck on Lewes-Georgetown Highway.
- Columbia County, Georgia Fire Recruit Kalif Leslie Daly became ill during physical training and later died at a hospital

FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK

- Suspected drunk driver arrested after slamming into Texas fire engine. Fort Worth firefighters had just exited Engine 14 when it was struck while blocking traffic for an earlier wreck. The two occupants of the pickup that hit the fire engine were trapped inside their vehicle. Firefighters extricated both and transported them to a nearby hospital, no firefighters were injured.

*****Tactical Errors, Lack of Policies Cited in LODD of St. Mary's County, MD, Firefighter***

Patuxent River Naval Air Station Firefighter Brice Trossbach fell through the floor at a Leonardtown house fire in June 2023 and a report found the region lacked operational guidelines.

"There were several obvious signs visible during the initial size-up that should have indicated that an offensive fire attack was going to be ineffective. Significant involvement of lower floors in a Type V private dwelling, where there is also significant involvement of upper floors and attic spaces, should be an obvious sign that fire has already occupied the void spaces, spread to the open areas..."

Those were among the observations made by fire service officers who delved into operations at a 2023 house fire in Leonardtown, MD, where Patuxent Naval Air Station Firefighter Brice Trossbach died after falling into the basement.

Strategic and tactical errors were made, they concluded in a report released Thursday by the Leonardtown Volunteer Fire Department.

Firefighters involved in the incident told the investigating group that they were attacking the fire from the porch when someone kept urging them to go inside.

"Get in and put the fire out, or I will do it for you," a firefighter can be heard shouting.

Within about 30 seconds after entering the house, a firefighter saw the upper floor collapse, followed by the first floor, which sent Trossbach into the basement. Due to falling debris, they were unable to get him out of the basement.

They saw him attempting to hold himself up between the floor joists for a moment before falling through the floor and into the basement. Trossbach was never heard from.

After the two firefighters who were inside with Trossbach were out of the house, they and others sprayed water into the hole where their colleague had fallen. *They did not declare a mayday, the report showed.*

That call came from an officer who went to check operations at the front of the house.

Several firefighters ran to join the search for their colleague at that point.

Trossbach was located, buried motionless in debris about two hours after the mayday was declared. He was pronounced dead at a local hospital.

The investigative team noted: "The majority of recommendations in any LODD report can be linked back to acts, omissions and violations of standing policy/procedure. The same could be said for this report; however, alarmingly, there are very few, if any, policies and procedures to point to."

They added that some departments in the county "selfishly refuse to participate in the process of formulating such documents. The Committee has deduced this to be the biggest liability to the firefighters, the county, and its residents if left unaddressed."

They recommend: "St. Mary's County should immediately address the autonomous operational authorities that exist within the fire system in favor of some form of governance system that has full authority to propagate, codify, and enforce policies and procedures that impact Fire/EMS operations. Volunteer corporations should be able to maintain their independence when it relates to corporate matters; however, when it impacts emergency operations, there must be movement towards a one-standard, one-system, one-team approach. This is the only way to ensure that the residents of the county receive the same level of response regardless of where they live."

They added that people without firefighting expertise or experience should not be involved in developing the operational policies.

The investigators also wrote about the importance of a thorough 360-degree investigation at every incident.

"While there are many benefits of conducting the 360, the primary focus must be on determining the absence or presence of a basement and confirming if there is smoke or fire present. Operating above an unknown, unrecognized, and/or unchecked (hoseline in place) basement fire is perhaps the highest risk activity that firefighters engage in."

No interior operations should begin before the 360 is completed. Among their suggestions:

- *A requirement that when the first arriving officer cannot complete the 360, they must assign that task to a specific company, before units enter the structure.*
- *Verbal statement of the number of floors in the rear.*
- *Verbal statement of exterior entrance locations.*
- *Verbal confirmation of the absence or presence of a basement.*
- *Verbal statement of conditions evident in the basement, i.e., fire or smoke.*

The report read:

"Throughout the Deer Wood Park Drive incident, there were numerous occasions where crew integrity was violated. Fire officers who are charged with ensuring crew integrity either initiated these violations or observed them and did nothing about them.

