



CAPITAL SHORTS:

- A letter of intent for those wishing to run for CAFDA officer or director must be in to the Secretary prior to the start of the October General Membership Meeting.
- Both the fire district election schedule and the budget development schedule are posted to the web site at www.CAFDA.net
- September is Suicide Prevention Month. This is a time to raise awareness and discuss this highly stigmatized topic. In addition to educating and shifting public perception, we need use this month and EVERYDAY to spread hope and vital information to people affected by suicide.

- AFDSNY is pleased to announce that Michael Stevens, from NYS DHSES OFPC, will be presenting on Thursday, October 2nd at the AFDSNY Annual Meeting & Leadership Expo in Saratoga Springs, to review the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS), answer your questions. and help ensure you don't miss the January 1st deadline. Onboarding to NERIS is **mandatory** for all fire departments, with a deadline of **January 1, 2026**. Register for the Annual Meeting/Conference at: https://mms.afdsny.org/members/evr/reg_main.php?orgcode=FDNY&evid=45560727
- Congratulations to McKownville Fire District on the erection of your new fire station.

LEARN WITH CAFDA – OUR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

WWW.CAFDA.NET

1. ***NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday October 9th, in person or Zoom in. 7PM. Nominations for 2026 Officers and Directors will occur.***

ZOOM LINK FOR THE OCTOBER MEETING:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89890135454?pwd=XvaEknHQzJ8kiTq937xbUQlY12brdV.1>

Meeting ID: 898 9013 5454

Passcode: 248739

One tap mobile 646-558-8656, 89890135454#,,,,*248739# US (New York)

NOTE: According to our By-Laws Article 7 (C) "Letters of intent to be nominated for President, 1st Vice Preside, 2nd Vice President and Board of Directors must be submitted to the Secretary in writing by the **OCTOBER** meeting."

And it should also be noted that: "Letter of intent to remove a name from nomination for President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President and Board of Directors must be submitted to the Secretary in writing by the November meeting."

2. **CONTINUE BELOW:**



Capital Area Fire Districts Association FALL EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR

**Saturday November 1st, Verdoy Firehouse
988 Troy-Schenectady Rd. Latham, NY 12110**

7am Registration, Continental Breakfast



**8:00-9:30am Bob Mitchell, Fire Station Legal
Liability and the Role of a Properly Designed
Decon Laundry**

**9:45-10:45am Alyssa Snyder, Running a
Proper; Election District and Company**



**11:00-12:00pm Greg Serio, Ethics and the
roles of the players; District and
Company**

**12:15-1:30pm Lunch with the Experts
Panel Round Table**



**To register go to: CAFDA.NET
Designed for District and Fire Company Officers and
Boards**

3. CAFDA is happy to announce the dates for Conference '26 in historic Lake George,

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

4. 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.

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

Proposed Amendments to the State Association By-Laws

The State Association will be voting on a number of By-Law amendments at the October Annual Meeting. A review of the proposed amendments can be found here:

https://d15k2d11r6t6rl.cloudfront.net/pub/8ziy/udmzgsvm/n3z/6je/n41/PROPOSED%20AFDSNY%20BYLAW%20AMENDMENTS_3.pdf

CAFDA's Officers and Board of Directors supports these amendments and urges delegates to vote "Yes".

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

THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

Legislative Commentary

To see what the fire service accomplished during this legislative session go to the following LINK:

<https://cafda.net/what-did-the-fire-service-accomplish-during-the-2025-legislative-session/>

Now that the legislature is out of session, the ScoreCard will be reviewed for activity monthly.

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.

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES

Former Durhamville Fire Department Treasurer Pleads Guilty to Stealing Over \$92,000

New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, Oneida County District Attorney Todd Carville, and New York State Police Superintendent Steven G. James announced today that the former treasurer of the Durhamville Fire Department, Kimberly Simchik, pleaded guilty to stealing over \$92,000 from the fire department over a

seven-year period. As part of the plea, she will pay restitution of just over \$92,000 and faces 1 to 3 years in jail at sentencing.

Simchik stole over \$90,000 in fire department funds by using the department's debit card to make payments at local casinos and by diverting checks made out to the department into her personal account. She also spent department funds on plane tickets, spas, and nail salons.

The theft was discovered when a fire department member attempted to make a deposit and was informed by the bank that the department account had been closed due to a negative balance. The fire department subsequently reached out to the New York State Police, who partnered with DiNapoli's office to conduct an investigation and forensic analysis. Simchik has since resigned from the fire department.

Simchik, 62, of Durhamville, pled guilty to grand larceny in the second degree and corrupting the government in the second degree before Judge Michael R. Nolan in Oneida County Court. She is scheduled for sentencing on Nov. 21, 2025.

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

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Seconds Matter: Performance Outcomes and Justification for Four-Person Engine Staffing

Kristopher Blume

Fire Departments across the country are continuously evaluating their staffing models for effective firefighting; Meridian, Idaho, is no exception. Justification for staffing levels will never go away quietly. So it becomes incumbent on fire service professionals to demonstrate both qualitative and quantitative empirical evidence to support the proposed staffing model.

To that end, the Meridian Fire Department (MFD) recently conducted a series of 18 live-fire simulations. This sequence of developments underscored the influence of crew composition on fireground efficacy. The outcomes were impressive, revealing that four-person crews significantly outperform their three-person counterparts in critical tasks. Historically, the MFD has operated with three-person engine company staffing. This norm that has influenced both training and incident response practices. However, with the addition of Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response-funded (SAFER-funded) personnel, a comparative analysis of operational efficiency under different staffing models has become possible.

THREE- VS. FOUR-PERSON CREWS

By directly comparing three- and four-person crew performance under similar fireground conditions, *the MFD Training Division's study has demonstrated clear, measurable performance gains in favor of four-person staffing across all critical benchmarks.* This includes the following:

- *An 11% improvement for getting water on fire.*
- *A 74% improvement in establishing a continuous water supply.*
- *A 27% faster victim removal time.*

At the outset, it is worth noting that these findings also align with national trends highlighted in the International Association of Fire Fighters' (IAFF's) "Critical Considerations in Safe Fire Fighter Staffing" report, which has shown that four-person crews can rescue victims up to 80% faster than three-person teams. They also experience fewer delays in task completion.

As the MFD continues to assess staffing models for future operational readiness, the evidence from these training exercises provides the fire service with a compelling case that increasing engine company staffing to four personnel enhances both crew performance and the potential for civilian rescue from an IDLH environment, suggesting that the benefits of four-person staffing are substantial and inherent, rather than simply a product of additional practice or familiarity.

THE MFD'S FINDINGS

The MFD's findings are consistent with research on firefighter crew size and rapid intervention teams. These facts illustrate that the advantages of four-person staffing are not unique to the MFD's situation. A research project on firefighter crew size and emergency responses at South Metro Fire Rescue (SMFR) pointed out that the advantages of additional crew size include improved response and safety.

In addition, a study on the performance of the existing firefighter rapid intervention teams (RIT) indicated that a minimum initial four-person RIT team could rescue two downed firefighters faster than could be achieved by smaller crews. The available external research provides a context from which the MFD findings can be interpreted. By positioning the MFD results within the above studies, it is evident that while the MFD has support internally from its own data and in the fire service community, there is wider support to pursue four-person engine company staffing.

Research on the impact of crew size on firefighter health and safety has consistently shown that increasing crew size will lead to measurable improvement in task completion times. There is profound and necessary significance in consideration of the complex interaction of crew operational tempo, battle rhythm, and the situational context when evaluating the merits of different staffing models. Overall, these research-based results provide a clearer frame. The benefits of a four-person staffing model is clearly not only identified with one factor or outcome, but represented within a wider trend of improved performance, safety, other critical tasks and circumstances, and firefighter and community outcomes.

