



CAPITAL SHORTS:

- The fire district election schedule is posted to the web site at www.CAFDA.net
- Congratulations to the Wright Fire District in Schoharie County on the addition of miscellaneous unit 8062 which will be used as an EMS response vehicle and carry various resources. The unit has a 5 person cab and a rescue body built by Bulldog Fire Apparatus.
- Congratulations to Boght Community Fire District on the delivery of your new Seagrave Aerial Scope designated Truck 1.
- Ithaca Fire Chief Robert Covert stepped down from his job to begin a new role as deputy state fire administrator with the Division of Homeland Security on

November 6.

○ More than \$5.45 million in federal funding is coming to 11 Capital Region fire departments and EMS squads. The money comes from FEMA grant programs for Fiscal Year 2024 — the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program and the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) program. The grant awards will go toward staffing, training, and purchasing new equipment such as turnout gear, personal protective equipment (PPE), turnout washer/dryer/extractors, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) face masks, and more. Five departments will receive money from the SAFER program to support hiring new firefighters and increasing recruitment and retention:

- City of Schenectady Fire Department: \$2,008,304
- Rotterdam-Princetown Fire District #5: \$821,192
- Halfmoon Hillcrest Volunteer Fire Department: \$635,886
- S.W. Pitts Hose Company of Latham, NY: \$426,838
- City of Rensselaer Fire Department: \$237,090

Eight departments will receive funding from the AFG program to support improvements in equipment, operations, and safety.

- Round Lake Fire Department: \$295,428
- Albany Fire Department: \$266,181
- City of Schenectady Fire Department: \$201,933
- Ravena Rescue Squad: \$191,428
- Halfmoon Hillcrest Volunteer Fire Department: \$137,142
- Glenville Fire District #2: \$124,936
- Cohoes Fire Department: \$85,714
- Voorheesville Fire Department: \$27,450

Good news for all the departments receiving grants.

- This morning at the Hilton Garden Inn in Troy the legislative Issues of United Concern meeting was held, hosted by the NYS Association of Fire Coordinators. In attendance were representatives from Fire Coordinators, State Chiefs, State Fire Districts, Fire Police lobbyists and other interested members of the various organizations. I will wait until next week to reveal the top 7 legislative agenda items that were agreed to this morning. I will wait for today's chairperson, Bill Streicher to publish the agreed to agenda items. There was a also extensive discussion on the status of the proposed 1910.156 emergency response standard. It appears that a new revised standard is being developed by the task force and when published by the US Department of Labor it will reopen comment period.

LEARN WITH CAFDA – OUR EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS
WWW.CAFDA.NET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE LATEST FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

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

Are You PESH Prepared?

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

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

THE LATEST FROM WASHINGTON

Washington Watch

★ **ACT NOW to Keep Cancer Coverage for Firefighters in the NDAA:** The Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act (S. 237/H.R.1269), would update the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program to include benefits for firefighter occupational cancer. The bill was **included in the Senate's version of the National Defense Authorization Act** (NDAA) but **needs your support to stay in the final NDAA.**

To take action, contact your members of Congress today to ask them to keep the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act in the final NDAA.

✓ Visit [CFSI's Legislative Action Center](#) for information on reaching out to Congress.

➔ One active "ask" is to include the Honoring Our Fallen Heroes Act in the final NDAA. **An email script is provided!**

✦ **FEMA Review Council Report Expected Next Week.** The FEMA Review Council [published a notice in the Federal Register](#) that they will meet on December 11. The meeting will include “Remarks from Senior leadership; remarks and updates from Council leadership; a presentation of the draft final report from the Final Report Subcommittee; a presentation of a summary of public comments made to the Council by the Designated Federal Officer; Council deliberations; and a public vote on the draft final report.”

CFSI Releases FEMA Reform Report

The Congressional Fire Services Institute (CFSI), together with its National Advisory Committee (NAC), released a comprehensive report titled [FEMA Reform: Recommendations from America's Fire and Emergency Services](#). The report outlines critical steps the federal government must take to strengthen national preparedness, enhance FEMA's effectiveness, and support the nation's one million firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel.

CFSI's recommendations emphasize that America's fire and emergency services are not only the backbone of local emergency response but constitute a critical national capability, recognized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as one of the nation's 16 critical infrastructure sectors. Fire departments protect not only communities but also the critical infrastructure upon which the nation's economy, security, and public health rely.

The report highlights several urgent needs, including:

- **Elevating the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA)** and expanding its role within FEMA.
- **Strengthening FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) system** and ensuring timely reimbursement to USAR task force teams for costs.
- **Modernizing national fire data systems**, particularly through the implementation of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS).
- **Enhancing federal wildfire mitigation and response programs**, including rapid post-fire assistance.
- **Protecting and fully funding core FEMA grant programs**, including AFG and SAFER, which provide essential equipment, staffing, training, and preparedness resources to local agencies.

As local fire departments and EMS agencies face increasing equipment and training costs, increasingly complex hazards, and strained budgets, sustained federal support is essential to America's emergency response capabilities. With FEMA's future being examined by Congress and the Administration, it is essential that the federal partnership with America's fire and emergency services is strongly maintained. National resilience depends on local readiness. Any FEMA reforms must strengthen the federal commitment to the fire and emergency services that safeguard millions of Americans every day.

About CFSI

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

About The NVFC

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

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

The NVFC unites and supports volunteer and combination fire and EMS organizations through education, advocacy, leadership development, and collaboration. Guided by professionalism and innovation, we

provide the tools and resources needed to protect communities, advance responder health and safety, and prepare leaders for the future.

What We Do

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

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

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCES

DEC Announces \$851,255 in Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Funding Now Available **Funds Assist with Purchases of Wildland Firefighting Equipment for Rural Fire Departments**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is now accepting applications for \$851,255 in Volunteer Fire Capacity grants to help rural fire departments protect public safety and natural resources. The application deadline is December 22, 2025.

“Volunteer fire departments are essential partners with DEC Forest Rangers in battling wildfires across the state,” said **DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton**. “The Volunteer Fire Capacity grant program helps support fire personnel in these departments with the resources they need to continue the vital work protecting our communities and State lands.”

The Volunteer Fire Capacity grant program is funded by the U.S. Forest Service and administered by DEC’s Division of Forest Protection. Eligible fire departments will receive 50/50 matching funds up to \$3,500, a \$1,000 increase from last year. In 2024, the program provided grants to 345 fire departments.

Eligible fire departments include those that are at least 80 percent volunteer and provide wildland fire protection to a rural area within their jurisdiction. Fire departments that receive a grant award must complete all grant process paperwork.

Only expenses directly related to wildland firefighting suppression efforts are eligible for funding. These include the purchase of protective fire clothing and PPE, modern communications supplies for more effective action on incidents, firefighting supplies such as nozzles and hoses, tools and other smaller scale supplies, and water delivery systems such as cisterns and dry hydrants.

