



THE BULLETIN

MAY 23RD, 2026

The Voice of CAFDA since 2004
Editor, Tom Rinaldi – tom@rinaldi1.com since 2014
When you see **, highly recommended article

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- *As we gather with friends and family this Memorial Day, let's remember the true meaning behind the holiday. Memorial Day isn't just about barbecues, sales or the unofficial start of summer – it's a sacred day to honor those who gave everything for our country. It's about the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Their sacrifice is the reason we live in a democratic republic and not a socialist totalitarian state.*
- Congratulations to the Ticonderoga Fire District on the voter approval of the new \$13M fire station, second time is the charm.
- DHS Makes \$648 Million Available to Help Firefighters and First Responders Nationwide. FEMA announced that the application periods for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG), Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants, and Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants are now open. These three funding opportunities provide \$648 million to help firefighters and other first responders stay safe while protecting lives and communities nationwide. The application periods for all three grants is May 19 at 9am ET to June 22 at 5pm ET. FEMA is hosting a [series of workshops](#) to help applicants navigate the grant process.
- We are happy that the 6 firefighters from Verdoy Fire District have been released from the hospital after being checked due to the boating accident on the Mohawk.
- A recording of the video Future of the Fire Service, panel discussion and open forum is available on the AFDNYS.org website.
- **Let them eat cake:** out of the 60-fire service-related bills introduced in the State Legislature this year, only one has passed both chambers, a bill requiring additional basic training to handling emergency situations involving individuals with any physical or developmental disabilities to all firefighters, that's significant! Two bills have passed the Assembly, one of which will provide additional income tax relief for first responders and also allow first responders to take advantage of the convoluted property tax break, and 6 bills have been passed in the Senate one of which mandates DEI training for all first responders, yahoo that's important!! Though we were doing away with that crap!! So, when these elected officials look you in the eye and tell you they are helping you, your reply should reference a well-used Irish term, malarkey, or perhaps hogwash, poppycock, hooey or the formal British codswallop.
- **Talking Trucks: 2027 Engines:** New EPA engine rules for 2027 are forcing changes for fire apparatus. Apparatus builders are scrambling to fit additional aftertreatment components and bigger alternators into tight cab real estate. Practical steps departments should take now: put engines on order to avoid disappearing pre-2027 inventory; demand granular CAD details from manufacturers (clear doghouse height/width, alternator voltage, under-frame sit-height, DEF canister placement); budget higher motor and parts costs into a maintenance "bank"; and expand parts inventories for multiple OEM DEF/alternator platforms to reduce out-of-service time.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

From CAFDA

1. Join us at the NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Thursday June 11 features dinner for attendees. Please join us.

ZOOM LINK FOR THE june MEETING at 7pm:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82294160041?pwd=2M7DZ1CRDlCFjv6N2LfUw9xxtf5fNQ.1>

2. CAFDA Conference '27, Lake George NY, April 9-10-11, dinner and a vendor show Friday April 10th Fort William Henry Carriage House. Sponsored Mixer the evening of April 9th at the Holiday Inn Resort, food, games, beverages.

3. Mark your calendars now, CAFDA Fall Seminar, Saturday November 7th, at a location in Colonie to be announced.

4 CAFDA Commissioner Training for 2027 will be held in Rensselaer County, Schenectady County, Saratoga County, Schoharie County and Warren County. Dates and locations to be announced.

5> A DAY AT THE RACES to be held again this summer, stay tuned for more information, Friday, August 7th, in the Picnic Paddock Area, lunch included.

CAFDA TRAINING AND EVENT DATES

Day/Date	Time	Type	Location	Notes
FY 2026				
Thursday, June 11, 2026	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	
July, 2026	NO MEETING			
Friday, August 7, 2026	1:00 PM	Membership Activity	Saratoga Race Course	NYRA Day at the Races!
Thursday, August 13, 2026	7:00 PM	Board of Directors Meeting	Clifton Park	
Thursday, September 10, 2026	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	
Thursday, October 8, 2026	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Officers/Director Nominations
Saturday, November 7, 2026	8:00 AM	Annual Fall Workshop	Verdoy	
Thursday, November 12, 2026	7:00 PM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Officer/Director Elections
DECEMBER 2026	NO MEETING			
FY 2027				
Saturday, January 2, 2027	9:00 AM	General Membership Mtg.	Clifton Park	Organizational/Morning Meeting
Thursday, April 8 - Saturday April 10, 2027		CAFDA Conference '27	Fort William Henry Conference Center	Lake George
Thursday, April 6 - Saturday April 8, 2028		CAFDA Conference '28	Fort William Henry Conference Center	

From Other Organizations

NYSAFC is Bringing Hands-On Training to Your Area!

FIRE BEHAVIOR ON THE INSIDE

REGISTRATION: <https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/firebehavior>

FLASHOVER

REGISTRATION: <https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/flashover>

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)

<https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/2026seminarseries>

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 are available at the website for this series.

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

From Albany

The 2026 Issues of United Concern are posted on the CAFDA.net website.

See this week’s ScoreCard.

From Washington

WASHINGTON WATCH

🔗 **AFG, SAFER, and FP&S Grant Programs Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is now OPEN!** Applications for all three grant programs are currently open and will be closing on June 22nd. **See article below for more information.**

🔗 **National Fire Academy Resumes In-Person Emergency Management Trainings.** The National Fire Academy is looking to fill classes beginning as early as May 24th. To [view class openings](#) and to apply, visit the [NETC Online Admissions application](#) website today!

