# THE BULLETIN

AUGUST 22ND, 2026

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


## CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- ***If we fail to invest in our people, the result is predictable: they stop investing in us.***
- **BUDGET SCHEDULE** PAGE 4 also on CAFDA.net
- **ELECTION SCHEDULE** PAGE 9 also on CAFDA.net
- **You're Invited! Firefighter's Home Open House September 26 Join us on Saturday, September 26th, for The Firefighter's Home Open House.**
- Recently one of our members received an email to her district email address and was made to look like it came from a board member. The first thing that should be noticed that the email it was mailed from was NOT the email of the board member. This is how scammers suck you in to opening dangerous emails. The first thing to look at if you receive an email that doesn't seem right is to immediately delete it. If it's REAL correspondence, they will contact you again or try another method. If someone doesn't answer you via email, pick up your phone and give them a good old-fashioned call.
- Two more New York State fire districts are reporting that they are operating under stress; Clintondale in Ulster County where a number of firefighters have left the company, and Youngsville in Sullivan County where a number of firefighters have left and there are only 2 Commissioners remaining which means they cannot carry on the business of the fire district. One option is that fire districts can contract with adjacent fire companies for staffing. Some of these fire departments are beginning to fall over the cliff, it's unknown if they will be able to recover. Make no mistake there are several more across the state that are in the same situation.
- The crises spreads to Ohio; An apartment fire in Pioneer, Ohio, further exposed the department's staffing crisis after more than a dozen firefighters resigned following the mayor's decision to demote the assistant chief weeks earlier. The department responded with only the fire chief and a trainee and requested mutual aid, but two former department members who lived nearby, and still felt obligated to help, arrived first and entered the building with fire extinguishers. A resident said they had the fire largely under control before Pioneer's apparatus arrived, potentially preventing it from spreading into a larger multi-unit apartment fire. The mayor has since appointed a new chief and said the department has rebuilt to roughly six members, with a goal of reaching 12 by the end of the year. Despite criticism over the response and current level of protection, the mayor called the incident a "success" because there were no deaths, no pets lost, and only minimal structural damage. That's rolling the dice!!
- **The new warning about dumpling 'dupes'** Two weeks after a fire ripped through two rowhomes in Lancaster City and sent one person to the hospital with minor burns, the fire marshal knows how it started and spread. It happened on August 5 in the 100 block of North Reservoir Street around 3 a.m. Tom Hoffman, the Lancaster City Fire Marshal, said a counterfeit squishy dumpling toy a family bought the day before the row home fire acted as a catalyst. "When these things get an initial source to them, they will heat up, they will burst, and flammable materials go everywhere," said Hoffman. On the same day as the fire, coincidentally, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) posted a press release about the counterfeit toys and how they oftentimes do not comply with federal safety requirements. "These warnings were mainly health-related," said Hoffman. "What was not on there was the flammability range of these things." Hoffman said he did some research and contacted

a laboratory in Georgia to find out what is inside a fake squishy dumpling. *Some of these chemicals include benzene, toluene, cyclohexene, all of which are very flammable and are very toxic to humans," said Hoffman*.

## TRAINING OPPORTUNTIES:

## From CAFDA

1. ***Join us at the NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING on Thursday September 10 features dinner for attendees. Please join us.***
   **ZOOM LINK FOR THE SEPTEMBER MEETING at 7pm:**
   https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89275151494?pwd=H9Wzo77bprmGQd5beFEjODUJxebjJC.1
2. ***Mark your calendar for the CAFDA Conference '27, Lake George NY, April 9-10-11, dinner/vendor show Friday April 10th Fort William Henry Carriage House. Sponsored Mixer the evening of Thursday April 9th at the Holiday Inn Resort, food, games, beverages. The response has grown each year and we are in the process of identifying the subjects for 2027.***
4. ***Mark your calendars now, CAFDA Fall Seminar, Saturday November 7th, at Guilderland Fire Department, 2303 Western Ave. (US Route 20), Guilderland, NY. The Education Committee has identified the subjects including the ever popular "Experts Panel".***
3. ***CAFDA Commissioner Training for 2027 will be held in Averill Park, Thomas Corners, Clifton Park, Schoharie and Warrensburg.***