THE IDEAL NUMBER

So, is four personnel on suppression units optimal? *Research on initial attack fire crew productivity and effectiveness has shown that crew sizes beyond five personnel yield diminishing returns on task performance* (Hirsch et al., 1996). A study on crew productivity found that while a two- to-five-person engine crew produced an average level of performance, increasing the crew size to more than five persons had little benefit on overall effectiveness. This suggests that there is an optimal crew size and that four-person staffing may be close to this optimal point.

To support these assertions, research conducted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) concluded that four-person staffing is particularly beneficial for search and rescue activities, with a four-person crew able to execute these tasks 30% faster than smaller crews (Payne, 2014). This provides a nexus point to the MFD's research, which showcased the significant performance gains associated with four-person staffing in critical tasks such as victim removal.

Four-person staffing has operational advantages and enhances firefighter safety and well-being, as evidenced by lower fatigue and improved situational awareness. Research suggests that the physical and cognitive demands of emergency response can be high, with firefighters often operating in high-discomfort environments with limited information and resources. *By increasing crew size to four personnel, engine companies can better share the environmental, spatial, physical, and cognitive demands associated with the response.*

When departments like the MFD prioritize four-person staffing, they can create a more efficient operational approach. This would increase focus on firefighter safety and the potential to facilitate better resilience in the face of the complex demands of the entire spectrum of emergency response. This commitment to the safety and well-being of firefighters is aligned with the IAFF position for staffing being a determinant of firefighter safety and outcomes. It promotes the need for departments to develop staffing models that enhance operational effectiveness and firefighter well-being (IAFF, n.d).

IMPACT ON TRAINING

The use of four-person staffing in fire departments comes with profound ramifications for training and preparedness. At its core, it does enable more meaningful and realistic forms of training that better simulate the complexities and chaos encountered in real-time emergencies. When conducting three- or four-person training evolutions, the dramatic improvement in "horizontal reflex time" (Davis, 2024), as measured by the composite times to task completion, provides a compelling story. It is also evidenced that when firefighters train with a complete number of personnel, they tend to develop the essential skills and physical memory to respond effectively by communicating, coordinating, and making decisions. (These decisions may include optimizing fire department operations through work schedule analysis, alternative staffing, and reduction of nonproductive time.)

COST CONSIDERATIONS

What about cost? Any notion that the implementation of four-person staffing would have no financial implications for fire departments must be dismissed. However, research continues to demonstrate more significant long-term benefits in terms of reduced risk and improved operational outcomes when using four-person staffing (Payne, 2014). A NIST study evaluating the cost-benefit of staffing models concluded that the increase in personnel costs with the four-person staffing was offset by reductions in injury and illness costs, as well as property loss and damage costs (Payne, 2014). *Additionally, a study examining the economic benefits of improved firefighter staffing, found that departments that increased staffing adequately saw significant economic returns such as reductions in workers' compensation claims and lower overtime pay* (Fire Engineering, 2021).

HELPFUL INSIGHTS

As the MFD continues to assess staffing models for future operational readiness, the insights gained from its 18 live-fire simulations provide a framework that can help with this decision. The framework provides evidence of clear and measurable performance improvements in key indicators including water supply, victim removal, and overall task organization. *To put it in perspective, MFD suppression crews with four persons have improved their time on task compared to crews with three persons by 213 seconds.* Organizational response times aside, the question should be this: Once you arrive on the scene, how fast can you accomplish the mission? Seconds are significant and more than a mere count. They represent the distinction between life and death.

STEP INTO THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

NY Division of Human Rights Dismisses Discrimination Complaint Against Fire Volunteer Fire Company

Posted by Curt Varone

The New York State Division of Human Rights has dismissed a complaint filed by former Patterson Fire Department #1 member who alleged that the department and several of its officers subjected her to unlawful discrimination and retaliation.

The petitioner, Eleanora Smith, had been a volunteer firefighter with Patterson FD since 1991. She was a life member and served in a number of different positions, including president of the board of directors. In January 2019, another female member, Monica DeFeo, filed grievances against Captain Vincent Montouro, alleging aggressive and harassing conduct. Smith cooperated with the investigation of DeFeo's grievances and expressed concerns about Montouro's behavior.

Smith claimed that over the following months, her relationship with department leadership deteriorated. She was removed from the ambulance driver list, but it turned out that her removal occurred at her own request due to her frustration with the department's leadership. She claims she was denied reassignment to certain committees (including a fire company centennial committee), and was not reinstated to the ambulance list after she later sought to return.

In October 2019, she filed a grievance against department leadership, alleging retaliation for her role in the DeFeo investigation. That grievance was dismissed as unfounded.

In May 2021, after a grievance was filed against Smith by the department's president, the grievance committee recommended that she undergo anger management training. Smith refused. At a membership meeting that followed, a motion was made and seconded to terminate her membership, which was approved. Shortly afterward, another motion was passed banning her from the department's premises.

Smith subsequently filed suit in state court challenging her termination, but the petition was denied by the Putnam County Supreme Court in September 2022, and her appeal was dismissed in August 2024.

On May 14, 2021, Smith filed a complaint with the Division of Human Rights alleging sex discrimination and retaliation in violation of the New York Human Rights Law. The case was referred to a public hearing before Administrative Law Judge Rebecca A. Clancy. Hearings were conducted virtually in 2024, and both parties were represented by counsel.

Smith argued that her removal from committees, denial of reinstatement to the ambulance list, ineligibility to serve as treasurer, termination from membership, and redaction of certain information about her from the

department's centennial book were all acts of unlawful discrimination or retaliation connected to her involvement in the DeFeo grievances.

The ALJ determined that:

- Claims based on events prior to November 22, 2019, were barred by the statute of limitations.
- Smith's allegations of discrimination regarding committee assignments and ambulance driver status did not amount to continuing violations.
- Smith failed to establish a causal connection between her protected activity in 2019 and the department's later actions, including her ineligibility to serve as treasurer in October 2020 and the termination of her membership in May 2021.
- The department had legitimate, nondiscriminatory reasons for its decisions, including enforcement of bylaws and Smith's refusal to comply with disciplinary recommendations.
- The centennial book, which included multiple photographs of Smith and recognition of her service, did not constitute retaliation despite the omission of her life member status following her termination.

On August 20, 2025, Judge Clancy issued a Recommended Order dismissing Smith's complaint in its entirety. The parties were advised they have 21 days to file objections before a final order is issued by the Commissioner of Human Rights.

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

Not a very positive week!

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

Fire Chiefs Lay Out Plan for Byron, South Byron Merger

The Byron and South Byron, Genesee County, fire chiefs propose merging their departments to enhance efficiency, improve service ensure sustainable staffing and strengthen fire protection.

They plan to do it in four phases over several years, with final integration into one facility by the end of 2032.

Byron Fire Department No. 1 Fire Chief Dwane Weatherell said there were several merger proposals with South Byron Volunteer Fire Company, led by Chief Brian Hickey.

"This is the proposal that Chief Hickey and I have worked on over the course of the year," Weatherell said at a special meeting Wednesday at the South Byron Volunteer Fire Company.

Weatherell and Hickey gave a few reasons for merging: operational efficiency, improved response times, financial sustainability, unified training and standards and community cohesion.

"The primary goal of this merger is to enhance operational efficiency, improve service delivery and ensure sustainable staffing and strengthen the fire protection service across the entire town," Weatherell said.