For unknown reasons, Engine 132's Acting Captain made a purposeful decision to assign the two firefighters

whom he was personally responsible for to advance Engine 132's hose line through a front porch window, onto the first floor, while he decided to attach himself to Engine 11's crew. To be clear, the Committee was unable to determine if there was any overwhelming reason for him to make that decision. There was certainly nothing obvious that came up during interviews or in the review of the fireground video. Absent something unknown to the Committee, this was a poor decision at best. *The fire officer has no greater obligation than the safety and welfare of those assigned under their leadership.*

Throughout fire suppression efforts and the RIT operations, there were numerous instances of firefighters operating independently without their officers, as well as officers abandoning their crew, leaving subordinates who were responsible for operating alone inside and outside of the IDLH. Firefighters operate in the most complex, dangerous, and time-deficient environments; our response system is the most effective when supported by strong policies, operational organization, communications, and teamwork. In the absence of consistent implementation of one or more of these tenets, individuals will begin to take matters into their own hands.

Observation: Although there is no video or photographs that show the Deer Wood Park Drive structure at the exact time that Chief 1 arrived and completed his 360, there were video and photographs that show the structure one to two minutes later. *It was obvious to the committee members that this was a well-advanced fire that already involved 80 percent of the structure, with obvious signs that the structural integrity was significantly compromised, before the first application of water.* This is not the 'opinion' of the committee; it's a fact-based assessment from the committee's more than 165 combined years of firefighting experience.

Video of the operations from the start through the point of collapse shows severe window and door racking, alligatoring of the wood siding, internal wall studs (visible because the drywall had completely deteriorated) that had burned through, and a sagging roof and second floor.

Throughout the interview process, the committee was astonished at the number of firefighters who were on the scene, offering their assessment that this was a 'bread and butter fire' or that 'this was a two-line fire.' *More insidious was the fact that many of those same individuals had little to no actual firefighting experience. It is worth stating that there were also several experienced firefighters (career firefighters in larger more busier fire departments) who opined that this was a glaringly obvious defensive fire once they viewed all sides of the structure.*

There are numerous explainable reasons for the contradiction in observation, most of which could be categorized as 'cognitive bias.' *Most came from those with little to no real experience who simply regurgitate phrases and slogans they hear from those they look up to in an attempt to sound like a seasoned firefighter. Much of it also came from people who mistakenly think they are more knowledgeable, experienced, and competent than they really are, and worst yet, many of those same people are unable to see just how incompetent they are.* This is in no way intended to disparage anyone. These are legitimate cognitive biases that are a liability to fire officers and the safety of the people they lead. This type of company officer exists in every fire department in the country, not just in St. Mary's County."

FIRE APPARATUS

Specifying Fire Apparatus Lighting

In the realm of fire apparatus specification, one of the most important things to get right, yet one of the most difficult to understand sometimes, is lighting. Firefighters are well accustomed to understanding gallons per minute and pounds per square inch, but lux and lumens are not always terms easily understood, nor is understanding the nuances of getting a scene light, for example, to shine light where you think it will. Along the way there are numerous types of lights, among them silicone lighting, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) compliance, and writing the specs themselves. But companies like SoundOff Signal offer support when specifying the lighting on your next rig.

SILICONE LIGHTING

SoundOff Signal designs, engineers, and assembles its lighting products in its Hudsonville, Michigan, headquarters. Among its product lines are its mpower® products. According to Damon Mirate, director of product management at SoundOff Signal, “The lenses of the mpower fascia, 4x2, 6x4, and 7x3 lights include an integrated seal. The light housing directly clamps the compressible lens to prevent moisture intrusion. Other brands require a sealing gasket in addition to the lens, which increases the number of surfaces needing to be sealed, allowing for more leak points.” Mirate adds that SoundOff Signal is the only fire light manufacturer that offers a full fire light line with silicone lenses, although other brands offer pieces of optical silicone within their light. “But, they do not offer all silicone lenses for the full product lineup of warning, scene, tail light, and turn signal lighting like we do,” he says.

Advantages of SILASTIC silicone include UV stability, which prevents the cracking and crazing that occurs with uncoated polycarbonate lenses. While UV causes polycarbonate to yellow, it causes silicone to become more clear.

SILASTIC silicone, by DOW, demonstrates 94% light transmission through the silicone material compared with 88% to 90% through polycarbonate material, according to a study DOW conducted on its SILASTIC silicone. This allows SoundOff Signal engineers to create unique lens shapes and longer path lengths, resulting in more efficient and brighter beams.