🔗 **Acting FEMA Administrator Replaced.** Karen Evans, who had led FEMA since December of 2025, was [relieved of her duties](#) last week and has been replaced by Robert Fenton, a 30-year FEMA veteran. This marks the third time the FEMA acting administrator has been replaced since the beginning of 2021. Mr. Fenton is expected to hold the position of acting administrator until [Cameron Hamilton](#) receives his Senate confirmation for the role.

From Federal DOL/OSHA

See the latest from DOL/OSHA at CAFDA.net website.

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCIAL NEWS

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

TIOGA FIRE DISTRICT – AUDIT FOLLOW-UP

Purpose of Review

The purpose of our review was to assess the Tioga Fire District’s (District) progress, as of January 2026, in implementing our recommendations in the audit report *Tioga Fire District – Board Oversight (2022M-170)*, released in January 2023.

The audit determined the Board did not always provide adequate oversight of District financial activities and did not complete mandatory fiscal oversight training. Had Board members attended the mandatory fire district commissioners’ training, they would have better positioned themselves to oversee the District’s financial activities and helped ensure reporting requirements were in place. The Board did not:

- *Develop and adopt a written procurement policy, as required.*
- *Audit and approve all claims prior to payment.*
- *Ensure the Treasurer filed the District's required annual update documents (AUDs) for fiscal years 2015 through 2021.*

The audit included seven recommendations to help the Board improve its oversight of the District's financial activities.

Background

The District is located in the Town of Tioga Center (Town) in Tioga County. The District provides fire protection and emergency medical services to the entire Town and services to the Town of Barton on a contract basis. An elected five-member Board governs the District and is responsible for its overall financial management. The Board-appointed Treasurer is the District's chief fiscal officer responsible for receiving, maintaining custody of, disbursing and accounting for District funds, as well as preparing periodic financial reports.

Results of Review

District officials did not implement any of the seven recommendations. Until all recommendations are implemented, the Board cannot ensure District assets are fully safeguarded.

Read the complete report here:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/tioga-fire-district-2022-170-f.pdf>

KERHONKSON FIRE DISTRICT, ULSTER Co. – BOARD OVERSIGHT

Audit Objective

Did the Kerhonkson Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) provide adequate oversight of District financial activities?

Audit Period

January 1, 2024 – March 12, 2025.

We extended our audit period to review the District's 2008 through 2024 Annual Financial Report (AFR) filings as of March 12, 2025.

Understanding the Audit Area

A board of fire commissioners, responsible for the general management and control of a fire district's financial operations, must provide adequate oversight of the financial activities to ensure public funds are managed with accountability, transparency and integrity. This critical function can help maintain public trust, prevent mismanagement, waste, fraud and legal non-compliance.

The District's budgeted appropriations totaled \$310,411 for the 2025 fiscal year. The District paid 227 claims totaling \$275,324 during the audit period.

Audit Summary

The Board did not provide adequate oversight of the District's financial activities and was not transparent. The District's required AFR was last filed in 2007, more than 18 years ago. As a result, the Board, taxpayers, New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) and other interested parties have been denied the ability to assess the District's financial standing.

In addition, because *the Board did not request or review the Treasurer's financial records*, there was an increased risk that errors and irregularities could occur and go undetected. Additionally, *the Board's inadequate review of claims led to claims potentially being paid without sufficient budgetary appropriations being available.* Because *the Board did not adopt financial policies and plans* and *the individual members of the Board did not complete the required fiscal training*, the Board's ability to set long-term financial priorities and goals was limited. As a result, the Board hindered its ability to make informed financial decisions and cannot ensure taxpayers and other interested parties that the District's financial activities are adequately accounted for and reported.

Specifically, *the Board did not:*

- *Audit the Treasurer's records in accordance with New York State Town Law (Town Law) Section 177.*
- *Ensure the Treasurer prepared and provided the Board with monthly bank reconciliations.*
- *Request, and the Treasurer did not provide, monthly budget-to-actual reports. As a result, the Board approved expenditures without available appropriations and overspent five appropriation budget lines totaling \$50,792, or 43 percent more than budgeted.*

- **Ensure the Treasurer filed the District's AFR with the OSC for 17 fiscal years (2008 through 2024).**¹
- *Perform an adequate audit of claims prior to approving the claims for payment. We reviewed 11 claims totaling \$46,075 and the Board did not properly audit all 11 claims. For example, 10 claims totaling \$45,792 had no evidence that quotes were obtained to demonstrate that the purchases complied with the District's procurement policy, which required officials to obtain competitive quotes.*
- *Develop and adopt required policies, including an investment policy, and ensure established policies are adequate.*
- *Develop and adopt written multiyear capital and financial plans to anticipate and prepare for infrastructure repairs, future purchases and asset upgrades.*
- *Ensure all members of the Board completed the mandatory fiscal oversight training within the required time period.*

The report includes 12 recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the Board's oversight of the District's financial activities. District officials agreed with our findings and recommendations and indicated they plan to initiate corrective action.

Read the complete report here:

<https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/kerhonkson-fire-district-2025-124.pdf>

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Fire Service Leaders Must End 'Management by Memo'

Alex Zielinski

Have you ever opened your inbox to find a department-wide *reminder* about a mistake you didn't make? If so, you're not alone. In workplaces of all types, leaders rely on blanket emails to address individual issues—a practice that erodes morale, undermines trust, and damages the culture we work so hard to build.

Fire departments, both career and volunteer, are built on trust, teamwork, and clear communication. Yet in today's fast-paced world, too many leaders default to blanket emails or memos to address individual issues. This "management by memo" approach, while convenient, can prove poisonous.