The fire chiefs propose the following phases:

Phase 1, begin dispatching both fire departments to all calls simultaneously by the end of this year.

Phase 2, officially merge the departments into the Black Creek Fire Company by the end of 2027.

Phase 3, operate seamlessly as one department using two fire halls between 2028-31.

Phase 4, merge into a single, centralized department by the end of 2032.

Weatherell said the name Black Creek Fire Department isn't etched in stone right now.

"We used the Black Creek Fire Company because the original fire department in Byron was the Black Creek Fire Department," he said of the name used many years ago. "If somebody wants to call it Byron, somebody else wants to call it South Byron, let's just get rid of both of those names and call it something different."

Each phase has a list of key actions. Establishing a leadership structure is part of the second phase. *The proposed Black Creek Fire Company would have one fire chief, deputy chief and one EMS captain. There would be two assistant chiefs, fire captains and fire lieutenants, one per fire station for each role.*

Phase 3 would include standardized training, equipment and administrative procedures, shared rosters, shift assignments, and training calendars. The new fire company would evaluate response data and station coverage needs.

Among the key actions of the final phase are feasibility studies for long-term infrastructure such as a new building, renovations or consolidation.

The fire chiefs propose having a Merger Oversight Committee during this process. The committee would include two representatives from each fire department, the town supervisor (or designee), an at-large community member and a representative of the county Office of Emergency Management. .

Weatherell was asked if there would be any help from the county or the state during this process.

"Once we formalize our plan and start moving forward, we will absolutely try to take advantage of any financial incentives," he said. "The state wants everybody to combine. Why would we have five people doing the same thing when we might be able to get one or two entities doing that?"

There are federal and state money available that would need to be applied for to help with the process, Weatherell said.

"It's roughly around \$20,000 to get the lawyers to sit down and hash this out ... but, if we can put a proposal together and put it in front of our federal and state stakeholders and say, 'Listen, we've got this small community. We would really like to join these two fire companies together and make something great out of it,'" he said.

"If they want to say, 'Hey, that's a great idea. Here's a lump of money to do what you want with,' of course we're going to attempt that," Weatherell said.

There was a question about how a merger would affect response times. Weatherell said he looks for this to lessen response times.

To the question of would they move and where would they move, Weatherell said there are limitations and strengths to both fire stations.

"That's why we propose to have both buildings stay in operation for a period of time," he said. "We have taken into consideration where the two buildings are. We have not decided one building or the other. We have five pieces of apparatus down at the Byron Fire Department that we would need to store. Eventually, as we move forward, we would obviously ... lessen duplication."

Eric Zubel asked about potential grant money and whether Byron and South Byron would be pressured to form a fire district.

Weatherell said there are several different ways to have fire protection in the state. Byron has a fire protection district, he said.

"We are contractors. We, essentially, contract with the town. We do have tax-exempt and all those other things so we are like a public entity, but in reality, we're a corporation," Weatherell said. "Same with our friends here in South Byron."

A fire district is another way to provide fire protection, he said.

"A fire district has a board of commissioners. A board of commissioners, they are a taxing entity," Weatherell said. "The board of commissioners decide that they want whatever they want and they tell the town, 'You tax the people for this.' That could be beneficial or that could be not so good."

Weatherell said that in Byron, the population has been going down over the years.

"We've lost about 100 people a year for the last four years, according to the census," he said. "It's harder and harder for 2,000 people to bear the burden of large fire protection. We could form a fire district and that fire district could say, 'No more fire department in Byron.' The town has a responsibility to provide fire protection, so we would have to work that out."

Right now, the two departments are trying to resolve this between themselves and become one fire company, Weatherell said.

A woman noted Weatherell had said fire departments wanted the blessing of the towns for a merger.

"What happens after tonight? What's the next step?" she asked.

Weatherell said the two departments would go back to their boards.

"We would probably meet again as to fire departments and make sure we're happy with proposal as it is," he said. "I'm sure there will be some things that need to get changed, or some wording or something along those lines."

An attorney would have to read the proposal to make sure it's legal, he said.

"We would have to vote on it as individual companies and then come together," Weatherell said. "I think Chief Hickey shares my opinion that the young membership — the membership of the fire department that's actually doing the work right now, they're ready (to become one department)."

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Training: Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Clifton Park - October 18-19

Corning - October 25-26

MissionCIT's recruitment and retention workshop is back with two sessions this October for fire and EMS leaders looking to strengthen their teams.

Clifton Park: October 18-19

Corning: October 25-26

This immersive two-day experience will equip you with proven strategies to recruit effectively, retain members, and build a stronger department culture. Whether you're a seasoned officer or just stepping into a leadership role, this training will help you create lasting impact.

REGISTER NOW AT THIS LINK:

<https://firefightersassociationofthestateofnewyork.cmail20.com/t/y-l-qijitky-ikjuyhjliy-m/>



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.makeamefirefighter.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>

****From The Bench To A Starter: How To Cultivate The Members Who Struggle**

Colby Davis

Have you ever been to a sporting event, whether Little League, middle school or even high school, and noticed that one kid who seemed to be an outsider – the kid who never got to play?

Since most firefighters are naturally athletic, many of us were likely active in some kind of sport in our younger years – baseball, football, basketball, tennis, cross country, track or even something more unique, like gymnastics or archery.

When we were very young, we sort of ran around in a position with no real direction. Then when we moved into middle school or high school sports, we were pushed to be our best at the position in order to bring success to the team as a whole. Our ability to “play” was ultimately rooted in our skill progression and openness to coaching – this is what coaches are looking for and determined who was a starter for the team.

Of course, there are also the players who never progressed and therefore sat on the bench – and many eventually quit the team.

Have you ever thought about the kids on the bench? Did you ever wonder if they were actually a good hitter but never stepped up to bat because the coach didn’t think they played the field well enough – or whether they were a good runner but never had a chance to steal? Maybe they were great at reading plays but never on the field because they weren’t a strong tackler.

Just because someone isn’t top of their game with the abilities that we want them to have doesn’t mean they don’t have other abilities that can help us succeed as a team or an organization.

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS

In the last decade or so, the fire service has struggled with recruitment and retention. With retention specifically, some members have walked away from the fire service, not even to pursue another job. Did we have something to do with that, being the “alpha” personalities we are? Are there people who find the job harder than they thought it would be? Are the new generations of members not as interested in physical labor jobs like the baby boomers and Generation X?

I think the answer is yes – yes to all of those things. But how do we engage members enough to retain them?

Most people we are losing are the ones who “never played.” What do we blame that on most of the time? We say they’re lazy, they can’t take the heat, they applied for this job because they thought it was easy or, the best one, they thought they were going to sleep all night. What if all of those were false and we didn’t spend enough time on them, so they just went away?

When we are in the fire academy, whether at the state level or after we are hired within an organization, we are the little kids running around with no real direction. As we come out into the station, that is where our direction or non-direction is given. We have all had that officer or senior member who took us under their wing and showed us everything that we needed to know. We have also seen or been the officer or senior member wrote someone off quickly because they weren’t picking it up fast enough.

Think about it: *When we have the members who pick it up easy, it’s easy to give them direction and let their natural talent take care of the rest. But what about the member who are not good at remembering the instructions in the book, the ones who are not mechanically inclined, or who just don’t have the natural ability to do something and have to work at it?* They deserve our time, too. We are part of the problem when we fail to give them equal attention, essentially driving them away from the fire service. *Why not spend a little extra time on the person who doesn’t pick it up as fast and bring them up to par? While they don’t have to be the most knowledgeable person on the crew, they still bring something to the table.* If we spend some time on them through effort and training and bring them up to even 60% capability, then they are providing more assistance than the person we left at 10% capability – the person who ends up quitting.