Expenditures not directly related to firefighting, such as search and rescue supplies, acquisition of land, construction of buildings and facilities, major apparatus purchases, and maintenance items (gas/gas cans, oil, bar chain oil) are not eligible for funding.

[For applications and additional information about the grant program](#), contact DEC at (518) 402-8839, or write to NYSDEC, Division of Forest Protection, 625 Broadway 11th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-2560, or visit the DEC website.

<https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases>

Local Government and School Accountability Contact Information:

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

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

NYS-OSC Fire Service Audits

Henrietta Fire Company, Inc. – Board Oversight

Audit Objective

Did the Henrietta Fire Company, Inc. (Company) Board of Directors (Board) provide adequate oversight of financial operations?

Audit Period

January 1, 2023 – June 16, 2025

Understanding the Audit Area

The Board must provide oversight to help ensure financial operations are properly managed. Adequate oversight includes ensuring that Company officials maintain comprehensive records, appropriately segregate duties or implement compensating controls to safeguard funds, and review records and reports to detect discrepancies. The Company is governed by its articles of incorporation, bylaws and nine-member Board what is generally responsible for managing the Company's financial activities.

From January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024, the Company's disbursements totaled \$299,640 and revenues and redeposited startup cash¹ totaled \$372,140.

Audit Summary

- *The Board did not provide adequate oversight of financial operations, adopt detailed written bylaws or financial policies or enforce the limited financial provisions the bylaws and financial policies contained.*
- Because the Board did not ensure that the Treasurer maintained custody of all Company funds as required by the Company's bylaws, the Treasurer's financial records and reports to the Board did not include all Company activity.
- In addition, the Board generally did not review bank statements, canceled check images and bank reconciliations for any accounts to monitor financial operations.

Therefore, the Board did not have the necessary information to help it ensure that the Company's financial operations were adequately accounted for, recorded and reported. As a result, the Company had an increased risk of theft, waste and abuse of Company resources.

- In addition, the Board generally did not review the Company's claims before they were paid to help ensure that all 448 claims paid from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024, totaling \$299,640 were properly supported with documentation, such as itemized invoices, and for appropriate Company purposes.
- Furthermore, the Board did not ensure that the Treasurer maintained supporting documentation for all revenues and redeposited startup cash totaling \$372,140 that was received and deposited from January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2024.
- *Also, the Board could not support that the membership approved using all \$68,907 of foreign fire insurance (FFI) tax proceeds. In addition, officials used the funds for inappropriate purchases, such as purchasing approximately \$600 in gift cards for attendees at the Company's annual membership banquet.*

Without detailed bylaws, written policies and procedures, complete and accurate records and reports, periodic review of financial records and authorized claims supported with documentation, the Board and membership have less assurance of properly overseeing the Company's financial operations.

The report includes 13 recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the Board's financial operations oversight. Company officials generally agreed with our findings and indicated they will initiate corrective action.

SEE THE FULL REPORT HERE:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2025/pdf/henrietta-fire-company-inc-2025-71.pdf>

STEP INTO THE CHIEF'S OFFICE

The Impact Of Policy And Procedure On Fire Command

Jon Dorman

Effective command is the backbone of any emergency response, ensuring that incidents are managed with coordination, efficiency and safety. However, the success of command is largely dependent on well-defined policies and procedures that govern decision-making, resource allocation and inter-agency collaboration.

These are not merely administrative formalities; they shape the way fire departments respond to emergencies, maintain control, and account for the safety of personnel and the public they are sworn to protect.

INCIDENT COMMAND AND CONTROL

One of the most critical steps in emergency response is the establishment of incident command. A well-written and practiced incident command policy and procedure will outline how the first-arriving unit should take command, perform an initial size-up, and communicate with dispatch and other responding units. This early stage sets the tone for the entire response operation. As Chief Alan Brunacini was known to stress to firefighters, “the first five minutes are worth the next five hours.” So, what does that mean? In the context of incident command and control policies and procedures, it means setting expectations like:

- Immediate assignment of an incident commander (IC) to maintain control;
- Implementation of the personnel accountability system to track personnel;
- Best practices for determining the appropriate mode of operation;
- Structured transition from fast attack mode to a formalized command mode when necessary;
- Proper handover of command when a higher-ranking officer arrives; and
- Best practices for what information should be included in the verbal report when transferring command.

These directives help create a clear leadership structure, reduce confusion and ensure that resources are used effectively from the outset.

FIREGROUND COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication is a critical component of effective command. Ideally, policies and procedures related to communications will standardize how emergency scene communications should be handled, emphasizing:

- Clear and concise radio transmissions during the incident, with an emphasis on accurate scene size-up by the initial IC;
- Assignment of fireground channels to prevent radio traffic congestion;
- Emergency traffic and mayday procedures; and
- Use of National Incident Management System (NIMS)-compliant language to facilitate coordination among multiple agencies.

Standardized communication procedures reduce response delays and ensure that vital information reaches all personnel operating at the scene.

FIREGROUND ACCOUNTABILITY

A critical component of firefighter safety is accountability. Many NIOSH reports on fire service line-of-duty deaths indicate a lack of fireground accountability as a contributing factor in the death of personnel.

Well-crafted accountability policies and procedures play a crucial role in ensuring personnel tracking and reporting. Common components should include language requiring:

- The use of a standardized personnel accountability system to track all members on the scene;
- Routine Personnel Accountability Reports (PARs) to confirm the location and status of responders;
- Supervisors to maintain oversight of their assigned crews at all times; and
- Emergency reporting measures in the event of missing personnel or hazardous changes in fire conditions.

UNIFIED COMMAND

We’ve covered some key policies and procedures that every fire department should have on the books to address everyday incidents — but we can’t stop there. What happens when the incident is complex and involves multiple jurisdictions or agencies? This is when unified command becomes essential. A solid unified command policy and/or procedure will cover:

- When to implement a unified command structure;
- How to identify key agencies and personnel involved in decision-making;
- How to select a spokesperson for external communication; and
- How to develop a coordinated Incident Action Plan (IAP) and resource allocation strategy.

TRAINING TIME

Even the biggest contrarian in the fire department is going to have a challenging time trying to negate the need for policies and procedures related to incident command. Having these things in place just makes good sense. It's up to leaders to ensure that their personnel are properly trained on and understand the contents of these documents.

These policies and procedures are not ones that get dusted off every couple of years when personnel are preparing for a promotional exam. They are the ones that should be implemented and enforced on all applicable scenes. Sure, not everything is going to require unified command. But, *every* call should have the crews applying the critical aspects of the department's incident command, communication, and accountability policies and procedures.

As for training, try to focus on regular, organized training events that can be accomplished without forcing crews to endure an overly formal training session that may be mundane at best and morale-killing at worst.