THE PROBLEM WITH BLANKET COMMUNICATION

It's a scenario that plays out in firehouses everywhere: One member falls short of a standard, and instead of addressing it directly, a supervisor sends a department-wide *reminder*. Everyone knows who it's about, but everyone feels accused or unappreciated. The result: Accountability is diluted, trust is undermined, and motivation suffers.

Firefighter Wilson forgets to wear the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) during an extrication on the interstate. Instead of addressing the issue directly, the officer sends a "just a reminder" email to the entire department about PPE standards.

The first time, it's a gentle nudge. By the second or third, everyone knows who it's really about and now the whole team feels micromanaged, their professionalism questioned. The officer's avoidance of direct conversation is obvious.

The solution? Address Firefighter Wilson directly. Coach the behavior. Don't make the rest of the department collateral damage.

WHY LEADERS DEFAULT TO BLANKET EMAILS

Why do so many leaders fall into the trap of "reply all" reprimands? It's easy and fast—just a few taps and the entire department is notified. Some leaders may fear confrontation, while others assume that if one person is making a mistake, others must be as well. But this approach is lazy leadership. It's indirect and passive. It creates unnecessary impact on personnel who should either be mere bystanders to the situation or completely uninvolved. It sends the message that leadership doesn't trust its people.

THE STANDARD: PRAISE PUBLICLY, CORRECT PRIVATELY

The best leaders know the value of targeted communication. Positive feedback should be shared with the whole team—public praise motivates and sets positive example. Correction or discipline, on the other hand, should be addressed directly and privately with the individual involved. This approach preserves dignity, builds trust, and is far more likely to change behavior.

This principle is echoed in the fire service leadership and officer training material and standards. National Fire Protection Association 1021, *Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications*, requires officers at all levels to demonstrate effectiveness in clear and direct communication skills. Fire officer training texts stress the need for two-way communication and warn against the dangers of ambiguity and indirectness.

While these principles are well established in both fire service standards and leadership training, the real test comes in their day-to-day application. When leaders choose the easier path of indirect, blanket communication, the consequences ripple far beyond the original issue. To understand why targeted, direct feedback matters, it's important to recognize the tangible costs that passive, nonspecific communication imposes on our teams and our culture.

THE COST OF INDIRECT LEADERSHIP

When leaders rely on blanket communication the impact is real:

- **Morale:** Members begin to doubt their own performance and feel unappreciated.
- **Accountability:** No one is sure who needs to change, so no one does.
- **Culture:** Passive-aggressive communication becomes the norm, creating an atmosphere of avoidance and fear instead of growth and accountability.

Over time, this erodes the very foundation of a high-performing fire department.

EMAIL ACTIONS FOR LEADERS AND MANAGERS

1. **Be laser-focused:** Only include people in an email if they need to act, make a change, or they need to be informed for a specific reason.
2. **Address issues directly:** If someone falls short, talk to them one-on-one, either face-to-face or via private message.
3. **Praise in public:** Celebrate wins. Give praise but also consider making it a point to give praise for great work in front of others or department wide.
4. **Create a communication policy:** Set clear expectations for supervisors:
 - No blanket corrective emails.
 - Use department-wide messages for praise, relevant updates, or actionable information only.
5. **Train and hold leaders accountable:** Make direct and specific communication a standard part of officer development and evaluation.

A SIMPLE COMMUNICATION DECISION FLOW FOR DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS

Issues arise → Does it affect **everyone**? Does it require an action or change from **everyone**?

- **Yes:** Communicate with everyone.
- **No:** Address it directly with the individual(s).

BE SURGICAL WITH COMMUNICATION

Fire service leaders set the tone for the entire department. Stop the collateral damage. Be direct, be specific, and build a culture of trust and accountability. Challenge yourself: Review your last five department-wide emails. How many could have been directed to an individual or a smaller group? Let's commit to leading with intention, clarity, and respect. Our people and our profession deserve nothing less.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

HOT TOPIC

[Click on this PDF to see notes from DOL related to Prevailing Wage Rates for Construction, Article 8](#)

PREVAILING WAGE RATE NOTES OPEN THIS LINK:

<https://cafda.net/information-on-the-nys-dol-prevailing-wage-rates-for-fire-districts/>

[This week's burning question, can my fire company give funds to an individual who is a member?](#)

Legal counsel replies with, my initial reaction is that the support of the membership in that manner is not the mission of the fire company and therefore would be outside the scope of what it could do in relation to its not-

for-profit status. Most incorporated volunteer fire companies in NY are generally recognized as a tax-exempt organization. At the corporate level they apply for a federal 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) tax exempt status. The difference is a c-3 is for organizations that perform a public safety function, where a c-4 is classified as a social welfare organization. Therefore, the support of the membership by distribution of company funds to individuals is not the mission of the fire company and would be outside the scope of what it could do.

On the other hand a fire department that establishes a "benevolent association" is chartered by the state to provide funding to help the members and their families to may become indigent or in times of financial stress. The benevolent may also help by lending medical equipment, including wheelchairs, mobile scooters, walkers and more. They may even aid with corrective lenses, and funeral services. Forming a Fire Department Benevolent Association requires establishing a legal, not-for-profit entity *independent* of the official fire department, tasked with managing supplemental funds (like "foreign fire insurance taxes" or "2% taxes") to provide relief and assistance to firefighters and their families. In jurisdictions with specific legislative frameworks (such as New York and Pennsylvania), benevolent associations are often created by a **Special Act of the State Legislature**. The difference is, If your state does not require a special legislative act, you will typically register as a **501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation** or a tax-exempt organization for the specific purpose of charitable relief. The legal documents, the charter or articles of incorporation must clearly define the association's clear purpose as providing financial relief, aid and assistance to indigent or disabled firefighters and their families.