Everyone has their place within an organization, we just have to help them find their spot. If we lose them, the time and effort you did put into them is wasted. And what if the next person you get has fewer capabilities, leaving your team even further behind?

We have all heard, in some fashion or another throughout our careers, “If I run 20 calls during a shift, how many does the public expect me to show up on and fix the problem?” 20. The public doesn’t care about what you think about your subordinate’s ability, but they do care that we show up as a team and fix whatever problem they called us out there for.

Maybe your member is a cautious, safe engine driver; maybe they are good on medical skills; maybe they are good at reading a building; or possibly even good at investigating fires. Just because someone isn’t a hose-

dragging hallway pusher doesn't mean they don't have abilities that will help the team or organization develop and progress. There are going to be times that a member doesn't have the capability to do something, no matter how bad we want them to, nor how bad they want to. As officers and leaders, this is where we must find their strengths and use them.

Again, maybe they don't thrive on the technical rescue team, but they can drive and pump an engine. Why not help them understand their strengths – and strengthen the organization – by moving them out to a single house and give someone else a chance at that spot on the tech rescue team? This can be a difficult talk, but that's our job as an officer or mentor.

How many times in college football have you seen a quarterback get hurt or a running back blow his knee out? Now they have to go to the backup. Is your backup ready to do the job and fulfill the starters shoes? What if your backup is the person whom you didn't put much effort into, but they are now your go-to member? If you find yourself in this situation, then you have done a disservice to yourself, your member, your team, and the citizens you serve. After all, instead of training that member, you wrote them off.

EVEN TREATMENT ACROSS THE BOARD

In officer classes, we are taught to build our members up and teach them what they need to know to make the next step or take our position. Why not do this evenly across the board? As a leader, you should enjoy the challenge of sculpting pottery out of a piece of clay.

Who knows, that person may be in a position later in life to help you in a tough situation, or even save your life, because you took the time to teach them what they didn't know and gave them the knowledge, skill and ability to help you.

As officers, leaders and mentors, we have to be able to work on multiple different levels. While it is easy for us to take the more motivated, more talented individual and plug them in the game, maybe the poor fielder has a higher batting average than our starter.

Remember, runs mean more in a baseball game than fielding ever did. To help retention, we cannot let these people get pushed to the outside of the circle, never assisted, and expect them to feel wanted and stick around. We need to step up and build our crews to the best of its ability, no matter how much work we have to put into it. We are here for them.

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH & SAFETY; PROTECTING OUR OWN

65

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.)

Alarming Numbers!!

The number of first responders and others diagnosed with 9/11-linked cancers has ballooned to 48,579 — a staggering 143% increase in five years, the [latest data](#) from the World Trade Center Health Program show. Skin, prostate and [breast cancer](#) top the list, along with melanoma, lymphoma, leukemia and cancers of the thyroid, kidney, lung and bladder — believed to have been triggered by toxins at Ground Zero and the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island.

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

- Steven Scott, Houston Fire Department, heart attack from stress/overexertion during patient care as an EMS provider.

FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK

- Three people have died following an overnight crash involving an ambulance Sunday in Chesapeake, according to Virginia State Police. The accident happened around 2:35 a.m. on I-464 southbound at Exit 2. State police say a 2024 Ford Econoline ambulance was traveling south on I-464 when it was struck head-on by a 2022 Lexus Sedan that was traveling north in the southbound lanes. The collision resulted in both vehicles catching fire. The driver and passenger of the ambulance, which was owned by Midwest Medical in North Carolina, were taken to Sentara Norfolk General Hospital with life-threatening injuries, where they later died, police said. The passenger was identified as 53-year-old Stephen Michael Anderson. The driver was identified as 22-year-old Sky Alexis Oraczewski. The driver of the Lexus, identified as 39-year-old Shakena Shamae Taylor-Pannell, died at the scene. *State police say alcohol and speed are being investigated as contributing factors in the crash.* The investigation remains ongoing.
- A man in his 30s was hospitalized with life-threatening injuries after a fire crew ran him over with their truck outside a Cutting Boulevard fire station. The victim was believed to be intoxicated, and didn't respond when the station's roll-up door activated. The fire truck stopped and firefighters attempted to provide medical aid before he was taken to the hospital.
- In Indianapolis, four firefighters were transported to the hospital after their rescue truck overturned Saturday morning on the way to a crash scene. The injured firefighters were rushed to nearby hospitals for treatment. IFD said in an update Sunday that two of the firefighters were admitted to the hospital with serious injuries, while the others were treated, released, and remain off-duty for recovery.



FIRE APPARATUS

How Tools, Equipment & Compartments Figure into the Most Efficient Design of Heavy Rescue Rigs

Tom Shand & Mike Wilbur

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The “bigger is always better” philosophy doesn’t always work in regard to the design of heavy rescues, because the size and compartment configuration to meet a fire department’s needs still might go unaddressed.
- Tool and equipment storage and a detailed inventory of the equipment, including dimensions and weights for each item, must be shared with prospective heavy rescue manufacturers to determine the appropriate front- and rear-axle ratings that are required to accommodate the equipment.
- Prior to contract, a fire department should require bidders to provide a detailed weight analysis on the apparatus to include all of the fixed and portable equipment that would be supplied by the department.

Fire departments operate a variety of special service vehicles to support fireground, technical rescue and hazmat operations. Depending on the community demographics and the hazards that are in the response district, the size of the special service apparatus, the equipment cache and the department’s staffing models affect the service delivery for these assets.

There’s different terminology for these special service vehicles depending on past practices and, in some cases, as new technical rescue resources are brought on board. Most commonly, these rigs, regardless of size and operational mode, are referred to as rescues or rescue squads. Whatever the local terminology dictates, these units enhance the department’s capability to carry equipment resources that are beyond the capabilities of engine and ladder company units. *Although not every department requires this type of apparatus—along with the enhanced training that’s required to operate the equipment—resource planning should be accomplished to have this level of expertise available, even if organized on a regional level.*

LARGER NOT ALWAYS BETTER

Because of federal funding that became available after 9/11, many departments developed technical rescue teams that include vehicles and equipment that were made available with a subsequent increase in the number of heavy rescues of all sizes, including semitrailer units. Departments that have previous experience with operating heavy rescues have an advantage based on their experience with the equipment that must be carried to meet the mission and how the overall size of the vehicle affects the capability to safely access the response area and position for optimal use at the incident scene.

Historically, the apparatus industry developed some standard body designs based on the length and height of the rescue body for both walk-around and walk-in heavy rescues. Because of the amount of equipment that's desired to be carried, along with the weight and staffing levels for these special service units, tandem-axle rescue apparatus have become more prevalent. *Although this "bigger is always better" philosophy works in some cases, the larger apparatus still might not provide the appropriate size and compartment configuration to meet a department's needs without careful planning.*

More than ever, apparatus committees must evaluate the service needs of their first-due area and temper this with some practical application of situational awareness to provide for a well-designed apparatus. With many communities introducing traffic circles in lieu of signal-controlled intersections, the maneuverability of the apparatus, including the angle of approach and departure, is an important consideration during the design process.