**CAFDA TRAINING AND EVENT DATES**

| Day/Date | Time | Type | Location | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FY 2026** | | | | |
| **July, 2026** | **NO MEETING, See next month's Day at the Races** | | | |
| 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** | Guilderland FD | 2303 Western Ave. |
| 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!*

Open enrollment is available for NYSAFC Regional Hands-On Training this fall. The eight-hour **Fire Behavior On the Inside** course is scheduled for **Albany** (November 14-15), Ontario County (November 7-8), and **Schenectady** (October 17-18) Counties.

The three-hour **Flashover** program is coming to **Albany** (September 26-27), Ontario (October 10-11), and Orange (November 21-22) Counties.

**View the Calendar and Register...**

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## *2026 Seminar Series with Chief Mike Lombardo Resumes in September*

**https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/2026seminarseries**

Chief Mike Lombardo (Buffalo Fire Department) will present "**Dangerous Spaces: Challenges and Tactics When Dealing with Garage and Basement Fires**" at 16 sites through November. Registration is $35 (NYSAFC members) and $50 (non-members) per person. Registration will be available at the door, but pre-registration is encouraged. Join NYSAFC in Chautauqua, Chemung, Cortland, Dutchess, Erie, **Fulton**, **Greene**, Monroe, Nassau, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, Otsego, **Rensselaer**, Rockland, and **Saratoga** Counties.

# LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

## From Albany

### ***DiNapoli: Growing Number of Local Governments Reporting Plans to Override Property Tax Cap: Trend Signals Growing Budget Pressure on New York's Municipalities, Fire Districts and School Districts*

More local governments have reported to the Office of the New York State Comptroller (OSC) that they plan to override the property tax cap in recent years, according to a report released today by State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli. More school districts, which require a ballot proposition and at least 60% voter approval to override the tax cap, have also reported plans to override the cap. While a planned override suggests that local officials may be concerned about a potential budget shortfall, it does not necessarily mean that they will exceed the cap for that year.

"Many local governments are under fiscal pressure, with rising costs and slower growth in recurring revenues," DiNapoli said. "For local officials trying to close budget gaps or increase revenue to align with spending, overriding the tax cap is an option, and increasing numbers have reported plans to do so. I urge local officials to communicate with the public and be transparent about their fiscal challenges and plans for addressing them. My office is always here to help."

New York's property tax cap limits annual increases in property taxes to the lesser of 2% or the inflation factor, with some exceptions. Local governments other than school districts may override the cap if at least 60% of their governing boards vote to approve it. ***Every year, before they adopt their budgets, all local governments must file tax cap forms with DiNapoli's office, indicating whether they plan to override the tax cap for the upcoming fiscal year. Even if they report their intention to override the cap, a local government can still decide to stay under it.***

Pandemic relief aid, as well as a surge in sales tax revenue, contributed to a drop in the share of reported override plans, most notably in 2022. But in recent years as pandemic-related federal aid has dwindled, sales tax growth has moderated, and ***inflation has risen above the 2% cap,*** the number of municipalities reporting plans to override the tax cap has grown substantially. Cities led the increase, with nearly half (49.2%) reporting that they planned to override for the local fiscal year ending (FYE) in 2025 and 45% indicating they would override for FYE 2026, up from 13.1% in 2022.

Over one-fifth of New York's counties also reported that they planned to override the tax cap for FYE 2025, and nearly one-fourth reported planning overrides for FYE 2026, up from 3.5% in 2022.

Towns and villages have also experienced notable increases in planned overrides in recent years. For FYE 2026, 35.5% of villages and 28.6% of towns said they were planning to override the cap, up from 22.7% and 16.6%, respectively, in 2022.