Ask yourself these questions to guide your training:

- Does your agency require command to be established on ALL scenes?
- Does your department have a set communication model that units are supposed to use?
- Is that model something that is easily remembered and can be repeated on every call so that it just rolls off the tongue almost like muscle memory?
- Does your department expect officers and acting officers to maintain crew accountability and integrity?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, consider how the everyday operations of your agency can be leveraged to change those answers. For example, you can work ICS-related training into other drills. This makes it part of a more interesting experience and allows the learner to apply the concepts in a practical manner. Think of things like a "First Few Minutes" drill where members are given a simulated incident and need to operate as they would in the first few minutes of an actual incident. Be sure to require members to use proper NIMS-compliant ICS methods as they conduct their drills. This gives the opportunity to "work the bugs out" and identify potential problems in a training environment.

Encourage members to step outside their comfort zone during training and participate in ICS roles they don't normally hold. This gives them an idea of what other members are experiencing during an incident and can help them be better team players in ICS. It can also help members understand why crafting their radio traffic in the department's identified manner can help eliminate confusion.

A simple game of "telephone" with the crew sitting at the kitchen table can do wonders for illustrating how messages can become convoluted when they aren't repeated back to the sender. This can give personnel firsthand experience seeing the difference that missing one or two "small" details can have on the entire message. Hopefully, these non-scene related experiences will translate into more complete radio traffic when it's needed on the emergency scene.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Policies and procedures are the foundation of effective fire command. They provide structure, enhance coordination, and ensure safety for both responders and the public. By adhering to standardized guidelines, fire departments can execute efficient emergency responses, mitigate risks and save lives. As fire command continues to evolve, continuous training and policy refinement will be essential in maintaining operational excellence and firefighter safety.

STEP INTO THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

'It's Disappointing:' 4 Marion County Fire Rescue Employees Charged After Hazing Incident At Fire Station

WTF is wrong with people?

Four Marion County Fire Rescue [employees](#) were arrested and terminated from the department following a violent hazing incident, the Marion County Sheriff's Office said.

On Nov. 16, the 19-year-old victim, who had been with the department for almost a year, was subjected to escalating harassment by coworkers while working his shift at Fire Station 21, deputies said. The situation escalated when the victim was chased down in the parking lot by the accused employees, the sheriff's office said.

"It all began over grease being smeared on the victim and a pizza later in the afternoon," Sheriff Billy Woods said in a Wednesday news conference. "Also, the whole thing began because the four who are arrested, or individuals at the firehouse, wanted a video from TikTok that the victim had."

According to the investigation, firefighter Tate Trauthwein, 19, threw the victim's boots into the woods near the station. When the victim went to retrieve them, 22-year-old Edward Kenny III, an EMT, grabbed him from behind, causing both to fall to the ground, the sheriff's office said.

Deputies said Kenny and 22-year-old Seth Day, a firefighter and EMT, then held the victim down while Trauthwein removed the victim's belt and pulled down his pants. Trauthwein and paramedic Kaylee Bradley, 25, took the victim's cell phone and demanded his passcode.

When the victim refused, Trauthwein whipped him with the belt as Kenny and Day restrained him. The abuse intensified as the victim's underwear was pulled down and he was struck again on his bare skin. The sheriff's office said that's when one of the accused went to get a bottle of water and a towel and waterboarded the victim three times while others held him down.

"It's disappointing. Absolutely. As the son of a firefighter myself, it is disappointing," Woods said.

Fire Chief James Banta also condemned the actions.

"Their actions, now the subject of serious felony charges, represent a disturbing violation of everything that this profession stands for," Banta said.

The four accused were arrested on Wednesday. Kenny, Day, and Trauthwein face charges of kidnapping, battery, and robbery, while Bradley is charged with robbery and accessory to robbery.

According to Woods, the kidnapping charge stems from the victim being forcibly dragged through the parking lot from one location to another.

During their first appearance on Thursday, bond was set at \$100,000 for Bradley, and \$101,000 each for Day, Trauthwein and Kenny. So far, only Trauthwein has bonded out of jail.

According to Banta, Bradley has been with the department for nearly three years, Trauthwein for 15 months, Kenny for more than three years, and Day for nearly three years.

[ONLY ONE THING TO SAY IS YOU'RE FIRED, GET OUT AND STAY OUT.]

****Volunteer Fire Company in NY Files Suit Seeking Reinstatement After Fire District Suspends it From Active Duty**

Curt Varone

The Poland Volunteer Fire Company has filed suit seeking to overturn the Poland Joint Fire District's decision to suspend the company from providing fire protection within the district. The Article 78 proceeding was filed in New York Supreme Court for Herkimer County on November 24, 2025.

According to the filing, the Poland Volunteer Fire Company has provided fire protection to the area for more than 122 years. The fire district—created in 2017—voted on August 19, 2025, to "suspend its relationship" with the volunteer company. The petition alleges that the decision was made "without any public notice or comment," and resulted in the company's removal from the 911 call list effective immediately.

The volunteer company states that prior to the suspension, it had always been the "exclusive provider of primary fire protection within the area now covered by the District." The petition asserts that the district took this action without making any determination that the company could not provide "adequate and prompt fire protection," which the company argues is required under New York Town Law § 176(22).

The filing alleges that district commissioners later stated the suspension was based on "personal" reasons rather than operational concerns. One commissioner affidavit referenced in the petition states that the district "never determined" the fire company was unable to provide adequate service and "never even discussed" suspending the company at district meetings.

Following the suspension, the district began relying on mutual-aid companies outside the district to respond to calls. The petition contends that response times—particularly in the Town of Ohio—"more than doubled" due to increased travel distances. Mutual-aid agreements, the volunteer company argues, "are not intended to provide direct fire protection," but only assistance when a primary agency is overwhelmed.

By mid-October, the district was attempting to enter new fire protection contracts with departments outside its boundaries, including Newport and Barneveld. The petition challenges the legality of these proposed

contracts, citing Town Law § 176(22), which limits fire districts from contracting with outside agencies unless the district determines its in-district company is unable to provide adequate protection. The petition also cites Not-for-Profit Corporation Law § 1402(e)(2), which places outside fire companies under the control of their home town boards.

The fire company asserts that its staffing remains consistent with historical levels, reporting 44 members—12 interior-qualified and 17 exterior-qualified firefighters—and that its performance data, including response times and mutual-aid statistics, does not support the district’s actions.

The petition further notes that residents have filed a dissolution petition with the Town of Ohio seeking to dissolve the fire district itself. That petition was certified and forwarded to the district on October 20, 2025, but the district has “yet to schedule the referendum required” for voters to decide the district’s future.

The volunteer company is asking the court to:

- annul the district’s August 19, 2025 resolution suspending the company,
- bar the district from contracting with fire companies headquartered outside the district for primary fire protection,
- deem any such contracts to be mutual-aid agreements only,
- order the district to notify 911 that Poland Volunteer Fire Company is to be restored as the in-district fire company, and
- issue preliminary relief reinstating the company during the litigation.

The petition argues the district’s action was “arbitrary and capricious,” unsupported by evidence, and taken in violation of lawful procedure. It also claims the district cannot ensure adequate fire protection without its in-district fire company due to its lack of authority over outside departments.