EQUIPMENT MEASUREMENTS

NFPA 1901: Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus addresses heavy rescue and squad vehicles in Chapter 10 and provides for an equipment weight capacity of 10,000 lbs. for vehicles that have a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 60,001 lbs. This payload allowance is a minimum, which requires a department's apparatus committee to determine its requirements for tool and equipment storage along with a detailed inventory of the equipment, including dimensions and weights for each item. This information must be shared with the prospective apparatus manufacturers to determine the appropriate front- and rear-axle ratings that are required to accommodate this equipment. *It might be helpful to have the prospective manufacturers provide the members of the apparatus committee with shipping weights for completed vehicles, which would indicate the front- and rear-axle weights on the vehicle, prior to mounting of the department's equipment.* These weight tickets are invaluable to the process of assessing the available payload that can be carried on the apparatus and to determining whether the proposed chassis components are adequate to safely carry personnel and the desired tool and equipment payload.

The size and configuration of technical rescue equipment are critical, because the manufacturers' standard compartment dimensions might not account for the space that's required for slide-tray and tool-board clearance with equipment that's mounted on these devices. Some specifications state overall compartment dimensions in inches for the height, width and depth of each area. These numbers might not take into consideration the loss of height because of headers, the roll-door shutter or the clear door opening of hinged doors. Likewise, the depth of each compartment both on the interior and exterior should be verified with the door in the closed position.

TOOL LAYOUT

After the particular compartment dimensions are established, you can begin to lay out your tools and equipment within each compartment for an initial run. Many manufacturers and equipment-mounting companies can provide a computer-aided design (CAD) drawing for each area that's within the compartment body. These CAD drawings can be of great assistance to determine ahead of time that your proposed tool/equipment and compartment layout will work once the body fabrication is completed.

Another technique that can be accomplished in the fire station is to mark out each surface area (e.g., adjustable shelf, tray or wall) on the apparatus bay floor with tape and locate the desired equipment within the space. Documentation of this work should include digital images and a listing of the appliances and equipment for each location.

WEIGHT ANALYSIS

Prior to contract, the department should require bidders to provide a detailed weight analysis on the apparatus to include all of the fixed and portable equipment that would be supplied by the department. Projected weight should be verified at the final inspection. If sufficient equipment weights aren't available, sand or shot bags should be loaded onto the apparatus to simulate the missing equipment.

Prior to final acceptance, the completed and fully equipped vehicle should be weighed, including personnel, on a certified scale to validate the rig's in-service weight.

PLAN ACCORDINGLY

Designing a new heavy rescue/squad is a detailed and time-consuming process. It requires the apparatus committee to review the department's staffing and deployment practices as well as to confirm the required tools and equipment that will meet the operational needs of the department for the planned life cycle of the apparatus. Heavy rescues that are cross-staffed by multiple companies often provide different specialized technical rescue missions compared with units that are staffed constantly and operate to perform multiple missions, including truck company functions, vehicle extrication and support functions on the fireground. In either case, the personnel who operate the rigs must be trained to provide the appropriate level of services to meet the defined mission of the unit.

There are many influences on the design of heavy rescues, compartment configuration and interior body layout that, ultimately, determine which style of rescue body is the appropriate one for a department. The time spent upfront in researching equipment needs, visiting other departments to gain from their experiences and defining the mission for the apparatus will pay off with a well-designed apparatus. Plan accordingly. You only get one chance to make the correct choice.

BUILDING CODE ISSUES AND REPORTED FIRE FATALITIES

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

An awfully expensive price to pay to save money. Stop the carnage, install residential sprinklers.

Residential sprinklers are a component of the plumbing system, with approximately 1 head per room. The purpose of residential sprinklers is to allow time for the occupants to escape.

Residential sprinklers are designed for quick response and only one at the most two heads may be triggered. With residential sprinklers present, the civilian death rate is 89% LOWER. Residential sprinklers will assist responding firefighters to do their jobs and save firefighters lives also, especially since everyone is short staffed!!

CHIEFS NEED TO SPEAK UP: Our fire problem would not be as bad if there were residential sprinklers!!

HOME FIRE FATALITIES REPORTED BY THE MEDIA FROM THE US FIRE ADMINISTRATION FOR 2025	
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	55
Last fire death 9/19/25 Penn Yan, Yates Co. Female 78, Male 12	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	91
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	749
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/60
	#2 NY/55
	#3 IL /44
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2025: 1502	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
Week 40 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 37.5 lives PER WEEK.	
Both the states of Maryland and California as well as Wash. DC require sprinklers in 1&2 family dwellings.	

Fatal Mass. Fire Highlights Haphazard Fire Sprinkler Inspections, No Statewide Database

Hadley Barndollar, masslive.com

The inspection process for fire sprinklers in Massachusetts relies on a haphazard honor system that can fail the very people it's meant to protect.

A MassLive investigation following the July fatal fire at Gabriel House — a Fall River assisted living facility where 10 people were killed by a five-alarm blaze — revealed a chain of problems with the state's oversight of sprinkler systems in buildings:

- *Inspections of sprinkler systems depend on an honor code, where fire departments rely on building owners to maintain these critical safety components. This reality extends beyond Massachusetts and is codified in the standards published by the National Fire Protection Association, which are adopted across the country.*
- *At Gabriel House, a sprinkler failed to activate in a second-story room where the fire started, sources with knowledge of the investigation have told MassLive.* A mandated, five-year internal inspection of the sprinkler system was overdue, and several lawsuits claim the system also contained parts that were recalled decades ago.
- *There is no centralized tracking of fire code violations in the state, and enforcement is arduous due to strained fire department staffing.*
- Meaningful changes to fire safety regulations often only follow tragedy, experts said, such as the fire at Gabriel House, the deadliest in the state in over 40 years. "Fire safety regulations are written in blood," said Chris Nelson, senior fire protection engineer in the Boston Fire Department's Fire Prevention Division. "Someone has died because of an incident, and the code is written because someone died."
- Nearly every fire department in Massachusetts reports being understaffed, undermining public trust and expectations that they can ensure fire safety in buildings across their communities.

These are daunting realities laid bare by the fire that struck Gabriel House on the night of July 13. Under scrutiny by an ongoing state investigation and numerous lawsuits is whether owner Dennis Etzkorn and the fire safety company with which he contracted, Fire Systems Inc., were negligent regarding the building's sprinkler system.

In the days after the fire, Fall River Fire Chief Jeffrey Bacon was quick — and honest — to speak about weaknesses of the honor system that local fire safety inspections hinge on. The legal responsibility lies with building owners to have their sprinkler systems inspected, maintained and repaired if necessary.

In most cases, fire departments are simply following up to ensure there are no blatant fire code violations, officials said. *And enforcement is a scattershot approach entirely dependent on manpower, resources and overall knowledge.*

In Massachusetts, there isn't a central mechanism — such as a statewide database — for pursuing and tracking noncompliant building owners and code violations across municipalities. Instead, violations are maintained by individual fire departments or in housing courts around the state.

Fire codes and standards are written by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the Quincy-based industry nonprofit that publishes more than 300 best practices adopted by states and municipalities across the country. **NFPA 25** is the minimum standard governing sprinkler inspections and testing, and it's the law in Massachusetts.

"All of the codes and standards put the responsibility on the owner," said Shawn Mahoney, a senior engineer at the National Fire Protection Association. "If you're going to have a building and going to bring occupants into it, it's the owner's responsibility to make sure it's a safe place for everybody."

Therein lies an inherent tension — while liability may be on individual property owners, the public expects accountability from fire departments to ensure buildings in their cities and towns are safe to patronize, assemble and live in.

But the system isn't set up to ensure they can — an unsettling reality in a state where fire department staffing woes are widespread.

Meanwhile, lurking in the background is a broader push to weaken fire safety codes and prevent additional regulations from being enacted. Fire officials contend codes are “under attack” across the country due to anti-regulatory attitudes and the influence of lobbying powers.

Because of that, stronger fire safety laws only happen when people perish in egregious events, they said.