***Fire districts also appear to be experiencing fiscal pressure. The share of fire districts planning overrides reached 34.9% for FYE 2025 before declining slightly to 31.5% for FYE 2026, up from 18.6% in 2022.***
A smaller share of school districts have reported plans to override the cap than other local governments. However, their share has more than doubled in recent years, increasing from 2.4% to 4.9% from FYE 2024 to FYE 2026.

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- The New York State Legislature passed the volunteer firefighter tax credit, which would increase the annual credit from $200 to $800, and provides meaningful relief to the 80,000 volunteer firefighters who serve communities across New York, helping offset the rising costs of service, including fuel, training, and equipment. This is an important step forward in advancing FASNY's 14-Point Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Plan and strengthening the future of New York's volunteer fire service, but we still need your support! The bill is currently awaiting delivery to Governor Hochul's desk; we are hopeful she will recognize its importance, and we're asking for your help. Contact Governor Hochul's office today, through FASNY's VoterVoice, and urge her to sign this essential bill! **Let the Governor Hear You through VoterVoice** at this link.

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Waiting for the governor to call for the bills that were passed by both Chambers so that she can sign them into law. Technically she has until December 31st.

- Law passed and signed to require mandatory recycling program for e-scooters/e-bikes.
- The use of "Piggyback Purchasing" extended one more year until June 30, 2027.

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| **S8832 KAVANAGH (D)** | **A9504 GLICK (D)** | **1/2/126 PASSED SENATE 2/10/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER AMENDMENT IS TO FACILITATE THE INCLUSION OF E-BIKE AND E-SCOOTER BATTERIES IN THE RECHARGEABLE BATTERY RECYCLING PROGRAM AND TO PROMOTE CONSUMER SAFETY, CONVENIENCE, AND AWARENESS** | **2/13/26 SIGNED CHAPTER 87** |
| **S10075 SOLAGES (D)** | **A11162 ZELLLNER** | **6/2/26 PASSED SENATE 5/29/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **EXTEND THE PROVISION OF THE COMPETITIVE BIDDING STATUTE [GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW §103] WHICH PERMITS PIGGYBACK PURCHASING. THE STATUTE HAD A SUNSET PROVISION MEANING THAT IT WOULD EXPIRE ON JUNE 30, 2026. THE BILLS PROPOSE TO AMEND THE STATUTE TO EXTEND THE SUNSET PROVISION UNTIL JUNE 30, 2027** | **6/26/26 SIGNED CHAPTER 147** |
| **S6368B SKOUFIS (D)** | **A3126B LUNSFORD (D)** | **4/22/26 PASSED SENATE 3/30326 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXECUTIVE LAW, IN RELATION TO REQUIRING THAT WHEN A COMPLAINT IS MADE TO LOCAL CODE ENFORCEMENT OF A VIOLATION OF THE UNIFORM FIRE PREVENTION AND BUILDING CODE OR LOCAL BUILDING CODES WHICH RESULTS IN THE ISSUANCE OF A COMPLIANCE ORDER, THE COMPLAINANT SHALL ALSO BE PROVIDED A COPY OF SUCH ORDER** | **PENDING SIGNATURE** |
| **S9502A MARTINEZ (D)** | **A10885B STERN (D)** | **6/2/26 PASSED SENATE 6/1/26 PASSES ASSEMBLY** | ***TO AUTHORIZE* LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO ADOPT A PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF PAID FIREFIGHTERS WHO ARE KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.** | **PENDING SIGNATURE** PENDING PASSAGE BY EACH LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY RESOLUTION |
| **S7316 HINCHEY (D)** | **A8008 LUNSFORD (D)** | **5/18/26 PASSED SENATE 6/1/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **REQUIRES THE FORFEITURE OF BENEFITS TO BE PAID PURSUANT TO A SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM TO VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS WHO HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF FELONIES COMMITTED AGAINST A VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY, FIRE DISTRICT, OR FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT.** | **PENDING SIGNATURE** |
| **S5614 ADDABBO (D)** | **A3681A WOERNER (D)** | **6/2/26 PASSED SENATE 1/28/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **AN ACT TO AMEND THE GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW, IN RELATION TO REMOVING RESTRICTIONS ON THE FREQUENCY CERTAIN AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATIONS MAY CONDUCT BINGO GAMES** | **PENDING SIGNATURE** |
| **S4675 JACKSON (D)** | **A688 BUTTENSCHON (D)** | **5/6/26 PASSED SENATE 4/29/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXECUTIVE LAW, IN RELATION TO PROVIDING MINIMUM BASIC TRAINING RELATED TO HANDLING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVOLVING INDIVIDUALS WITH ANY PHYSICAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY TO ALL FIRE-FIGHTERS** | **PENDING SIGNATURE** REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING |
| **S6233A MARTINEZ (D)** | **A6790A MCMAHON** | **6/1/26 PASSED SENATE 5/14/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY** | **THIS BILL INCREASES THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' AND AMBULANCE WORKERS' PERSONAL INCOME TAX CREDIT FROM $200 TO $800 FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND** | **PENDING SIGNATURE** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | FROM $400 TO $1600 FOR ELIGIBLE MARRIED JOINT FILERS. ALSO ALLOWS FIRST RESPONDERS TO TAKE THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT ALSO. | |