SEE THE FORMAL LEGAL PETITION AT THIS LINK:

<https://firelawblog.com/2025/11/25/volunteer-fire-company-in-ny-files-suit-seeking-reinstatement-after-fire-district-suspends-it-from-active-duty/>

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

EMS Billing has a Positive Impact for Kingston

While many Hudson Valley municipalities have hired professional ambulance services as it has become more difficult to attract volunteers to staff emergency calls, the City of Kingston opted to bring its service in-house to the fire department and Mayor Steven Noble says it is working extremely well.

The mayor said the city hired 16 professionals and uses two fully equipped advanced life support services ambulances to handle the city’s needs.

“We are literally doing thousands of calls a year now in ALS pickup and delivery to our local hospitals and our response time has been incredible and I feel that our team is really stepped in and has done the right thing for our residents and thankfully we have also seen the county stepping in to help us with a new grant program,” he said.

The proposed ambulance budget in 2026 is \$2.6 million, but Noble said with some \$1.5 million collected in billing for services, he expects the cost to city taxpayers to be under \$1 million.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

- Four more firefighters from the Harvey, Illinois Fire Department were laid off last week, further reducing a department that was already been operating at half strength following sweeping reductions to city staff in October. Before the city announced a financial emergency and began mass

layoffs, the Fire Department had 37 staff, said Keith Freeman, secretary of Harvey Firemen's Association Local 471. Now, they're down to just 15, and have gone from three active fire stations to just one.

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT



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

Get started:

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

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

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

GET STARTED NOW AT THIS LINK:

<https://tracking.police1.com/t/9495565/187515077/7816037/1/1006865/?b44ed14b=YmY5NWQ4NzktNW RmOC00MWJkLTkzMdctNzg0Y2VhZTNjMzYy&x=1ee5e8f9>

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH & SAFETY; PROTECTING OUR OWN

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LINE OF DUTY FIREFIGHTER DEATHS FOR 2025

In 2024 we experienced 64 LODDs reported nationally.!

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

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

- The [United States Fire Administration](https://www.usfa.fema.gov) announced the on-duty death of a Camden firefighter following complications from an earlier incident. Firefighter Julius Snyder responded to eight emergency calls during a 24-hour shift from Jan. 31 to Feb. 1, 2020, and suffered a medical emergency shortly after his

shift ended, according to officials. Snyder was transported to a local hospital and later transferred to a regional medical center for emergency surgery. *After enduring prolonged complications from that 2020 medical emergency, Snyder died on Oct. 27, 2025.*

FIRE APPARATUS ACCIDENTS FOR THE WEEK

- Earlier Sunday morning, Houston Fire Department Engine 104 was blocking traffic on on US 59 North near exit 151 in north Houston for a motor vehicle accident when it was struck by an 18-wheeler. All four members were transported to a local hospital with injuries of varying severities. All are expected to fully recover and three remain hospitalized. "Blocking traffic on the freeway is one of the most dangerous tasks we do," Fire Chief Thomas Muñoz said. "We're extremely grateful that every member of Engine 104 is expected to recover, and we ask drivers to slow down and move over when they see emergency crews working." HFD will share additional updates as they become available. Houston Police Department is investigating the cause of the accident. The Ferrara Engine was totaled.
- A fire truck flipped onto its side after a collision with a car Monday in Smithfield, NC. The engine with four firefighters aboard was responding to a fire alarm when the crash occurred. The civilian and the firefighters were transported to a hospital for treatment of minor injuries, according to The Johnston County Report. While the crash is under investigation by Smithfield Police, early reports indicated the car pulled into the path of the responding rig.
- A firefighter was injured Nov. 28, 2025, after a fire apparatus rolled over on Highway 2 near James Peaden Road in North Okaloosa County, Florida, the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post. The firefighter, a member of the Blackman Fire District, was flown by medical helicopter to an area hospital after being thrown 50 feet from the engine. After a two-day stay, he was able to be released from the hospital and is now recovering at home. The commercial cab engine was



totally destroyed.

- A Guil-Rand NC Fire Department apparatus was struck by a distracted driver on Interstate 74 Monday, Nov. 24, 2025. The impact caused severe damage to the apparatus—but we are incredibly thankful to report that no one was injured,” the department said.
- Springfield, Massachusetts a police sergeant and a firefighter were injured when their vehicles collided while heading to a scene of a suicide. Both emergency vehicles had their lights and sirens on, and were heading to the same scene. First responders were brought to Baystate Medical Center for treatment. The police officer suffered injuries that are serious but not life-threatening. The firefighter was treated for minor injuries and released.

FIRE APPARATUS

The Apparatus Architect: Soliciting Bid Proposals for New Rigs: Keys to Success

Mike Wilbur and Tom Shand

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

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

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

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

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

START EARLY

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

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

CUSTOMIZATION

With the rising cost of new apparatus, consideration should be given to reviewing the configuration of your engine and ladder company units with respect to the degree of standardization versus customization to achieve the desired result. An analysis of how the final cost of the apparatus rolls up based on the degree of customization and one-off engineering projects provides valuable information on which to make sound decisions.

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

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

With the extended delivery times, the date for the preconstruction meeting might not take place for some time after the contract is awarded. Some components, particularly vehicle lighting and electronic equipment,

might be out of date when the unit goes into production. Some of the enhancements to components that were implemented after the preconstruction meeting might be offered at little or no cost increase when compared with the originally desired model. However, if a significant amount of time passed between the contract signing and the preconstruction meeting, you can anticipate increased costs for the replacement component.

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

TIME AND INITIATIVE

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

Unfortunately, because of the increased usage of consortium contracts and bids that are awarded using tag-on provisions, fewer departments develop their own technical specifications and instead rely on input from outside resources. That said, if your department takes the time and initiative to develop apparatus specifications that are tailored to meet your and your members' needs, the proposals that you will receive will provide an opportunity to discern the degree to which the manufacturers' specifications deliver what you requested, probably with a wide variation in cost and number of exceptions or clarifications to consider.

We recently encountered a department that bid a custom chassis, 1,500-gpm engine that has a short wheelbase, a low rear hosebed, and a specific range of dimensions to cover the maximum overall length and height in conjunction with fire station limitations. Several bidders noted compliance with the dimensional requirements. However, when the department evaluated one of the blueprints that was submitted with the proposal, it found that the vehicle would exceed the height and length requirements. Similarly, a specific make and model of valves on the fire pump were listed for each discharge by the department, including the preferred method of actuation. Of the five bids that the department received, only one manufacturer offered exactly what was specified; the others offered what was considered as standard for their apparatus builds—and didn't note an exception or clarification as to why the requested valves wouldn't be supplied.

CONTINUAL UPDATING

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

THE CHANGING FIRE SERVICE

Texas Firefighter Exam Draws Over 300 Applicants After Dropping Dual-Certification Requirement

Bill Carey

BEAUMONT, Texas — The Beaumont Fire Department's entrance exam drew a record 347 applicants, with 162 candidates sitting for the firefighter test on Dec. 1 at the Beaumont Event Centre.