The Cocoanut Grove (1942) and Station Nightclub (2003) fires are infamous in the U.S. for leading to widespread fire safety code reforms for public assembly buildings, such as multiple exits and exit doors that open out rather than in.

This time, state leaders and lawmakers have proclaimed the double-digit deaths at Gabriel House must lead to significant changes.

‘IT’S OK UNTIL IT’S NOT OK’

Municipal fire inspectors typically rely on building owners to contract with licensed third-party vendors to inspect and maintain their fire safety equipment, including sprinklers.

That documentation is then supposed to be relayed to local fire departments during their annual building inspection process. Some departments require contractors to upload reports directly online, while for others, it's less clear how they obtain and organize confirmation of inspections and testing.

“That’s where things can get a little difficult,” Mahoney, of the NFPA, said.

Fire safety contractors working on sprinkler systems **must be licensed** by the state of Massachusetts — both companies and the individuals who work for them. If they aren't properly licensed, the state can issue cease-and-desist orders that could result in civil or criminal penalties if violated.

During a press conference in July, Bacon, Fall River's fire chief, said “no fire department in the country” is staffed to the level that they could verify and conduct all inspections themselves.

“We just don't have the resources to do that,” Bacon said. “We need to rely on the licensed professionals to do those, to do their inspections. And we're just following up to make sure those are done.”

In Fall River, the fire department's annual inspection form is a one-page checklist, according to records obtained by MassLive. Department records show three different individuals inspected — and passed — Gabriel House over the last six years. There is a check-off line for sprinklers where inspectors historically marked “FSI,” short for Fire Systems Inc., the contractor, and noted the date they reportedly did their inspection.

A survey of firefighter unions conducted after the Gabriel House fire found that nearly all Massachusetts fire departments fail to meet national standards for staffing fire trucks.

The survey didn't include fire prevention and inspection staffing, but Mahoney noted that when budget cuts hit fire departments, fire prevention resources are usually slashed first — “before they take people off trucks.” Bacon said the fire prevention staff in Fall River is “less than half” of what it was when he started with the department 23 years ago.

“Over the course of my career, many of those positions were reassigned back to [fire] suppression due to manpower shortages,” he said. “This presents a significant challenge for chiefs of departments like Fall River because fire prevention plays a critical role in life safety.”

There are six inspectors in Fall River — in addition to the city fire marshal and captain of fire prevention — who handle plan reviews, inspections of high-risk facilities, fire drills at schools, complaint investigations and more.

Fire officials across the state, including those in Boston and Springfield, told MassLive they don't inspect sprinkler systems themselves, but instead review the documentation provided by contractors who conduct the inspections and testing for building owners.

The protocol sets the stage for things to fall through the cracks, particularly when they aren't obvious to the naked eye, according to Nelson, of the Boston Fire Department.

He described a situation where the sheer amount of buildings (and the older building stock in New England), combined with understaffing, makes the endeavor to catch all deficiencies virtually impossible.

“I could walk into most buildings in the country and find something wrong,” Nelson said. “It's on the honor system because there are millions of buildings in the state of Massachusetts, and the squeaky wheel gets the grease. The small mistakes slip through the cracks where it's OK until it's not OK.”

At Gabriel House, Etzkorn previously said he had the sprinkler system visually inspected annually as required, and he regularly passed inspections by the Fall River Fire Department, according to department records. However, he was missing the comprehensive fire-year inspection of his sprinkler system, which ensures that internal parts are functioning, MassLive previously reported.

Etz Korn has said the sprinklers were found to be in working order just five days before the July 13 fire. But that same day, Fire Systems Inc. also alerted Etzkorn to his ongoing failure to obtain the five-year inspection, sources told MassLive.

Bacon said he wasn't sure municipal fire inspectors would pick up on a missing five-year inspection tag. "That's definitely something between the building owner and the sprinkler contractor," he said.

Data from 2017 to 2021 show the most common reasons for sprinkler failure or ineffectiveness were that the system was either shut off prior to a fire or the water discharge didn't reach the flames, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Lack of maintenance accounted for less than 10% of failures.

Several lawsuits claim the sprinklers at Gabriel House also had components that were recalled decades before the fire and ultimately never replaced.

An ongoing investigation led by the Bristol County District Attorney's Office and the state Department of Fire Services, which will determine Gabriel House's compliance with life safety requirements, has yet to conclude. But officials have determined the fire started accidentally in a second-floor resident's room, caused by either an electrical or mechanical failure of an oxygen concentrator or the improper use/disposal of smoking materials.

Private attorneys who have filed at least seven lawsuits were on site this week, granted access to the building's interior for the first time to conduct their own investigations.

Etz Korn, through a spokesperson, did not provide additional comment for this story.

Another example that highlights the cracks in the fire inspection system recently came to light in nearby New Bedford. The New Bedford Light reported that the city's fire department had not inspected Whaler's Cove, the city's lone assisted living facility, for at least 18 years.

The reason, given by local fire officials, was that assisted living facilities are regulated by the state's Executive Office of Aging and Independence and thus not the fire department's responsibility.

The state office, however, said it doesn't conduct fire safety inspections itself and instead defers to local fire departments.

HOW SPRINKLER VIOLATIONS ARE ENFORCED — IF THEY ARE

When problems are discovered, Massachusetts' fire code clearly states that enforcement of violations is left up to local fire departments. This has led to a piecemeal approach across the state, as staffing and resources vary drastically from major city departments to all-volunteer staff in small towns.

"It's local," said Robert Duval, Northeast regional director for the National Fire Protection Association. "Unfortunately, it can be different in each town or city depending on the jurisdiction. A violation in Springfield, Worcester or Boston, it's going to be a lot different than way out in the boondocks somewhere."

Most fire departments are "up against it" in terms of inspections and enforcing violations, Duval said.

"They do the best they can and they do the high-priority stuff (high-occupancy buildings) first," he said. "It is a challenge around the country."

The Department of Fire Services can step in, most often when a fire results in a fatality. DFS inspectors, in addition to specific industries and activities under their purview, are also available to help municipalities with code interpretation, inspections and citations.

Sprinkler violations are usually "honest mistakes" rather than willful negligence, most often attributable to "old buildings that get changed over the years or change hands," Nelson said.

Before it became an assisted living facility in the late 1990s, the Gabriel House building was a motel, for example, built in 1964.

If fire code issues aren't addressed, local departments and the Department of Fire Services can pursue **non**-criminal citations filed through housing courts, and criminal charges if warranted.

Non-criminal penalties for violating the fire code are established by state statute, but enforcement is left to the "authority having jurisdiction," which is most often the local fire department.

According to state law, a person can be fined between \$100 and \$1,000 for violating a fire code.

The law explicitly states that any person who “wantonly or recklessly violates the state building code or state fire code” and causes serious bodily injury or death to any person can be fined up to \$25,000 and face a potential state prison sentence of up to five years.

Capt. Richard Martin, fire marshal for the city of Springfield, said in his experience, building owners “get compliant pretty quickly” when they’re notified of a problem, because they understand liability issues associated with having a sprinkler system violation.

“When a deficiency appears on my desk, it’s normally fixed within 48 hours,” he said.

Like others, Martin said one of the mounting challenges for fire departments is that fire codes are always several years behind new technology. Solar panels and battery storage are examples of developments that fire codes haven’t caught up with, officials said.

In Springfield, there are more than 35,000 structures and roughly seven fire inspectors in the field at any given time. Some sprinkler systems in the city date back to 1929.

“We try to do our best in all cases of high life-hazard facilities, like medical facilities, large apartment buildings, A2 occupancies (places of assembly with food and drink),” Martin said.