Because an association acts as the financial safety net for firefighters, it is vital to consult with a municipal or specialized non-profit attorney during the drafting and filing phases to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- The Willsboro- Reber, Essex County, Board of Fire District Commissioners voted on Monday to allow the Reber Fire Department to continue operating, provided it has at least six certified volunteers by June 1, 2027. At the March 9 board meeting, the WRFD voted to close the Reber Fire Station as of June 1, 2026. According to what was presented, it was a combination of Reber residents being unaware of the situation and a lack of communication by the WRFD. Residents claimed they first became aware of the situation March 31. On April 13, about 50 residents filled the Willsboro Volunteer Firehouse, voicing their disapproval for the proposed closing of Willsboro Station 2, also known as the Reber Volunteer Fire Company, which has been in existence for 72 years. Liability insurance for the fire district requires training, which includes health and awareness of cancer, which could be caused by hazardous materials. Members need to have sufficient yearly training. Another obligation is to obtain an annual physical during the month of September. If the physical is not taken at that time, the applicant has to wait until the following September. A discussion also ensued as to ownership of the property where the station is located, as well as the liability it entails. This will be investigated and a subsequent lease will be signed by all concerned parties.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

18

In 2025 we experienced 78 LODDs reported nationally.!

- Data from US Fire Administration on LODD: <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/>
- Information on FF injuries and deaths from the Secret List: <https://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/>

- **Information of Fire Apparatus MVCs:** <https://www.emergencyvehicleresponse.com/>

Fire Apparatus Accidents

- A Guymon, Oklahoma brush unit involved in responding roll over crash. The front tire caught the right shoulder edge of the highway, the driver overcorrected with water in the tank shifting, then rolled 1 and a half times, coming to a rest upside down in the east ditch. Paramedics and coworkers treated and transported the injured firefighters to Memorial Hospital of Texas County. The driver was treated and released with minor injuries while the passenger was admitted in stable condition with chest and back injuries.
- A Hawaii County firetruck overturned in the Pahala area, injuring one person. A blown front tire caused the truck to turn on its side, according to initial reports from the scene.
- 2 Los Angeles FFs were injured after their engine overturned as a result of a MVC as they were responding to a reported structure fire. The engine landed on its side up against a building while trying to negotiate a turn. The injured FFs were treated for minor injuries. LA police are investigating the cause of the crash.

Firefighter Maydays, Serious Injuries and Deaths

- Emergency crews from multiple towns across the state of Maine, Knox, Waldo and Lincoln counties converged at Robbins Lumber in Searsmont where an explosion was reported around 10:05 a.m., Friday, May 15, 2026. The Searsmont Fire Department responded initially to a reported fire in the area of a silo at Robbins Lumber. What they encountered, according to Commissioner of Public Safety Michael Sauschuck, was an “incredibly dynamic and dangerous situation.” The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has identified the firefighter killed in the line of duty in the Searsmont explosion as Morrill Firefighter Andrew Cross, 27. Plus 10 seriously injured.
- During a double fatal house fire in Ketchikan, Alaska a firefighter experienced cardiac issues and was treated and later released from the hospital.

THE BUILDING AND FIRE CODE ISSUES – WEEKLY REPORT ON FIRE FATALITIES

- **Home Fire Fatalities in the News:** <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/civilian-fatalities/>

Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	32
5/20/26 Richland, Oswego, Co. Male age unk.	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	74
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	531
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA/ 45
	#2 OH 34
	#3 NY 32
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 846	
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 my question to you is; when does a new home become an old home?	

NOTE: The New ICC Code-NYS Edition went into effect on December 31st 2025 although the implementation of the energy code provisions have been withdrawn until further notice.

THE LATEST ON THE CHANGING FIRE SERVICE

Mergers and Consolidations: Uniting Departments for a Safer Future

Tom Merrill

Across the volunteer fire service, conversations about mergers and consolidations are becoming impossible to ignore. Departments are facing increasing demands, shrinking membership, and rising expectations from the communities they serve—forcing leaders to take a hard look at how they operate and whether working together might be the path forward. But these decisions are about more than budgets and efficiency; they involve tradition, identity, and the future of the fire service itself.

1. Consolidation Is Not a Sign of Failure—It’s a Strategic Response to a Crisis.

Consolidation should never be viewed as a failure on the part of a department or its members. With volunteer numbers dwindling and average ages rising, many departments find themselves “the last ones standing.” Pinsky reports routinely closing five to ten fire departments annually in his legal practice—a sobering indication of the magnitude of this challenge.

They explain that consolidation can be a deliberate and positive pivot to preserve service quality and community safety. It creates larger, more sustainable organizations equipped to deliver more consistent emergency response. Departments should embrace consolidation as a way to “renew the fun” and “reinvigorate” the service by offering better training, safer operations, and a stronger sense of camaraderie.

2. The Legal Process Is Complex, but The Hardest Work is People and Policy Alignment.

The consolidation process involves two intertwined but distinct challenges. Legally, mergers and consolidations require navigating intricate regulations, drafting new bylaws, and aligning assets, liabilities, and governance structures. Without a willingness to put ego aside, consolidation efforts will likely fail. Departments must agree on basic operational policies, training standards, and equipment standardization.

3. Consolidation Yields Better Recruitment, Retention, and Resource Utilization.

The combination of larger member pools and unified operations is a major recruitment and retention driver. There are several success stories where historic consolidations resulted in a jump from just a handful of firefighters attending drills to 20 or 30.

Larger departments can offer more training opportunities, specialized teams like rope rescue, and better equipment purchases—often by negotiating volume discounts through “mass purchasing.” These elements not only improve firefighter safety but also add to the excitement and pride intrinsic to fire service membership.