## From Washington

📌 Appropriations Process Update. On August 8th, the Senate voted to pass a funding stopgap measure by a vote of 90-6. The Continuing Resolution (CR) funds the government through December 11th, but still has to pass the House when it returns on August 31st. Within the CR, Senators added language that delays the OMB Proposed Rule that would drastically alter the federal grant-making process at least until December 11th. There is also language that delays the lapse of Surface-Transportation programs until December 11th.

📌 Open National Fire Academy Classes. The National Fire Academy (NFA) has openings in a number of classes. The openings include a new 2-day course (P2602 - Wildland Urban Interface: Strengthening Communities for a Fire-Adapted Future) as well as a course being held in Paris, Kentucky (F0610 - Wildland Urban Interface Firefighting for the Structural Company Officer).

## ***Court Upholds EPA Rule Making PFAS Polluters Liable for Cleanup***

Garret Ellison – mlive.com

Appeals judges upheld a landmark rule that allows the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to force polluters to clean up two widespread toxic "forever chemicals" or reimburse governments and other parties for doing so.

On Tuesday, Aug. 18, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia rejected an industry challenge to EPA's designation of the individual compounds PFOA and PFOS as hazardous substances under the federal Superfund law.

*The ruling preserves one of the federal government's strongest tools for holding companies financially responsible for PFAS contamination in drinking water, groundwater, rivers and soil.*

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Associated General Contractors of America and National Waste & Recycling Association sued to overturn a Biden-era rule enacted in 2024, arguing that EPA exceeded its authority and failed to adequately account for full cleanup costs.

*A three-judge panel disagreed, concluding EPA reasonably found that releases of PFOA and PFOS may present a substantial danger to public health, welfare or the environment.*

The court also rejected arguments that EPA's consideration of the rule's costs and benefits was legally deficient. The underlying Superfund law did not require EPA to quantify every future cleanup cost before designating the chemicals as hazardous, the court concluded. The EPA supported its decision with evidence about the toxicity, persistence, mobility and widespread occurrence of PFOA and PFOS.

Industry groups did not meaningfully contest EPA's scientific findings about the dangers posed by the chemicals.

*The ruling leaves EPA's rule in effect while the industry groups decide whether to seek reconsideration or appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.*

Earthjustice, which intervened alongside EPA on behalf of environmental and community groups, called the ruling a major victory for communities contaminated by PFAS.

PFAS, short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a large family of synthetic chemicals used for decades in firefighting foam, stain-resistant fabrics, nonstick cookware, food packaging and numerous industrial processes. The chemicals are commonly called "forever chemicals" because they do not readily break down in the environment and can accumulate in people and wildlife.

Exposure to some PFAS has been linked to kidney and testicular cancers, immune system effects, increased cholesterol, liver damage, decreased vaccine response in children and developmental problems.

PFOA and PFOS are two of the oldest, most widespread and best studied compounds in the PFAS family.