Officials say the surge in interest follows the city's decision to drop its dual-certification requirement, which previously limited applicants to those who were already certified as both firefighters and EMTs. Now, candidates only need a high school diploma and to be at least 18 years old to apply.

With nearly 30 vacancies to fill, the department can now be more selective in hiring. Applicants with both firefighter and EMT certifications will be considered first, followed by those with one certification, while uncertified candidates will be hired into training slots.

Union President Jeff Nesom said the new approach is not only boosting interest but also shows the staffing shortage could have been addressed earlier without heavily relying on overtime and extra taxpayer spending. Firefighter applicant Holden Cravy said the new standards give aspiring firefighters a chance to be trained from the ground up through Lamar Institute of Technology's program, opening doors for many more people to enter the profession. With the strong turnout for the entrance exam, union leadership believes the city will be able to recruit high-caliber candidates and have them fully dual-certified before they begin their first shift.

****VA County to Centralize Volunteer Fire Stations, Create Paid Department**

CHARLES OWENS - Bluefield Daily Telegraph, W.Va.

Tazewell County officials have approved a restructuring plan involving firefighting service in the county. As part of the new ordinance adopted by the Board of Supervisors Tuesday night, a new, central volunteer fire company will be created to provide fire protection services from existing volunteer fire stations. *The ordinance also creates a separate, new paid fire department as a department of county government.* The county will employ firefighters for its new department on a part-time basis. The ordinance also allows existing volunteer departments to continue, but it will limit their role to providing support services for the new fire company. All existing brick and mortar volunteer fire departments will remain open under the ordinance, Tazewell County Administrator Eric Young said Wednesday.

"All current fire stations will remain open, using the same equipment, and be staffed by the same volunteers," Young said in response to Daily Telegraph questions regarding the reorganization plan. "However, they will be members of the new, single Fire Company. *The new company will centralize record keeping, finances, training schedules, and other administrative tasks which will no longer be the responsibility of the community fire departments.* The company will also coordinate response to larger events involving crews from multiple stations. And the company will provide additional equipment and training for all volunteers to promote uniformity throughout the county."

Those currently working as volunteer firefighters will have several options under the new ordinance, which becomes effective July 1, 2026. The county enacted a meals tax earlier this year to help address some of the firefighting deficiencies.

"This plan allows volunteers multiple options," Young said. "Residents interested in serving in fire protection may volunteer with one of the traditional volunteer departments in a supporting role, or with the new fire company as an active responder or apply to work for the board as a paid part time firefighter, depending on their level of training, experience, and commitment. They also have the option to belong to any two or all three."

The board has been working with fire chiefs and the county's emergency services committee over the past year to draft the ordinance. A 2013 study performed by the state identified several weaknesses in Tazewell County's fire protection services.

Up until now, each community in the county has been responsible for providing fire protection for its residents through volunteers with limited support from the board. However, Young said declining population, extended commuting times for work for many residents, and a general decrease in volunteerism has reduced the number of volunteer firefighters at the individual community departments. At the same time increasing costs for fire gear, equipment, and fire apparatus made maintaining proper equipment challenging, according to Young.

"We have been falling short with fire protection by taking our volunteers for granted and leaving them under equipped and underfunded for decades," Young said. "Today the board took another bold step to raise the level of coverage by consolidating the administrative burden off of volunteers, adding a new level of trained, paid personnel, and opening the doors to additional grant funding."

Eastern District supervisor Charles "Chuck" Presley, who serves on the county's emergency services committee, said *the restructuring plan will allow the volunteers to have more time training and responding to fires as opposed to fundraising and filling out paperwork.*

“When I joined the board, I was surprised to see how little funding and support our volunteers have to cover such a large territory,” Presley said. “We decided to support them with more funding and a better organization. Records, finances, procurement, training, will all be managed and supervised centrally.”

Presley, during a stop at the Daily Telegraph Wednesday, said the restructuring plan will not impact the fire departments serving the individual towns, including Bluefield. However, he said the new paid volunteer fire department as well as the members of the new central volunteer fire company would be able to provide back-up assistance to the towns.

Presley also said all volunteer fire departments will remain open under the restructuring plan.

“They will all be the same,” Presley said. “The biggest reason we want to the company is now we can capture all of the calls under one roof.”

By creating a new, central volunteer fire company to provide protection services from existing volunteer fire stations, the new company will consist of a single team that will train together, have uniform procedures and gear and operate better as a single unit in larger events, the county said in a statement explaining the reorganization process. It said having a central fire company will streamline record keeping, bookkeeping, procurement and other administrative tasks that previously fell upon the volunteers. *Furthermore, the new volunteer company will be eligible for more grants because it will have a larger roster and will count all calls run in the county as a single number to demonstrate a more accurate picture of the need for fire services.*

Young was asked if the central fire company would have a physical address or location.

“The Central Volunteer Company will be located in all of the existing fire stations,” Young said. “For example TCFC Bandy Station or “TCFC Baptist Valley Station. We likely will have an office in either one of the stations or in a county owned building for the Company for record keeping, administration, and conducting meetings. We do not envision an additional, new station for the Fire Company.”

The 2013 Cardinal study also recommended the county retain a coordinator of fire and EMS services, an objective that has already been completed. Barry Brooks has served in that role for 10 years.

“This was a long time in coming,” Brooks added in a prepared statement. “We are excited that when we apply for grants as a single fire company we will have over a hundred members and will be able to say we respond to hundreds of calls a year.”

As for the creation of the separate, new paid county fire department, the board of supervisors will employ the firefighters for its new department on a part-time basis, according to Young. A location for the new paid-county fire department is still being worked out.

“We are in negotiations with a property owner to acquire a building to locate the paid part time department and expect to have an announcement on that very soon,” Young said. “This will be the first site for this new department. We welcome any volunteer willing to help the public. We believe most of our paid part-time personnel will be individuals who also volunteer for the Fire Company or town departments who are willing to work a shift for us. New volunteers are welcome, but they will need to have Firefighter One Training to be eligible.”

Most if not all of these employees will also be volunteers at the fire company under the restructuring plan. However, the paid department will have higher physical performance and training standards. The paid crew will also be paid to train. The board’s paid department also will provide support for the volunteer company and town departments as a “rapid intervention crew” when circumstances require additional forces and will respond when volunteer personnel aren’t available.

Northwestern District Supervisor Shanna Plaster said having a central volunteer company is a necessity to help the existing volunteers.

“We cannot afford to provide fire service without our volunteers,” Plaster said. “But today our volunteers struggle to work, go to church, and spend time with their families. We cannot always expect them to come to every call. Having a paid department, especially during the daytime in the work week, means someone will come, even if the volunteers are out of town or tied up at work. And it means volunteers will know, if the event is too big, help is on the way. “

BUILDING CODE ISSUES AND REPORTED FIRE FATALITIES

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

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

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

Residential sprinklers are designed for quick response and only one at the most two heads may be triggered. With residential sprinklers present, the civilian death rate is 89% LOWER.