FIRE APPARATUS

FA Viewpoints: Maintenance in Your Specs

Bill Adams & Ricky Riley

ITS ESSENTIAL

Providing maintenance, service, and understanding warranty responsibilities (MSW) is essential in keeping fire apparatus in top-notch condition. My perspective does not favor purchasers (fire departments), apparatus manufacturers (OEMs), dealers (vendors), repair facilities, or the legal profession. Interpretations are mine. No recommendations are made. The intent is to make readers aware. Caution: MSW does not end with writing purchasing specifications.

Writing effective MSW requirements is contingent on identifying the purchaser’s objective, understanding terms and terminology, and knowledge of the law. Specifications detailing MSW can favor or eliminate potential bidders—no different than technical nuts-and-bolts descriptions can. When vendors help write that type of document, it’s called marketing. When purchasers do, it can border on collusion.

WARRANTIES

Simply put, a warranty is a commitment between buyer and seller that if something purchased breaks, it will be replaced or fixed. Unfortunately, warranties are not that simple. Cornell Law School (www.law.cornell.edu/wex/warranty) states: “There are express and implied warranties, both of which are legally binding commitments.”

Specification writers should know the differences—including costs—between standard, prorated, limited, lifetime, extended, and bumper-to-bumper warranties. Apparatus purchasing committees (APCs) and authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs) should know because a signed contract is subject to the laws of the land. State laws can differ. Years ago, one fire department purchased a rig with a lifetime booster tank warranty. Ten years later, the tank had to be replaced because of a defect. It ended up in court, which defined a lifetime warranty for a vehicle in that state as seven years. *Warranties can be based on age, accidents, mileage, “other than normal usage,” and equally ambiguous terms. Read the fine print.*

WHO COVERS WHAT?

OEMs claiming they are single-source manufacturers imply they or their dealers will perform all warranty work. *That is misleading.* They may facilitate and coordinate warranty claims; however, outside manufacturers that fabricate component parts decide who, when, and how warranty claims will be satisfied. There are probably four or five dozen component part manufacturers that OEMs use in building their apparatus. Warranties for “small stuff” are seldom described in purchasing specifications and rarely submitted at delivery and probably shouldn’t be.

Don’t panic. Most OEMs act as third-party providers representing component part manufacturers. That is usually unbeknownst to purchasers unless major problems occur requiring that the apparatus be transported to an authorized, often specialized, and possibly distant repair facility for sophisticated components such as motors and transmissions.

At delivery, one OEM supplied individual warranties for items including paint, plumbing, fire pump, booster tank, chassis transmission and motor, braking system, axles, steering gear, shutter doors, foam system, cab structure, body structure, and frame rails. The quantity usually corresponds to the number of times purchasing specifications denote specific warranties. *Each warranty may stipulate conditions such as where and by whom the warranty work must be or can be performed. Important is whether labor and transportation costs to fulfill warranty requirements are included. They can be expensive.*

Most OEMs have standard nationwide warranties. Purchasers demanding more than the standard will no doubt be upcharged.

SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE

Understanding and establishing service and maintenance requirements including repair capabilities are equally as important as warranties. Seldom found in the technical nuts-and-bolts specifications, they are often in the “front sheets” where the AHJ inserts financial, local, and legal requirements. Dealers helping write purchasing specifications usually specify the exact service, maintenance, and repair capabilities they provide. That’s business.

Sophisticated electronics and computers mandate most chassis inspections, warranty claims, and repairs must, or should, be done at an authorized repair facility—which might not be your preferred one. *Dealers licensed to perform state or federal inspections for Class 8 rigs are not required to repair them. Ask. If a rig does not pass inspection, it may have to be transported to a facility that does.* For example, the Department of Transportation’s Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s regulation (49 CFR § 396.17) on large trucks states, “defects affecting safety must be corrected before the vehicle is operated again.” Underlining is mine for emphasis. Who pays for towing/transportation if it can’t be driven?

DEALERS

Today’s marketplace is becoming megadealer-oriented. Small dealerships are disappearing. There are probably 25% to 30% fewer dealers than 20 years ago. Many successful dealerships have been absorbed by megadealers. Their level of service may not be the same as the folks you’ve always dealt with.

Many smaller dealers have successfully sold apparatus without owning a service facility. And, some OEMs are successful in marketing their apparatus “factory direct.” Both contract with local service providers that purchasers might be comfortable working with. Many purchasers prefer local repair providers for service and maintenance regardless of who built their apparatus, especially after warranties expire.

New apparatus contracts are usually between the purchaser and the apparatus OEM. It is unknown how warranty claims and legalities are handled when a new rig is purchased from a dealer’s stock inventory.

FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITY

MSW requirements in a purchasing specification do not absolve purchasers from not properly performing preventive maintenance and regular upkeep on the vehicle.

RECORD EVERYTHING. *Maintain written records of all repairs, preventive maintenance performed, and communications with your dealer and OEM about possible warranty concerns and how they address them.*

Dates and times on faxes and emails work best—even to substantiate telephone conversations. It might not matter for a defective gauge, but it could help for major warranty claims. It keeps everyone honest.

Ensure state-specific regulations such as environmental concerns, chassis emissions standards, and consumer protection laws are covered by standard warranties. Co-op purchasing may result in less incentive for purchasers to address MSW requirements.

Consider optional pricing in purchasing specifications for items such as coverage for transportation and labor costs to fulfill all warranty claims. What about towing for on-the-road breakdowns?