DOW rates the SILASTIC silicone to a 302°F maximum service temperature. This is a 22% increase over typical polycarbonate lenses. Mirate says, “With silicone, the lens is no longer the weak link in the lighting system. When it comes to heat from the sun, or even exposure to flame, these lenses last longer.”

Silicone is highly durable to withstand the demands of exterior lighting. Mirate states, “Lens chipping or cracking that can occur from gravel impact in a traditional polycarbonate lens, is not a concern due to the inherent elasticity of the silicone lens. This is even more evident at lower temperatures when traditional plastics become brittle.”

Another feature of silicone lights is their ability to combine the optic and lens. Silicone is a moldable compound, like pouring water into an ice cube tray where the ice forms the pattern of the tray. “Because we can design the shape in one pour,” says Mirate, “we were able to form the outer lens and inner optic into one piece. For customers, it means fewer parts to break and a longer-life light. It also means a more efficient light path, resulting in a brighter output.”

NFPA COMPLIANCE

All SoundOff Signal fire lights are measured according to NFPA 1900, *Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Vehicles, Automotive Fire Apparatus, Wildland Fire Apparatus, and Automotive Ambulances*. That measured data are available to customers to ensure a fire apparatus is NFPA 1900 compliant.

NFPA 1900 has shifted many equipment-specific requirements (like materials or accessories) to Annex A, making them recommendations rather than mandates. One NFPA recommendation is that plastic lens materials be Automotive Manufacturers Equipment Compliance Agency (AMECA) approved. Although AMECA approval is recognized as a benchmark for plastic lens materials within FMVSS108 and SAEJ576, it is not a stated requirement in NFPA 1900. Because optical silicone is not a plastic, and in fact is closer in make up to being a “flexible glass,” it does not fall under the requirements of plastic. Silicone is in its own unique category that is yet undefined in current standards. Nevertheless, DOW has obtained AMECA approval on its SILASTIC MS-1002 optical material to show that it can meet the rigors of the standard.

SPECIFYING FIRE APPARATUS LIGHTING

When apparatus purchasing committees (APCs) are configuring their fire apparatus, Gabe, director of sales, fire/EMS, says they should keep in mind that although OEMs will always have default lighting products, APCs can request the lighting products they want. “We work with all OEMs and have good relationships with them,” he says.

As APCs start the process Casucci says to keep in mind three things: to and from scene, on scene, and maintenance longevity. “We’re all here to make lives easier and safer,” he says. Federal Highway Administration data indicates that approximately 50% of all severe traffic injuries happen at intersections. The NFPA says that about 5% of fire apparatus collisions occur at intersections. “Firefighters want confidence instead of anxiety when going through intersections,” says Casucci, “it’s important to choose lighting, sirens, and control systems, that reduce this risk like sync technology and sirens that have both low-frequency and high-frequency tones.”

When on scene, Casucci says to think about light direction. He says that APCs often focus on output and lumen numbers instead of actual area illumination. "For scene lights on tall apparatus, make sure they are angled in the appropriate direction for actual use cases on buildings," he says. "And for lights that are meant to be under your apparatus to light up the ground at night when stepping out of the vehicle, make sure you choose some sort of flood pattern instead of spot. There's a lot that goes into choosing lighting, and we can help make sure on scene fire suppression is supported by lighting that helps instead of just looking pretty on the truck."

Regarding maintenance and longevity, Casucci says, "Think about products that are easy to replace so apparatus do not sit out of commission for longer than they need to be. Also think about the longevity of your lighting products. For example, traditional polycarbonate lights fade, crack, and fog faster than silicone products do. Silicone withstands hotter temperatures, which means longer on scene lighting output."

Another consideration is mount patterns. The fire and automotive lighting industries have a standard mounting pattern for the 7x3 and 6x4 size lights, according to Mirate. These mounting patterns are set close to the corners to optimize the lighting area. The legacy 9x7 mounting format does not follow this pattern and brings the screws far inboard into the face of the light, causing a dead space in older 9x7 lights. "SoundOff Signal kept the tight corner mounting pattern scaling of the 7x3 and 6x4 lights and scaled it up to the 9x7 light size," he says. "In this way, SoundOff maximized the full-face potential of the 9x7 lens for light output. Using the scaled SoundOff Signal format allows for the same consistent and full lit appearance across the 7x3, 6x4, and 9x7 lights. If a customer would still prefer to use the 9x7 legacy mount pattern, SoundOff Signal provides adapters that make this possible."