Unique in Boston is an entire legal unit within its fire department dedicated to enforcement — they follow up on code violations in the field and take building owners to court if necessary. This is in addition to a staff of fire inspectors.

A Boston property owner typically has 15 days to fix an issue and schedule a new inspection; if they fail to do so, the violation will be escalated to a criminal complaint.

Capt. Robert Kelly, of the Boston Fire Prevention Legal Unit, acknowledged that those resources are far beyond what most communities in the state have. And yet, Boston, too, always seems to be playing catch-up.

“A lot of times things fall through the cracks,” he said. “We’re constantly finding things that haven’t been maintained, and we fix them as we find them. A lot of times (building owners) will work with you, but sometimes they won’t.”

The Boston Fire Department depends on sprinkler system affidavits when it comes to issuing certificates of occupancy, Kelly said.

“That means (building owners) hire an outside third party to sign an affidavit, stamp it with their engineering stamp, saying that they installed the system, that it works like this, and it works as designed,” he said. “We send an inspector out there to make sure that everything’s in place, but we don’t actually do the testing ourselves. That basically falls in line with what most departments do.

“I mean, should Boston have our own sprinkler guy? You know, in my opinion, we probably should. But we rely solely on third-party affidavits,” Kelly said.

ATTACKS ON FIRE SAFETY CODES

A national movement pushing back against fire safety standards has been transpiring in the background for years, with a particular focus on sprinkler requirements in certain residential dwellings.

While fire officials tend to advocate for additional standards and regulations, the homebuilding industry is often pulling the levers to do the opposite — as evidenced by the 48 states across the country that don’t follow a hotly-debated residential sprinkler standard.

Current NFPA codes and standards require sprinklers in new one- and two-family homes and townhouses, as do recent editions of the International Residential Code. However, only two states in the U.S. currently follow this — California and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia.

In 2016, an investigation by ProPublica and The Post and Courier revealed the homebuilding industry had, at that point, spent millions of dollars in state capitals to block fire sprinkler mandates in new homes.

“Fire sprinklers in single-family homes are illogical for the expense, as homes are already designed with many points of egress and smoke detectors can alert homeowners to fires before they spread,” according to the National Association of Home Builders.

The association claims “emotional arguments” are used when mandates are pushed in state legislatures.

A bill before the Massachusetts Senate this session would allow municipalities to “opt-in” to a one- and two-unit residential dwelling sprinkler requirement solely for new construction. The same effort stalled in the last six legislative sessions, according to the state’s website.

In Massachusetts, the homebuilding industry has historically lobbied against residential fire sprinkler proposals, arguing they raise the cost of housing and that efforts should instead focus on ensuring working fire alarms in all buildings.

According to the Department of Fire Services, more than 70% of all fire-related injuries and deaths in Massachusetts take place at home, yet residential occupancies are the least likely to be protected by fire sprinklers.

"People take safety for granted and don't understand what actually goes on behind the scenes," Mahoney said. "Codes and standards are under attack and they have been under attack for a while. They are there for a reason and things are happening in (state) legislatures where people are undermining the process."

Because of the competing interests that result in stalemates, fire officials say calamities like the deaths at Gabriel House are often the only force that spurs change.

"Things generally don't get fixed until there's a tragedy," said Kelly, of the Boston Fire Department. "It's always about money. They're always looking at the budgets. And we can only work with the tools they give us."

GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE

Firefighters Respond to Lithium-Ion Battery Storage Units on Fire at NV Solar Power Plant

Brett Clarkson – Las Vegas Review-Journal

A fire that broke out at a solar facility in Boulder City on Tuesday night and burned for several hours, police said in a Tuesday night update. In a post on Instagram, the Boulder City Police Department said in a 9:20 p.m. update that Boulder City firefighters were continuing to battle the blaze. The fire at the Townsite Solar Facility was reported south of Interstate 11 near U.S. 95 at about 7 p.m., police said in the post.

MA Scrap Metal Fire Likely Caused by Battery; Officials Worry About Future Junkyard Fires

Jeanette DeForge – masslive.com

A major fire that took hours to extinguish and polluted nearby residential neighborhoods with clouds of thick black smoke was likely caused by a battery that was mixed with car parts and other scrap metal. Fire Chief Bernard J. Calvi recently met with the City Council's public safety committee to discuss concerns about the fire and scrap metal yards in general following the Aug. 8 fire at Chet's Auto Wrecking and Scrap Metal. The fire at the yard on Page Boulevard started at about 6:30 p.m. in a 60-foot mountain of car parts and other metal. Firefighters had it under control in six hours, and the scene was turned over to the owners by 10:30 a.m. the next day, Calvi said.

"Our hypothesis to what caused the fire ... is that there was a supposed (nickel-cadmium) battery that went into the stream when they scooped the pile up," he said.

Security video of the scrapyard captured the fire's ignition, which left investigators to suspect the battery ignited it. The official cause is listed as undetermined, because there is little evidence left following the blaze, Calvi said.

"It was not tampered with ... there was no malicious act that caused the fire. For all intents and purposes, it was an industrial accident," Calvi said.

About 75 city firefighters responded to the blaze, and departments from surrounding communities assisted, mainly manning stations and answering other calls in the city, he said.

It took about 4.5 millions of gallons of water to extinguish the stubborn blaze. A heavy equipment operator from the company, under the direction of fire officials, broke down the flaming pile, while firefighters blasted water on flames, he said.

"We were able to mitigate it in a timely fashion with no real spread," Calvi said. "Fires like this have been known to go on for several days, and we were able to knock it down in six hours."

STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!

Firefighter Ethics: Legalities, Moralities, and Common Sense ESIP WEBINAR SERIES

Join Chief Gerald Schalk and us as we review the core questions we face in the work we do as emergency responders.

Date: Wednesday 10/1/2025 Time: 7:00 PM EST

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

<https://mcneilandcompany.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=03596f243a9d922954ebaf15e&id=6dbb05ce6b&e=781e9a2c81>



2nd Annual Lake George Training Symposium

The 2nd Annual FASNY Lake George Training Symposium returns to the beautiful shores of Lake George from Saturday May 15th to Sunday May 17th, 2026!

Whether you're returning or attending for the first time, this weekend is designed to help volunteer firefighters enhance their skills, develop leadership, and connect with a statewide community.

Be sure to make time for the Annual Golf Tournament at Cronin's Golf Course — a weekend highlight featuring a fun scramble format, BBQ dinner, and a fantastic atmosphere.

Save Me a Seat for Lake George 2026

<https://fasny.com/training/annual-firetraining-symposium/>



2025 Seminar Series, Short-Handed Firefighting

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

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

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

Cortland (October 28) • **Erie** (October 8) • **Jefferson** (October 15) • **Nassau** (November 5)
• **Rensselaer (October 20)** •

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

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

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](#).

ASSOCIATION OF FIRE DISTRICTS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Coming Attractions:

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



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

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

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Vischer Ferry Fire Department Lobsterama

Get Lobster and support your local fire department. **Saturday October 4th** 750 Grooms Road, Rexford. Order at VFLOBSTERAMA.COM, Starting at \$20. Same day from Maine!

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

The fire company thanks you for your support!! Breakfast will be served starting at 8AM on **Sunday October 19th**.

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

See you **Sunday October 5th** when we start up again. Thank you for your support!

GENERAL INTEREST

The 2026 Budget Calendar and the 2025 Election Schedule are posted to our Website at CAFDA.net

****Before Firefighters Can Learn To Lead, They Must Learn To Follow**

Vincent Bettinazzi

Everyone wants to lead. No one wants to follow.