Residential sprinklers will assist responding firefighters to do their jobs and save firefighters lives also, especially since everyone is short staffed!!

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

HOME FIRE FATALITIES REPORTED BY THE MEDIA FROM THE US FIRE ADMINISTRATION FOR 2025	
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	65
Last fire death 11/25/25 West Winfield, Herkimer Co., female 82	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	111
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	1002
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/90
	#2 NY/65
	#3 IL /53
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2025: 1891	
2046 civilian home fire fatalities in 2024	
Week 49 of 2025, fire has claimed on an average 38.5 lives PER WEEK.	
Both the states of Maryland and California as well as Wash. DC require sprinklers in 1&2 family dwellings.	
According to realtors and builders only old homes burn, so sprinklers are not needed in new homes: so when does a new home become an old home?	

Electric Heater Blamed for Buffalo, NY, Fire that Claimed Kids

Susan Nicol

An electric heater is being blamed for a house fire in Buffalo that claimed the lives of two children.

"Fatal fires are always difficult, especially when there are children involved, it makes a little harder on everybody. They're not easy," said Fire Marshal Captain Francis Krathaus. The bodies of a two-year-old and a 10-year-old were found by firefighters. Buffalo firefighters, who found heavy fire, managed to rescue five from the fire, including two adults and three other children.

****Follow Up: Oswego County Leaders Evaluating Strain On Fire Services After Three Fires At Novelis Plant**

Gary Robinson Jr. – CYN Central

swego County officials are taking a closer look at the strain placed on local fire departments after three separate fires broke out at the Novelis aluminum plant in Scriba in recent months.

The first, a major fire on Sept. 16, drew more than 20 fire departments from across the region, including crews from Oswego, Jefferson, Onondaga and Cayuga counties. A smaller fire followed in October, and the most recent fire on Nov. 20 erupted in the same area as the September incident, according to county emergency officials.

With many of the responding agencies being volunteer companies, county leaders say the repeated calls are putting pressure on departments already operating with limited staffing.

Oswego County Legislature Chairman Jim Weatherup said the most recent fire once again required a large-scale response.

"Basically, every agency in our county was there. We also had them from Jefferson, Onondaga and Cayuga County, upwards of 25 departments," Weatherup said.

He noted that volunteer firefighter numbers have been declining for decades, making mid-day responses especially difficult.

“Volunteerism in the fire departments in the last 20 years has really taken a hit,” he said. “During the day, it’s really hard for volunteer departments to turn out.”

County officials said they have remained in contact with Novelis since the latest incident and are offering support while investigators continue working to determine the cause of the fires.

Oswego County Fire Coordinator Shane Laws said teamwork made a significant difference in managing November’s response.

“I’ve had outstanding support from the fire and sheriff’s departments. Their coordination made this incident so much better,” Laws said.

Novelis is one of Oswego County’s largest private employers with more than 1,000 workers, has kept all employees on payroll, shifting some to other company locations while operations in Scriba remain partially shut down.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY OR SHOULD I SAY OVER DEVELOPMENT SHOULD HAVE YOU THINKING ABOUT YOUR STAFFING AND ABILITY TO RESPOND TO INCIDENTS IN YOUR FIRST DUE AREA? WHAT IS THE DEMAND ON RESOURCES GOING TO BE?]

GREEN TECHNOLOGY & THE FIRE SERVICE

Plans for Huge New CA Oceanfront Battery Storage Plant Withdrawn Following Disastrous Moss Landing Fire

Paul Rogers - The Mercury News

The Texas company that owns the battery storage plant at Moss Landing, California, that burned in a spectacular fire in January, raising questions nationwide about the safety of the fast-growing renewable energy technology, has withdrawn plans to build a similarly sized battery storage plant in the adjacent county.

Vistra, based in Dallas, has notified the California Energy Commission that it is dropping efforts to secure state permits to construct a 600-megawatt battery storage plant in Morro Bay, a coastal town in San Luis Obispo County.

The proposed plant would have been one of the largest in the United States with thousands of lithium-ion batteries capable of storing enough electricity for 450,000 homes. *Vistra did not announce the decision to halt the project publicly or notify city leaders, despite having advocated for it over the past four years.*

The information became public in recent days when local media outlets in San Luis Obispo County confirmed with the energy commission that the company had withdrawn the project.

“The comprehensive review and investigation of the incident at our Moss Landing facility is ongoing,” said Meranda Cohn, a Vistra spokeswoman, “which will inform current and future energy storage operations across our fleet.”

The company has not given a reason for halting the Morro Bay project, which was being watched across the state by renewable energy interests.

Residents of Morro Bay opposed it. Last year they approved a ballot measure by a 60-40% margin to prohibit its construction with future voter approval.

After the Moss Landing fire on Jan. 16, which spread 55,000 pounds of toxic heavy metals on the surrounding area, according to a San Jose State study released this week, and forced the evacuation of 1,200 people and closed Highway 1 for three days, Morro Bay’s opposition stiffened.

Two weeks after the fire, the Morro Bay City Council voted 5-0 to impose a two-year moratorium on the construction of battery plants in the town, a scenic fishing and tourism community of 10,000 residents known for Morro Rock, a giant natural landmark at the edge of its harbor.

“The Moss Landing fire had a huge impact,” said Morro Bay Mayor Carla Wixom. “People were afraid. They were angry. It was like ‘oh my gosh — if that could happen to them, it could happen to us.’”

Like the Moss Landing facility, Vistra also proposed building the Morro Bay plant on the site of a former 1950s-era PG&E power plant on the oceanfront. The Morro Bay site is well-known for three towering 450-foot concrete smokestacks, which, similar to the two 500-foot tall former PG&E smoke stacks at Moss Landing in

Monterey County, are among the tallest structures on the California coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Vistra attempted to go around Morro Bay's opposition by using a state law, AB 205. Signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in 2022, the law allows corporations to secure approval from the California Energy Commission for renewable energy projects, even when the projects are slowed or denied by local cities and counties. The energy commission's five members are appointed by the governor. [WONDER WHERE NY GOT THE IDEA?]

Vistra announced in April that it would pursue that route.

But in an email Oct. 10 to Eric Knight, siting branch manager for the California Energy Commission, Cathleen Colbert, Vistra's senior director for Western markets, said that "the project is no longer being advanced."

The 107-acre oceanfront site in Morro Bay "remains in our ownership and perhaps we will revisit plans for redevelopment sometime in the future," Colbert added.

She did not cite a reason for the shift, citing only "some challenges with the project."

The cause of the Moss Landing fire, which Vistra reported was a \$400 million loss, remains under investigation. California has seen a massive increase in the growth of battery storage plants in recent years, going from 17 in 2019 to 248 today. Many more are planned across the Bay Area, in the Central Valley and Southern California. The plants store electricity generated by large solar and wind farms to release back on the power grid at night when the sun isn't shining, or the wind isn't blowing.