There are many factors to consider when specifying the lighting for your fire apparatus. As fire departments begin to navigate the specification process, SoundOff Signal not only offers details on lighting packages, but also real-world advice. "Our fire team has fought fires themselves and understand what is needed most," says Casucci. We're here to sell a product that actually helps firefighters and here to discuss actual use case scenarios—because we get it."

FIRE STATIONS

I got nothing this week!

THE CHANGING FIRE SERVICE

Big Beaver, PA, Fire Department Gives Notice to Elected Officials

Susan Nicol

For the past 68 years, Big Beaver Borough firefighters have served their community. But, that will be coming to an end on Dec. 31, unless borough officials start paying for it.

"...The reality is our volunteers are aging out, and our recruitment and retention has been increasingly difficult," fire department leaders wrote in a letter posted on the department's Facebook page.

Fire Chief Matt Straub told KDKA: "We used to have a waiting list back in the day for people to be members here, and those times are gone. The people that are here now, we're here because we feel obligated. If we all walk away, who's going to do it? And unfortunately, that's what we're looking at now, and it breaks our heart. We don't have the manpower. We can't do it safely or efficiently."

In May, residents spoke of the need to pay for fire service and even agreed to a tax increase to make it happen. On Oct. 25, the council nixed a proposal to hire only one fire administrator and to provide a timeline for paying part-time firefighters.

"Hundreds and hundreds of manhours we spent on this, and for them to vote 'no' is just a slap in the face," the fire chief said.

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!!

DATA SUBMISSION IS ON HOLD DUE TO THE FEDERAL GOVT. SHUT DOWN!!

HOME FIRE FATALITIES REPORTED BY THE MEDIA FROM THE US FIRE ADMINISTRATION FOR 2025	
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	53
Last fire death 8/9/25 Eaton, Madison Co., Female 69	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	88
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	733
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/60
	#2 NY/53
	#3 IL /43
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2025: 1480	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
Week 36 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 41 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?	

A Single Staircase Doomed a Family of Five. How a NJ Home Renovation May Have Led to Tragedy.

Richard Cowen, nj.com

Investigators are still searching for the cause of the Halloween night fire on Emerson Avenue in Paterson that killed a family of five and left another seven people homeless.

Two families lived in the small, 1,300 square-foot Cape Cod style house at 15 Emerson Avenue, said Paterson Fire Chief Alex Alicea.

But there was only one way out of the apartment on the second floor, down a rear staircase where the fire broke out just before 10 p.m. Friday, he said.

"We believe the fire started in the rear on the first floor," said Paterson Fire Chief Alex Alicea. "Whether it was inside or outside, we're still looking into that."

Trapped by flames and smoke, a family of five perished on the second floor. The Passaic County Prosecutor's Office identified the adults as Raid Abuhadbeh, 39, his wife, Yesenia, 38. The names of the children, ages 14, 12, and 7, were withheld.

The victims are related to state Assemblyman Al Abdelaziz, (D-35th District) a Paterson resident who was up for reelection on Tuesday.

Late Monday, Abdelaziz posted on Facebook, thanking everyone for their emotional support and asking for their vote.

"These past few days have been incredibly difficult as I grieve the tragic loss of my cousin and his beautiful family while also navigating a consequential election for our state and country," he wrote.

Alicea said that when firefighters attempted to enter the house, there was no front entrance to the second-floor apartment.

"It was compartmentalized into two," Alicea said of the house, which was built in 1950 and is listed as a one-family on Zillow.

He said city records would determine whether the renovations dividing the house into two separate apartments were done legally.

The family that lived on the first floor escaped. The American Red Cross says it provided emergency shelter to seven people roused by the fire. A GoFundMe campaign thus far has raised \$22,000.

The house is located in Paterson's Hillcrest section near the Totowa border.

Emerson Avenue cuts through Paterson's Hillcrest section, a string of well-maintained single-family homes near the Totowa border. Hillcrest has long been one of Paterson's most attractive neighborhoods.

One resident, Linda Damian, said she's lived on Emerson Avenue since 1966. Damian said kids were still going door-to-door for trick or treat on Friday night when the fire trucks arrived.

"When I first saw the flames, I thought it was on the next block," she recalled. "The kids were still trick or treating, and they were all screaming because they were scared."

"It's a very sad day and devastating for the families," she said. "This is something you wouldn't wish on anybody."