If the local dealer quits, is fired, or is absorbed into another dealership, will the OEM who signed the contract have to honor the MSW requirements the original dealer inserted into the purchasing specifications? Good luck!

GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO HELP

As we keep on our path of the importance of well-written specifications, now comes the part of the specs that is not glamorous, shiny, flashing, or murdered out (a.k.a. blacked out). This portion of the specification does not cover the most operationally motivated items, unlike our low hosebeds, attack line dividers, low access to ground ladders, and so on. As well designed as many rigs are nowadays considering fireground/operational performance, keeping all these great ideas, designs, and operational enhancements deployed on incidents requires the rigs to be in service and responding on calls for service.

This is the part of the apparatus where the person who does not respond on all your calls or crawl down hallways with you comes directly into play. *The mechanic is the person who keeps your rig in service and ready so you can use all your great designs and options to get to work.* His knowledge of your apparatus goes far beyond what we learn in the station or through training on apparatus component operations. It goes past your daily, weekly, and monthly checks and into how every component works and how they interact with each other—from the front bumper to the rear tailboard and all spaces and parts in between.

This does not only mean the mechanics that departments employ to service apparatus. It can also include third-party service businesses, the local mechanic who helps out your department, or the dealer network of service centers. Depending on the service situation in your area or department, and regardless of how or who services your apparatus, when buying your next apparatus, *the people who service and maintain your rig should be included in your decision making, your specs, and recommendations for your next piece.*

Without a doubt, stress the importance for any department buying apparatus to have a subject matter expert on apparatus maintenance and care involved in the specification writing, the preconference, the engineering conference, and the final delivery inspection.

Look—I have been in situations where we just took all the people who ride the rigs to all the meetings and trips but did not involve the people who were responsible for the maintenance side of the apparatus. We ended up paying for it in out-of-service time, with the rig just sitting in the station. This was because what we cared about was turning on the battery, starting the rig, turning on the lights, and going. As simple as that sounds and is, the reality is that the apparatus we ride today are very complicated and complex machines and rolling technology.

The men and women who maintain and service these machines have another level of understanding and knowledge of the apparatus that we ride and use. The training they receive and the knowledge they possess keep your apparatus functioning and operating. *So, to not include their input and expertise on your rig is just setting yourself up for out-of-service times and problems that affect your service delivery. By far, they know what has broken in the past, what has not worked in the past, and what needs to be done to prevent these issues from happening on the next apparatus.* Use that knowledge to design and spec your rig for mechanical reliability and to make the unit easier to service and maintain.

All these suggestions will keep you in your front-line rig and not riding around on a reserve unit that, for sure nowadays, has seen better days. So when you are buying that next rig, reach out to your service personnel, regardless of who does your service. Include them in the process and make them part of the team. Their inclusion in the process will only increase their buy-in and understanding of your newly purchased apparatus.

And, they will have seen all the discussions, needs, and wants of the end user in the fire stations. This will give the service personnel a better understanding of the performance and operational goals of the firefighters and paramedics who use these rigs to safely ride to an incident, to operate on incidents, and for the service they provide on all incidents.

The last topic to discuss is the warranty requirements on that next rig. You and your department will need to see all the warranties for the apparatus, components, and fixtures. These warranties should be supplied to you by your chosen manufacturer, but there will be many you will have to look up online. It is up to you, your department, and your service center or shop to decide how you are going to use these warranties and how long you are willing to wait with your apparatus out of service or unable to perform certain functions or operations related to the warranty item.

I will give you my take on warranties, but this is just one side of the warranty process as I see it. This process can be simple to understand or extremely complicated when we actually want to use the warranty for apparatus, components, and designs. There isn't anything much more boring to read than all the technical language and guidelines that encompass a warranty, regardless of product on your apparatus. We have some very large warranties that involve the engine, the transmission, the paint, and the construction. They may or may not be honored by your chosen manufacturer depending on which component broke, failed, or is not operating and exactly where you are at in age, mileage, hours, how it broke or failed, and how all that fits into your specific warranty. Now comes the grueling understanding of what is in each warranty for every product or option you put on your rig along with figuring out who is going to honor the warranty, how it is going to be honored, and what your role is in the warranty being honored and repaired.

Even using the manufacturer warranty can be extremely tedious and time consuming based on what you are trying to get warrantied and the approval process for the dealer to actually perform the work from the manufacturer. *Most manufacturers only pay a predetermined labor rate and not the actual labor rate of the service center where you take your apparatus to be serviced, thus making warranty work not too attractive for service centers.* And while this process is going on, your rig is sitting out of service or not functioning at the level for which it was designed. If you have the resources and apparatus to take full advantage of all warranties and have no concerns with out-of-service rigs or functionalities, then go right ahead and go through the warranty claim process. But, there are many departments that cannot afford the hoops and processes of a warranty claim and need to get their rigs back on the road. So, you will need to do an assessment with both line personnel and your service personnel to see if all your component, structural, and paint warranties are worth the effort and what the financial commitment is for each one of these warranties. *The warranty costs and stipulations to actually use the warranties made us look hard at what we were paying for the warranties.* And based on our use and mileage, were we going to be able to file a warranty claim and have it be actually paid to make the initial cost of the warranty financially and operationally responsible for our apparatus?