California lawmakers have set a goal of generating 100% of the state's electricity from renewable and carbon-free sources by 2045.

Earlier this year, Assemblywoman Dawn Addis, D-San Luis Obispo, introduced a bill in Sacramento to prohibit construction of new battery storage plants near homes, schools, parks and hospitals. It died amid opposition from labor unions and the renewable energy industry. Addis opposed the Morro Bay plant.

"There is understandable concern around safety," Addis said. "Vistra has told me they are focused on Moss Landing — getting the results of the investigation and finishing with the cleanup. I am pleased they are maintaining their focus on Moss Landing. The investigation and cleanup could take years."

Vistra acquired the Moss Landing and Morro Bay sites in 2018 after merging with Dynegy, another Texas energy company that had purchased them. Both properties are valuable because they are connected to high voltage power lines that move electricity across California. Years ago, they burned oil and natural gas, and PG&E used ocean water to cool them.

Morro Bay's mayor, Wixom, said she would like the Morro Bay site to be redeveloped into businesses or other facilities that serve tourism, fishing and education.

"I'm not against battery storage," she said. "But there are a million places you can build it away from populated areas. The risk isn't worth the reward."

Wixom noted that a high school and hundreds of homes are located near the site, which closed in 2014 amid tougher state rules about pumping seawater.

"I want us to be a beach town where people can paddle board and surf without the fear of a plant burning," she said.

Wixom said she worries that Vistra will eventually bring the battery plant idea back.

"You feel like David and Goliath," she said. "But we know how that ended."

CA Taco Bell Fire Caused by Lithium-Ion Battery

Aric Sleeper — Santa Cruz Sentinel, Calif.

The Scotts Valley Fire District responded to a fire Monday afternoon at the Taco Bell on Mount Hermon Road, which was caused by a lithium-ion battery.

"We were fortunate the fire was noticed quickly, and fire crews arrived soon after the 911 call," said Scotts Valley Fire District Fire Chief Mark Correia in a statement. "This situation serves as a reminder of the potential hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries."

According to the statement, the fire district received the call around 2:25 p.m. Monday and arrived at the Taco Bell at 233 Mount Hermon Road within five minutes. The Scotts Valley Fire District responded to the fire with the Santa Cruz Fire Department and "the fire was contained to a small area, and operations at the restaurant resumed shortly thereafter." There was no significant structural damage and no reported injuries.

The fire district determined that the incident was caused by a damaged or malfunctioning lithium-ion battery and reminds community members to avoid a similar incident by not leaving devices unattended while charging, not overcharging devices and only using authorized chargers in good condition, among other safety tips.

STUFF FOR YOUR OFFICERS AND MEMBERS!

Free Training Online Fire Police Refresher

Volunteer Fire Police Association of the State of New York

Mark your Calendar for the next SCFA Virtual Zoom Fire Police Refresher Training scheduled for **Wed. January 28, 2026 starting at 7pm and running to 10pm** with two SCFA Instructors presenting.

To make this class a success we request that you spread the news about the training to all Members in the Fire Service Industry. Feel free to share this email with anyone interested in attending. The training will be open to all.

This Zoom pre-registration link is available on the: VFPASNY Website on the Home page at <https://www.vfpasny.com/> click the "What's New", just click to preregister for training.

The preregistration link is also available on the VFPASNY Group Face Book page for any Members. Click below to use link to Register for 01/28/26 Zoom SCFA FP Refresher Training:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/zs7qVMo5S7uYNVUyC2f0cQ> On- line email pre-registration is required to attend this training and receive credit.

The link in this email is for the registration and will not allow you to enter the training, it is for pre-registration only.

Important Note: You are welcome to watch the class in group form at one location or your Fire House, however each person in attendance must still pre-register to receive credit and a Training Certificate.

- All registrations must be done in advance of the training, and no registrations will be allowed after training ends.
- Pre-registration is required to receive credit for this FP training with the SCFA. After registering, you will receive a response confirmation email containing information and a link to join the FP Refresher Training. Save this email response it is the access link to the Training on 01/28/26. If you pre-register a reminder email will be sent before the meeting with access to Join Meeting.

Sign in for training will start after 6:30pm. Sign in early. Training will start at 7PM sharp and late sign in's may not be permitted to enter training

NYS AFC 2026 Seminar Series "Dangerous Spaces: Challenges and Tactics When Dealing with Garage and Basement Fires" With Chief/Commissioner Michael Lombardo (Buffalo Fire Department)

Three-Hour Seminar:

Some of the most dangerous fires we deal with are often looked at as routine: the basement fire and the garage fire. Basement fires are probably the most overlooked killer of firefighters engaged in combat firefighting in much of the U.S. The construction, layout, fire load, and access present difficult and dangerous challenges at below grade fires. From the incident commander to the firefighter on the nozzle, we must all recognize and be able to deal with these challenges. Huge migration to the suburbs starting with the arrival of the Baby Boomer generation saw the explosion of the attached garage. Many older cities never had the available space for homes to feature an attached garage or have any garage at all. The tremendous fuel load that is constantly evolving presents danger for occupants and firefighters alike. This class will address these challenges and alternative strategies and tactics that can be deployed to deal with these dangerous spaces.

Registration Fee:

\$35 per person – NYSAFC Individual and Department Members

\$50 per person – Non-Members

Pre-registration is encouraged. On-site registration will be accepted if space permits.

Note: A 3% service fee will be applied if paying by credit card.

2026 Dates and Locations:

Seminar begins at 7:00 p.m. at all sites. Registration area opens at 6:30 p.m.

February 18 – Herkimer County

Newport Fire Department • 7370 Main Street • Newport, NY 13416

March 3 – Schenectady County

SUNY Schenectady Community College • Stockade Building • Room 101 • 78 Washington Avenue • Schenectady, NY 12305

September 10 – Fulton County

Berkshire Fire Department • 320 Steele Avenue Ext. • Gloversville, NY 12078

September 16 – Saratoga County

Saratoga County Public Safety Building • 6012 County Farm Road • Ballston Spa, NY 120

September 22 – Dutchess County

Pleasant Valley Fire District • Station 1 • 1619 Main Street • Pleasant Valley, NY 12569

Bridging the Gap

Guest Speaker Jeremy Donch, founder of National Fire Radio

Preserving Tradition and Culture One Generation at a Time

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

Sponsored by Arvin Hart Fire Company

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

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

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

Attend an NVFC Training Near You!

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



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

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

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

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

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

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

Speigletown Fire Department Breakfast 2nd Sunday of each month

Sunday December 14th from 7:30 to 11:30, \$10 adults, \$5 children, under 5 free.

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

Why Every Fire Department Needs A Community Outreach Specialist

Chad Costa

The modern fire service goes far beyond extinguishing fires, playing a far more comprehensive role in community risk reduction. Plus, in an era where transparency is paramount, our residents deserve to know about the valuable work done to protect and serve them. This is where a community outreach specialist is essential in bridging the gap between the fire department and the public.