Another neighbor, Kasey Alarcon-Borowic, said she looked out her window and saw the sirens flashing. She saw firefighters punching holes in the roof and trying to gain entry to the second floor.

"The only thing that would really let you know a tragedy was happening were the lights," she said. "There was no screaming, no crowd gathered, or anything like that. It was eerily silent."

[EDITOR'S NOTE: DON'T SOME ARCHITECTS AND POLITICIANS WANT TO BUILD BUILDING UP TO SIX STORIES WITH A SINGLE EXIT STAIRWAY? WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?]

GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE

Lenoir County Fire Sparked By Lithium-Ion Battery Prompts Safety Warning

LENOIR COUNTY, N.C. (WITN) - Emergency officials are warning about the dangers of lithium-ion batteries after a house fire in Lenoir County was traced to one that wasn't even in use or being charged. Firefighters from several volunteer departments responded early Friday morning after a homeowner was awakened by smoke detectors and discovered a fire that started from a lithium-ion battery connected to a leaf blower. The battery had been sitting idle when it suddenly overheated and caught fire. No one was injured, but the blaze caused significant damage to the home.

Cabinet Company Rises After Devastating Lithium Battery Fire

Caught on a security camera, fiery flames emanating from exploding lithium-ion batteries were the first indication of trouble for the owner and manager of Hiebert Cabinets and Woodwork in Bow Island, Alberta, Canada.

This sudden flash of fire became a massive conflagration that ended a day later with a burnt-out shell and a pile of rubble where a factory once stood.

Company managers were alerted to the fire at about 10 p.m., June 6, 2024. Emergency officials were en route. Owner John Hiebert was soon on his way to assess the situation. It didn't take long to find out.

"I saw a glow in the sky when I went over some of the hills, you know, 10 kilometers out of Bow Island, and I knew my cabinet shop was gone," Hiebert said. "I knew that I no longer had a cabinet shop."

The fire consumed the entire 9,300-square-foot shop, which typically employs 25 to 30 workers making custom- and high-end cabinetry and other products for residents and businesses in Southern Alberta.

Destroyed were the finished cabinets, components, and raw materials in stock, ongoing work in process, and equipment that included advanced machinery such as a Homag CNC router and Homag edgebander, as well as a dedicated finishing department.

ORIGINS OF THE FIRE

While Hiebert Cabinets began the process of rebuilding, investigators were able to determine the cause of the fire. After reviewing the security camera footage and examining the scene, officials determined that the fire was caused by a defective battery in the area where portable power tools that used lithium batteries were stored. The fire officials could not decide which tool battery failed, as multiple portable power tools were stored together.

STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!

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.

Duties & Deadlines is Back!

Join Us on November 18th 7:00 pm

We heard you and we're back! Join us for Duties & Deadlines, **training for Fire District Secretaries**. Gina Marrone, Amy Speach & Donna Marano will host a live webinar on Meeting Minutes and Annual Cancer Reporting. This is an interactive webinar so bring your questions and suggestions for future Duties & Deadlines. Join us on **Tuesday, November 18th beginning at 7:00 pm**. It's easy to join us, just click the registration button below to get the Zoom link.

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_B1jhRXX5RcCcy19cqxyknw#/registration

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 November 16th**

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

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

GENERAL INTEREST

Soliciting Bid Proposals for New Rigs: Keys to Success

Mike Wilbur & Tom Shand

Developing vehicle specifications is a time-consuming process no matter the type of apparatus. It requires the expertise of experienced personnel as well as input from fleet mechanics, apparatus engineers and other stakeholders.

Over the years, the acquisition process changed. Once, the common practice was for a detailed specification to be written by the department without bias toward a particular manufacturer. Today, using a nationally recognized purchasing consortium, a department can choose its preferred vendor and request an array of options and configurations.

The apparatus manufacturing industry is operating with an extensive production backlog of vehicles to build, with some delivery times extending into 2027. Compared with when an apparatus could be built and completed within 12–14 months, manufacturers must project their labor and material costs several years out. If you have observed the cost of routine consumer products during the past 18 months, the effect of inflation is readily apparent. The apparatus industry is no different, with the result being double-digit increases in the cost of new apparatus.

In January 2024, the new *NFPA 1900: Standard for Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Vehicles, Automotive Fire Apparatus, Wildland Fire Apparatus, and Automotive Ambulances* took effect. This will be followed by the January 2027 Environmental Protection Agency diesel engine emissions regulations. Both create an immediate effect on availability. Several of the most common diesel engines in various horsepower ratings no longer will be produced. (The replacement models still are under development at this point.)