If you are going to write your specifications, involve the personnel and subject matter experts who can help you properly include warranty, service, and maintenance in the specs. If you are not going to produce specifications, invite these personnel to your meetings and trips to your chosen manufacturer. While their input is not glamorous, it can help you keep that apparatus in service and ready for service.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

Solar Panel Fire Extinguished at CT House

Richard Chumney, New Haven Register

Firefighters extinguished a blaze that burned through multiple rooftop solar panels at a house on Clover Street Tuesday, officials said. Emergency crews responded just before 3 p.m. to the residential street for a report of a house on fire, according to Stratford Fire Chief Jermaine B. Atkinson. Atkinson said crews arrived to find rooftop solar panels on fire at a two-story home with extension to the roof material. "Fire crews rapidly extinguished the fire and disconnected the solar power to the home," Atkinson said. Atkinson said crews also searched the home and confirmed that everyone had escaped the burning building before they arrived on scene. He said no injuries were reported.

[Fire involving solar panels damages Twin Cities home](#)

Several surrounding fire departments responded to smoke and fire coming from a home in Savage, Minnesota, Tuesday afternoon. The damaged roof is now covered in a blue tarp contains solar panels. The U.S. Department of Energy says solar systems spontaneously bursting into flames is an extremely rare occurrence. But design flaws, component defects and faulty installation can cause a rooftop solar system to start a fire.

[Stratford Connecticut Firefighters respond to solar panel fire](#)

Stratford firefighters quickly knocked down a solar panel fire on the roof of a home on Clover Street, preventing further damage from the home.

[Solar panels catch fire on Stafford County, VA home roof](#)

A fire involving solar panels broke out on the roof of a Stafford County home Monday afternoon, but firefighters were able to quickly contain it. When crews arrived, they found smoke and flames coming from solar panels on the roof of a two-story, single-family home. Firefighters worked to extinguish the flames and search the residence. Officials said the fire was contained to the solar panels and did not spread into the home.

NEIGHBOR'S HELPING NEIGHBORS, thank you for your support!!

[Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast](#)

Sunday June 11th Breakfast will be served starting at 8AM. Last breakfast until the fall.

[Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast](#)

Next Breakfast will be held in October at a date to be announced.

[Speigletown Fire Department Breakfast 2nd Sunday of each month](#)

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

We salute all of the kitchen help who hustle, giving up their Sunday mornings, to make these events special for all the attendees and work hard to support their fire company's. Thank you for your tough work and dedication.

GENERAL INTEREST TO ALL

[Fit for Duty at 50? Rethinking Firefighter Wellness, Fitness Standards and Operational Readiness](#)

Michael Reily

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- When firefighters age, their speed and functional abilities decline. However, not all aging is equal, and not all decline is linear.
- Many U.S. fire departments are ill-equipped to support firefighters as they age. This is largely because of agencies' lack of age-related fitness programs that are tailored to physiological aging; the prevalence of dated or inconsistent performance standards that aren't based on current long-term firefighter health and wellness research; voluntary fitness programs that result in inconsistent buy-in across different age groups; and wellness programs that only focus on short-term injury reduction.
- An age-smart fire service provides the necessary fitness, wellness, medical and staffing systems to best support members for as long as possible.

The fireground doesn't care how old you are. The smoke is just as thick, the heat is just as unforgiving, and the stairs are just as steep. For thousands who are on the job, the physical requirements feel heavier than they did when those members were in their 20s.

The fire service is aging. Many members are in their 40s, 50s and older. With that shift comes a reality that many departments are unprepared to address: The body changes with age, even when dedication to the

mission remains constant. As with any walk of life, experience and judgment increase with age. At the same time, aerobic capacity, muscular strength, heat tolerance, recovery time and injury resilience decline.

WHEN FIREGROUND DEMANDS CONFRONT LIMITS OF THE HUMAN BODY

The physical demands of firefighting require essential abilities, including aerobic capacity (VO₂ max), muscular strength and power, short-duration anaerobic output, high heat tolerance and rapid recovery from intense workloads. Well-known biological age-related changes (ARCs) are related to lower levels of work performance. VO₂ max and lean muscle mass decrease with age at an average rate of approximately 1 percent–2 percent per year after an individual turns 30 years old. Strength and power also decline with age. According to Anssi Saari, et al, in “The Influence of Age on Firefighter Combat Challenge Performance and Exercise Training Habits” (Journal of Strength Conditioning Research, September 2020), older firefighters have significantly slower times in the Firefighter Combat Challenge as well as in power-based task performance when compared with their younger colleagues. In addition, body fat tends to increase, and pulmonary function shows a general decline over time (“Aging and the Fitness of Firefighters: The Complex Issues Involved in Abolishing Mandatory Retirement Ages,” K. Saupe, et al, American Journal of Public Health, September 1991).

Recovery times also increase, with older individuals experiencing greater strain on blood pressure and the heart, multiple reports show.

These physiological changes are related directly to slower times on occupational physical assessments. In “Age-Related Differences in Physical Fitness and Performance of an ‘Ability Test’ Among Firefighters” (Muscles, 2024) Koulla Parpa and Marcos Michaelides measured job-related ability test times and observed a significant increase in the time that was required to complete an ability test with increasing age. The average time for the ability test was 6.20 minutes for a 20–30-years-old age group, 7.13 minutes for a 31–40-years-old age group, and 8.45 minutes for a 41–50-years-old age group.

There’s a clear and progressive effect of aging on speed and functional abilities of firefighters.

EFFECT OF AGING ON FIREFIGHTER READINESS

Parpa and Michaelides investigated the physical fitness of 20–44-year-old firefighters in Greece to examine how firefighting-specific ability is affected by age. Aerobic capacity, which is a key element of physical fitness, was measured, and older firefighters had significantly lower scores. The two researchers also observed lower ability test times and decreased strength and power in the aging population.

Saupe and her co-authors found that older firefighters took longer to complete the Firefighter Combat Challenge, which they indicated likely was because of the decline in strength and power.