THE ROLE OF A COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST

A community outreach specialist is responsible for developing and implementing programs that enhance public safety and community engagement. Their primary duties include educating the public about fire prevention, safety practices and emergency preparedness. They work closely with various community groups, schools and organizations to disseminate vital information and foster a culture of safety. The role requires a deep understanding of the community's unique needs and challenges and the ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences. By maintaining a visible and positive presence, community outreach specialists help ensure that the fire department remains a trusted and respected institution.

IMPLEMENT AND PROMOTE TAILORED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Community outreach specialists organize and manage educational programs tailored to various demographics:

- **School-aged children:** They may host fire safety workshops in their local public schools, teaching children the basics of prevention and what to do in case of a fire. These workshops often include interactive activities and demonstrations, making the learning experience engaging and memorable for young students. Additionally, community outreach specialists may also collaborate with teachers to integrate fire safety education into the school curriculum, ensuring that students receive continuous reinforcement of these critical lessons.
- **Nursing home and senior center residents:** Community outreach specialists aim to educate older adults about the unique risks they face due to limited mobility, vision impairments or the use of medical devices requiring electricity.
- **Local organizations and businesses:** Specialists also engage with businesses, faith-based organizations and neighborhood associations. They provide training on fire safety protocols, the proper use of fire extinguishers and emergency evacuation procedures. This comprehensive approach ensures that fire safety knowledge permeates all community sectors, reducing the risk of fire incidents and enhancing overall preparedness.

SPEARHEAD PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGNS

In addition to education, community outreach specialists often organize public relations campaigns highlighting the fire department's role in the community. They use various media channels, including social media, local news outlets and community events, to share stories of heroism, safety tips and departmental achievements. This enhances the department's image and builds a stronger connection between the firefighters and the community they serve.

Public relations campaigns are crucial for informing the community about fire department activities and initiatives. For example, during Fire Prevention Week, a community outreach specialist might organize events and media appearances to raise awareness about fire safety. They may coordinate with local television stations to broadcast fire safety segments, write articles for local newspapers or create engaging social media posts that reach a broad audience. Maintaining a visible and positive presence in the community, these specialists help ensure the fire department remains a trusted and respected institution.

Their efforts contribute to a positive public perception of the fire department, encouraging community members to engage with and support their local firefighters.

Community outreach specialists also play a critical role in crisis communication, particularly at departments that do not have a dedicated public information officer. During emergencies or significant incidents, they may act as the voice of the fire department, providing timely and accurate information to the public. They work closely with local media and use social media platforms to disseminate updates, safety instructions and emotional reassurance.

PROVIDE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TRAINING

Community outreach specialists play a crucial role in disaster preparedness. They work with local authorities and community groups to develop and disseminate emergency response plans. This includes organizing drills and simulations to ensure community members know what to do in various situations. For instance, they might conduct school earthquake drills, organize flood evacuation exercises in at-risk neighborhoods or facilitate wildfire preparedness workshops in regions prone to such incidents.

In regions prone to natural disasters such as wildfires, earthquakes or hurricanes, the work of a community outreach specialist is particularly critical. They collaborate with emergency management agencies to provide residents with timely information on evacuation routes, shelter locations and emergency supplies. These specialists also work with local businesses and organizations to develop continuity plans that ensure essential services remain available during and after a disaster.

Disaster preparedness initiatives may also include educating the public on how to create and maintain an emergency kit, developing family communication plans and staying informed through emergency alert systems.

ORGANIZE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community events serve as a platform for the fire department to showcase its commitment to public service and community engagement through events such as open houses, station tours and safety fairs. These gatherings allow community members to interact with firefighters, ask questions and learn more about the fire department's operations.

For example, during an open house, residents might tour the fire station, see demonstrations of firefighting equipment or participate in hands-on activities. Such interactions help break down barriers and foster a sense of mutual respect and trust.

SUPPORT VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Supporting vulnerable populations in fire safety and emergency preparedness requires a specialized approach that acknowledges these groups' diverse challenges. Older adults, for instance, may have mobility issues or sensory impairments that hinder their ability to respond swiftly during emergencies. Low-income families might lack access to adequate fire prevention or evacuation planning resources. Individuals with disabilities may require customized strategies to navigate evacuation routes or use emergency communication systems effectively. Community outreach specialists are crucial in bridging these gaps. These specialists directly engage with vulnerable populations to understand their needs and limitations. They then design and implement tailored educational programs and outreach initiatives. For older adults, this might involve distributing accessible materials on fire prevention techniques and organizing workshops on creating emergency kits.

Low-income families could benefit from subsidized smoke detectors or information on available community resources for emergency support. Meanwhile, individuals with disabilities might receive personalized evacuation plans or training sessions on using assistive devices during emergencies.

MEASURING IMPACT

It's essential to measure the effectiveness of community outreach programs to ensure they achieve their intended goals. Specialists are responsible for developing metrics and evaluating the success of their initiatives, like tracking the number of smoke detectors installed in homes as a direct measure of improved fire safety. Or monitor attendance at safety workshops and educational events to assess how well these programs engage the community and enhance public knowledge about fire prevention and emergency response. Beyond these immediate metrics, Community outreach specialists also analyze long-term trends to gauge the broader impact of their efforts. This can include tracking the reduction in fire incidents and

related injuries or fatalities over time, which reflects the effectiveness of preventive measures and public education campaigns.

By systematically evaluating these outcomes, specialists can identify areas for improvement and adjust their strategies accordingly. This data-driven approach validates current initiatives' success and helps refine and enhance future community outreach programs, ensuring sustained progress in public safety and community resilience.

A KEY PLAYER

The role of a community outreach specialist within the fire service is multifaceted and essential. Their efforts help create safer, more resilient communities where residents are well-informed, prepared and engaged in their safety. As the fire service continues to evolve, the importance of community outreach will only grow, making the role of community outreach specialists more critical than ever

LAUGH OUT LOUD!!

Do you ever get up in the morning, look at yourself in the mirror and think, that can't possibly be accurate!!

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Opening for Part Time Fire District Treasurer/Deputy Secretary

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

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

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

CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063

EMAIL TREASURER: TREASURER@CAFDA.NET

518-407-5020

EMAIL SECRETARY: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET

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

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

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.CAFDA.NET

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

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

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*The Weekly Capital Bulletin is reaching well over **700+** subscribed fire district members and now other members of the fire service on a regular basis. This is a service of CAFDA through the effort of Tom Rinaldi who can be reached at tom@rinaldi1.com for comments and content contributions are always welcome.*

BECOME A MEMBER OF CAFDA!

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION (CAFDA)

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

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

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

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

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

\$600,001 plus: \$300

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

Business Partners: \$100.00 annual member fee

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

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

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

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Website

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NEWEST INFORMATION ALWAYS AT THE TOP WITH RED ARROW

The Latest from Dave Denniston:

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

By Dave Denniston NVFC OSHA 1910.156 Taskforce Chair

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

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

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

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

Dave Denniston, 1st VP AFDSNY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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