Given the effect of inflation, along with frequent adjustments that can be expected in material costs, departments that are soliciting bids for new apparatus will find that, in some cases, the proposal price that's offered likely will be firm for a period of 30 days or fewer.

START EARLY

Fleet managers and those who are responsible for the procurement process must develop and update their apparatus replacement plans to align with the extended delivery schedules and anticipated final costs. The planned life cycle for front-line and reserve units must be adjusted. This results in extended service life along with increased repair and maintenance costs, to keep vehicles in good condition and in conformance with *NFPA 1910: Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Refurbishment, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Emergency Vehicles and Marine Firefighting Vessels*. When the financial resources aren't sufficient to adequately fund the replacement schedule for apparatus, it's imperative that chief officers work with internal and external stakeholders to adjust the replacement plan, to ensure that it can be implemented. Whatever methodology your organization utilizes to procure new vehicles, plan to start the process early to avoid unanticipated price increases as well as to secure a production slot for the apparatus. The planned life cycle for the replacement unit shouldn't be predicated on who can build the rig the fastest, nor should you favor a preferred vendor that can't provide a fixed price for the unit or requires a prepayment without providing a performance bond to protect the monies that are paid to it.

Although using a purchasing consortium to select your preferred vendor ensures that you will obtain the model of vehicle that's desired, this might not provide the lowest price for the vehicle, depending on the design and configuration. Fleet standardization should be the goal, particularly with respect to hose, tool and equipment layouts, major components and vehicle dimensions. What's standard in your fleet with respect to electronic components, pump panel instrumentation and valves, along with major chassis components, should be incorporated into the final version of vehicle specifications.

CUSTOMIZATION

With the rising cost of new apparatus, consideration should be given to reviewing the configuration of your engine and ladder company units with respect to the degree of standardization versus customization to achieve the desired result. An analysis of how the final cost of the apparatus rolls up based on the degree of

customization and one-off engineering projects provides valuable information on which to make sound decisions.

For example, your current engines might have bumper hose trays to accommodate preconnected attack lines that have a specific dimension. However, you might find that this varies from the manufacturer's standard dimensions, even if by a small amount. The result of this tray design to meet your specifications costs almost double that of the standard design. It's difficult to remove personnel preferences and opinions when discussing apparatus design, but the degree of customization affects the overall cost.

What's standard equipment in your fleet might not be standard with your preferred manufacturer. To alleviate issues at the preconstruction meeting when the planned configuration and components might not be available, consider meeting with the sales engineer prior to contract to review the specifications from bumper to back step to confirm that the unit can be built as planned.

With the extended delivery times, the date for the preconstruction meeting might not take place for some time after the contract is awarded. Some components, particularly vehicle lighting and electronic equipment, might be out of date when the unit goes into production. Some of the enhancements to components that were implemented after the preconstruction meeting might be offered at little or no cost increase when compared with the originally desired model. However, if a significant amount of time passed between the contract signing and the preconstruction meeting, you can anticipate increased costs for the replacement component.

Each apparatus project should have a contingency fund that can be utilized with discretion as needed to absorb the cost of change orders at the preconstruction meeting and for unanticipated changes during the production cycle. Changes made after this point should be discouraged, because they become increasingly costly and can delay the planned completion of the new apparatus.

TIME AND INITIATIVE

If your department desires to obtain competitive bids for your new rig, the preferred method is to develop your own specifications to include requirements for technical documentation, warranty terms, training, delivery and acceptance, among other items. Submitting a list of critical apparatus dimensions, including overall length and height, wheelbase, cab and body lengths and hosebed heights, provides guidance for manufacturers to follow. This information, along with a technical description of the principal components on the vehicle, gives a prospective bidder everything that it needs to provide a proposal.