In today's fire service, you can't toss a Halligan without hitting a self-declared "emerging leader." We've got leadership academies, challenge coins, challenge coins for leadership academies, hashtags, keynotes, and every podcast from here to the dayroom urging the same thing: Lead, lead, lead. But here's the uncomfortable truth: We're overfeeding the leadership machine and starving the very foundation it stands on — followership. *And maybe, just maybe, the issue isn't that we have a leadership crisis. Maybe it's that we have a followership vacuum.*

WHAT IS FOLLOWERSHIP?

Let's clear something up: Followership doesn't mean being a robot. It doesn't mean blind obedience or waiting around for orders like a firehouse dalmatian either. *Followership is a discipline. It's about showing up sharp.*

It's about trusting your officer and, even deeper, it's being someone your officer can trust. It's initiative without ego. It's having your crewmember's back even when the coffee is cold. *It's the firefighter who doesn't need a chore list to know what needs doing. It's the one who grabs the irons without being asked, wipes down the rig before you even notice the grime or double-checks your SCBA without making a show of it.* As laid out in "[The followership formula](#)," a **good follower is proactive, accountable and dependable**. They bring ideas, not excuses. They execute without drama. They're the firefighter who hears "grab the irons" and is already on the stoop before the second syllable lands. And guess what? That's the kind of firefighter who becomes a great leader later — if and when they want to.

NEGLECTING THE VALUE OF FOLLOWERSHIP

We glorify leadership in conference halls and across social media platforms, with buzzwords and book deals fanning the momentum. And let's be honest, who doesn't want to be known as a "transformational" leader with an "adaptive mindset"? Sounds good, right? But somewhere along the way, we started handing out leadership rhetoric like candy and treating followership like the broken recliner in the corner. No one wants to sit there. We tell every recruit, "Someday you'll be in charge." But we rarely stop to ask, "Have you learned how to follow yet?" We equate followership with passivity, like it's just a stepping stone to the real stuff. We feed the dessert before the meal. That's the problem. *We've become so focused on growing future chiefs that we're not growing fully developed firefighters first.* A good follower doesn't just make the job easier. They make the entire crew stronger. They carry the load without constant supervision. They plug gaps in the game plan without waiting for permission. They have enough self-awareness to know that leadership isn't always about taking the wheel. It's also about knowing when to ride shotgun and navigate a time or two.

WE PREACH LEADERSHIP BUT DON'T TEACH FOLLOWERSHIP

Walk into any recruit academy and you'll hear a lot about leadership. You'll see quotes from Lincoln, fireground flowcharts and department org charts with the names of the chiefs circled. You'll hear talk about "command presence" before someone even learns the department's radio guidelines. And sure, it's important to inspire vision early. But here's a radical idea: *What if the first few years of the job were about becoming a phenomenal follower? Not a follower as in a "yes man." A follower as in:*

- *The firefighter who sees something before it's said.*
- *The one who trains like they're going on shift at 5 p.m. on a Friday in July.*
- *The one who builds trust one call, one meal, one mop bucket at a time.*

We stress leadership as the goal, but we leave followership up to chance. That's like building a ladder with no rungs in the middle. No wonder some folks skip steps or, worse, fall off completely. There's no shortage of leadership books on the firehouse table. But when was the last time someone shared a lesson on being a good subordinate? We talk about chain of command, but we don't emphasize what it means to actually support that chain even when you disagree, even when no one is watching.

DEVELOP FOLLOWERSHIP FIRST

The best leaders I've ever worked with weren't forged in a seminar; they were forged in the backseat. They were firefighters who watched, listened, asked questions, screwed up, owned it and then came back stronger. They didn't try to leapfrog over the grind. They leaned into it. The bright sparks made them stronger. If we want strong leaders tomorrow, we need to build rock-solid followers today. That starts in rookie school and extends through every early assignment, probationary year and station rotation. We should be coaching our new firefighters not just in skill proficiency, but in how to follow with integrity, initiative and humility. *Here's what good followership could look like in the first five years:*

- *Respect without sucking up.*
- *Feedback without defensiveness.*
- *Loyalty to the mission, not an extra vote in the popularity contest.*
- *The ability to take a tough critique without collapsing into ego dust.*

When you build that kind of follower, leadership becomes a natural progression and hopefully not a forced promotion. And if someone chooses to stay a lifelong follower? Good. Every crew needs a few who are so reliable, so steady, so bought-in that you'd take them into any fire, anytime, no questions asked. However, it

sometimes feels like they are becoming an endangered species — so rare that when you encounter one, you become speechless.

GREAT FOLLOWERS BUILD WINNING TEAMS

You want to know what makes a high-performing department? It's not the charismatic officer with the big ideas. It's the firefighter who cleans tools without being asked. It's the one who mentors without being assigned. It's the one who doesn't care who gets credit as long as the crew gets better. It's disciplined, relentless, humble followership. That's the glue. Or better yet, the cement. Good followers create psychological safety. They elevate everyone around them. They set the cultural tone without putting their name on it. And they stick around not because they need validation, but because they believe in the work. We've all seen what happens when followership breaks down: passive-aggressive behavior, with back-channel complaining, quiet quitting and trust erosion. Then we wonder why new officers struggle to lead. "Wait, are you saying you can't lead what doesn't want to be led?" you might ask.

Yes, I am — and it sucks. Start by building the kind of followers who make their leaders better. You'll get strong crews. You'll get real leadership. And you'll get a department that doesn't fall apart the moment someone puts on a white shirt.

FINAL THOUGHTS

When the smoke banks low, the radio's cutting out, and your crew is halfway through a search in a building built before the internet was a thing, nobody's asking who went to the latest leadership seminar. They're asking, "Can I count on the person beside me?" That answer doesn't come from charisma. It doesn't come from a slogan on your locker or a quote on your screensaver. It comes from consistency. Leadership may get the glory, but followership keeps the line charged. If we're serious about building resilient, high-performing, low-ego teams, then I argue that it starts at the bottom. Teach your people how to follow, not just who to report to. *Praise humility. Reward reliability. Celebrate the followers who grind in the background and never ask for a spotlight. Because at the end of the day, they're the ones who make this job work — and they've been doing it quietly for years.*

LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

**Our company is giving you 10,000 free golf balls with out company's info on them.
Since you'll lose all of them, we figure it will be good advertising!!**

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.

CAFDA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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Fred Richards Commissioner Harmony Corners/Saratoga,

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Treasurer: Tony Hill

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

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Legal Counsel: Greg Serio, Safety Officer, Verdoy 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](mailto:SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET)

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

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

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Welcome Aurora Insurance, Albany NY

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.CAFDA.NET

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

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

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Alyssa B. Snyder, Partner
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Jack Clark, Fire District Attorney
646 Plank Rd. Clifton Park, NY 12065
518-373-1482
Ducharmeclark.com

Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP

Bond Counsel

Robert J. McLaughlin, Partner
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Alan W. Clink, CPA aclink@mmb-co.com

Heather R. Lewis, CPA hlewis@mmb-co.com

*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://cafda.net/membership-info/>

CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

SAVE THE DATES!

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

COMMISSIONER TRAINING

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

OTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

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

SOCIAL EVENTS

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

MEETINGS – CLIFTON PARK FIRE DISTRICT & ZOOM

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



FOR MORE REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Website	www.CAFDA.net
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OSHA INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

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

NEWEST INFORMATION ALWAYS AT THE TOP WITH RED ARROW

By Dave Denniston NVFC OSHA 1910.156 Taskforce Chair

The NVFC continues to meet with the IAFC and 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.