Heat tolerance also had an inverse relationship with age. Firefighters were shown to experience impaired thermoregulation and greater cardiac stress when exposed to PPE thermal stress. Body composition was reported in the data that Saupe and her co-authors produced, with significant differences in body fat percentages in 20-year-old firefighters compared with 45-year-old firefighters.

The information from these studies can be applied to fireground operations to assess the decline of physical ability with age. *Age was associated with slower line advancement, shorter durations of SCBA air, the inability to perform prolonged searches, and less power for victim drags, forcible entry and other tasks that require power.* Furthermore, aging was associated with earlier onset of fatigue for prolonged incidents. Collectively, crew age has both individual and crewwide implications for fireground operations.

WHERE DEPARTMENTS FALL SHORT

Many departments in the United States are ill-equipped to support firefighters as they age, despite the national trend of the average age of firefighters increasing. This is largely because of a number of large and often systematic departmental gaps, including: a lack of age-related fitness programs that are tailored to physiological aging; the prevalence of dated or inconsistent performance standards for fitness that aren’t based on current long-term firefighter health and wellness research; voluntary fitness programs that result in inconsistent buy-in across different age groups and that allow for preventable decline to go unchecked; and wellness programs that only focus on short-term injury reduction as opposed to long-term career span and that don’t offer targeted support for the inevitable physical changes that firefighters experience as they age.

There also is a clear lack of strategic or tactical aging-related planning, as few departments factor it into

staffing, training and fitness expectations, medical evaluations, and succession planning, Saupe and her co-authors wrote.

PATH FORWARD: SMARTER FITNESS FOR A CHANGING WORKFORCE

Studies collectively point to an obvious and inarguable conclusion: Regular exercise is the most consistent predictor of slowing and, in some cases, reversing the effects of aging in firefighters. Resistance training combats sarcopenia (age-related, progressive loss of muscle mass, strength and function) and maintains the power that's necessary to perform physically demanding fireground tasks. Aerobic training enhances VO2 max at any age and lessens cardiac stress during operations. *Functional movement training promotes mobility, stability and more efficient movement, which, in turn, reduces injury risk and enhances overall job performance.* However, this also suggests a broader organizational imperative to embrace age-smart solutions across the board, including age-sensitive fitness testing, tiered programming that grows and changes with a firefighter's experience and career stage, and a wellness culture and climate that normalizes participation rather than deferring to voluntarism or individual initiative. Such a system would depend on data-driven policies and practices around staffing, assignments and workload to keep firefighters healthy, able and safe for as long as possible.

AN AGE-SMART FIRE SERVICE

Older workers are a rapidly growing part of the American fire service, but firefighting never has been less forgiving. Every alarm presents challenges to the human body. Every fire, every rescue, every critically stressed patient, every difficult call pushes workers in both physical and operational ways. The physiological challenges of aging in this demanding profession aren't avoidable, but they also aren't inevitable.

A predictable decline in aerobic capacity, strength and mobility, recovery capacity, and other physiological factors that can lead to increased heat, exertion and cardiac risk is certain with age. However, not all aging is equal, and not all decline is linear. Research that spans many years clearly shows that what a fire department provides through training, support, culture and policy can influence the trajectory of these effects on an individual level. *An age-smart fire service values what experience and maturity can provide in terms of operational knowledge, decision-making, situational awareness and leadership skills.* It also provides the necessary fitness, wellness, medical and staffing systems to best support these members in a safe and productive way for as long as is possible.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

When I was little, I didn't care what I wore. I just went along with what my parents chose.

When I look at old photo albums, I realize they didn't care either.

CLASSIFIED

CAFDA IS SEEKING A TREASURER FOR OUR FIRE SERVICE NOT-FOR-PROFIT ASSOCIATION.

Our current excellent treasurer has announced that he will be giving up the position as soon as we find a replacement due to increased workload with his own business. Any candidate should be familiar with Quick Books and the structure and operation of a not-for-profit organization as well as some familiarization with the operation of fire districts in New York State. CAFDA offers a stipend which won't make you rich, but you get to hang out with some great people, get free meals prior to meetings and trying to provide a service to fire district officials. The Association requires our treasurers to be bonded. If you are interested let us know by providing a resume and cover letter to secretary@cafda.net.

WHO ARE YOUR CAFDA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2026?

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1st Vice President, Ellen Martin, Deputy Treasurer Clifton Park Fire District

DIRECTORS:

Les Bonesteel Past Commissioner, Burnt Hills/Saratoga,
Skip Smith, Commissioner, West Crescent/Saratoga
Joyce Petkus Treasurer Greenfield/Saratoga,
Ed Woehrle Commissioner Niskayuna #1/Schenectady
Art Hunsinger, Ex-Officio Member Clifton Park Fire District.

We would consider expanding the number of Directors if individuals from other counties would volunteer to participate!!

APPOINTEES

Secretary Molly Jenkins, Region 1 Director, Assoc of Fire Districts, NYS
Treasurer: Tony Hill
Sargent at Arms: Tom Wood, Commissioner, Northumberland Fire District
Chaplain: Dane Fagan
Legal Counsel: Greg Serio, Safety Officer, Verdoy Fire District

***The Capital Area Association represents any fire district that wishes to join CAFDA. Fire District Officials include Commissioners, Treasurers, and Deputy Treasurers. Secretaries and Chiefs are also invited to join in!
If your Fire District is a member, you are a member!!***

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

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

518-407-5020

[Wish to become a member of CAFDA, go to CAFDA.net/membership to apply.](http://CAFDA.net/membership)

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.CAFDA.NET

Stay tuned for some new Business Partners for 2026.

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 2026. You are invited to our monthly membership meeting and to any of our social events..

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