Unfortunately, because of the increased usage of consortium contracts and bids that are awarded using tag-on provisions, fewer departments develop their own technical specifications and instead rely on input from outside resources. That said, if your department takes the time and initiative to develop apparatus specifications that are tailored to meet your and your members' needs, the proposals that you will receive will provide an opportunity to discern the degree to which the manufacturers' specifications deliver what you requested, probably with a wide variation in cost and number of exceptions or clarifications to consider. We recently encountered a department that bid a custom chassis, 1,500-gpm engine that has a short wheelbase, a low rear hosebed, and a specific range of dimensions to cover the maximum overall length and height in conjunction with fire station limitations. Several bidders noted compliance with the dimensional requirements. However, when the department evaluated one of the blueprints that was submitted with the proposal, it found that the vehicle would exceed the height and length requirements. Similarly, a specific make and model of valves on the fire pump were listed for each discharge by the department, including the preferred method of actuation. Of the five bids that the department received, only one manufacturer offered exactly what was specified; the others offered what was considered as standard for their apparatus builds—and didn't note an exception or clarification as to why the requested valves wouldn't be supplied.

CONTINUAL UPDATING

No one manufacturer may be able to provide 100 percent of a department's desired design. However, conducting a prebid conference to allow prospective vendors to comment on your requirements can afford a forum for a healthy exchange of information for all parties. Working on apparatus-related projects, whether on a new unit or evaluating the fleet for rebuild candidates, is a time-consuming project and must be updated continually to keep pace with changes in the apparatus industry as well as government regulations that affect how you operate and maintain your services to the community.

LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

My brain says let do something exciting today my body says don't listen to that fool.

Back in my day, kids didn't talk back to their parents because they had a mom with a wooden spoon and a dad that wore a belt.

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Plotterkill Fire District Seeks Treasurer

The Plotterkill Fire District is seeking a **part-time treasurer** to oversee the financial operations of the fire district in compliance with New York State laws and regulations.

Responsibilities include:

- Receive and disperse monies as authorized
- Maintain financial records, including spreadsheet for monthly expenses, Quickbooks, vouchers, and fuel usage
- Assist in preparation of annual budget
- Reconcile bank statements
- File required financial reports with the Office of the State Comptroller and other agencies
- Process payroll quarterly and prepare and distribute W-2 forms at year-end
- Review and sort incoming District mail and maintain and monitor District's email box
- Attend monthly Board of Fire Commissioners meetings to present financial updates.

Qualifications:

- Prior experience in Fire District or municipal finance preferred.
- Proficiency in accounting software and Microsoft Office
- Strong organization skills and attention to detail.
- Ability to work independently and meet deadlines.

Compensation:

- Annual salary of \$3,000, paid quarterly

Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter to Tonya Hall, the District Secretary at thallfd8@gmail.com.

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Sargent at Arms: Tom Wood, Commissioner, Northumberland Fire District

Chaplain: Fred Richards, Commissioner, Harmony Corners Fire District

Legal Counsel: Greg Serio, Safety Officer, Verday Fire District

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

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

CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063

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

518-407-5020

EMAIL SECRETARY: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET

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..

FIRE SERVICE LEGAL SERVICES



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Alyssa B. Snyder, Partner
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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

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION (CAFDA)

Would you like to join Capital Area Fire Districts Association along with 100 members in 14 counties? Individuals, fire district associations, fire protection districts and Village departments are all eligible for membership.

Annual dues (January 1st to December 31st) shall be as follows and shall be based on the annual budget of the Fire District/Organization;

\$0 to \$200,000: \$50

\$200,001 to \$400,000: \$100

\$400,001 to \$600,000: \$200

\$600,001 plus: \$300

Individuals \$50.00 or Other County or Regional Associations \$300 annually.

Business Partners: \$100.00 annual member fee

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

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

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

<https://cafdanet.com/membership-info/>

CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

SAVE THE DATES!

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

COMMISSIONER TRAINING

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

OTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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

SOCIAL EVENTS

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

MEETINGS – CLIFTON PARK FIRE DISTRICT & ZOOM

General Membership Meeting	Saturday, January 4, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, February 13, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Wednesday March 5, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting	Thursday, April 3, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, May 8, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, June 12, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting	Thursday, August 14, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, September 11, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, October 9, 2025
General Membership Meeting	Thursday, November 13, 2025



FOR MORE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Website	www.CAFDA.net
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OSHA INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

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

NEWEST INFORMATION ALWAYS AT THE TOP WITH RED ARROW

According to Tim Hannigan:

There was an update in early September on the Federal Register indicating that OSHA continues to review the record and matters on the docket. There is no end date on that process at this time, OSHA inserted a generic "November 2025" date as a timeframe to continue to review comments on the record. *That was pre-shutdown, so that timeframe is likely further out now.* The Proposed Rule as was initially published back in December 2023 by OSHA remains the only version of the rule at this time.

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.