EPA finalized the hazardous-substance designation in April 2024, marking the first time the agency used its discretionary authority under Section 102 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) to add chemicals to the Superfund program.

*The rule took effect in July 2024. It allows EPA to order parties responsible for PFOA and PFOS contamination to investigate or clean up polluted property. EPA can also perform cleanup work and seek reimbursement.*

State and local governments, water utilities, property owners and other private parties that incur qualifying cleanup expenses may also sue responsible parties to recover costs.

*The Chamber and other groups argued the designation would create a wave of costly litigation involving not only chemical manufacturers and industrial polluters but businesses and public agencies that received PFAS-contaminated material.*

*Those so-called passive receivers can include landfills, wastewater treatment plants, drinking water systems, airports, **fire departments**, farms and property owners **that did not manufacture PFAS but may nonetheless become entangled in Superfund claims.***

EPA issued an enforcement policy with the rule saying it would concentrate on PFAS manufacturers, federal facilities and other parties that significantly contributed to contamination. ***The agency said it generally did not intend to pursue farmers, municipal landfills, water utilities, publicly owned airports and local fire departments when equitable considerations weigh against enforcement.***

That policy guides EPA but does not change the Superfund law or prevent private parties from suing passive receivers.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin acknowledged those concerns after the Trump administration reviewed the rule last year and elected to keep defending. Zeldin said EPA would use its discretion to protect passive receivers but called on Congress to create clearer statutory exemptions.

The Superfund decision contrasts with the administration's treatment of separate federal PFAS drinking water standards.

The Trump EPA is proposing to retain limits for PFOA and PFOS while allowing some public water systems two additional years to comply with standards finalized under Biden in 2024. The agency is also moving to rescind and reconsider limits for PFHxS, PFNA and GenX, along with a standard governing mixtures of several PFAS compounds.

Those drinking water requirements arise under a different federal law and are the subject of separate litigation.

The hazardous substance rule has drawn opposition from industry because Superfund generally imposes strict liability, meaning parties may be held liable without proof that they acted negligently.

The Chamber previously estimated that assessing and cleaning up PFOA and PFOS at non-federal Superfund sites could cost more than $17 billion over 30 years.

The EPA argued that many cleanup costs are not newly created by the designation. Rather, the rule helps transfer costs that governments and communities would otherwise bear to companies and other parties responsible for the contamination.

Appellate judges concluded uncertainty about future sites, cleanup methods and liability disputes did not prevent EPA from acting on extensive evidence that PFAS may pose a substantial danger.

## From Federal DOL/OSHA

**When we hear something, we'll post it here.**

## FIRE DISTRICT FINANCIAL NEWS

*****FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET PROCESS SCHEDULE 2026 available on the CAFDA.NET website. CAFDA.net***

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### *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*

**SNYDER FIRE DISTRICT, Erie Co – CLAIMS AUDITING**

**Audit Objective**

Did the Snyder Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) properly audit claims before payment? Audit Period

**Audit Period**

January 1, 2024 – December 24, 2025

**Understanding the Audit Area**

A board of fire commissioners (board) is responsible for ensuring that tax dollars are used in the best interests of taxpayers. To do so, the board should properly audit claims before payment to ensure that district funds are spent only for legitimate, authorized and necessary purposes and that all expenditures are adequately supported. An effective claims auditing process helps verify that goods and services were received; amounts billed are accurate; expenditures comply with applicable laws, policies and contracts; and payments are not duplicated or unauthorized.

The claims audit is often the last line of defense by helping safeguard public funds from unauthorized, improper or fraudulent claims. The claims audit establishes an important internal control that promotes accountability and transparency over public funds and helps safeguard district assets from errors, waste, fraud and misuse. It also helps establish the control consciousness of board members and membership and helps make them aware that a careful review of claims should occur before public funds are disbursed. Without an effective claims auditing process, inappropriate or unsupported expenditures may be paid and remain undetected, which increases the risk that the district could suffer a financial loss and weaken public confidence in the district's stewardship of taxpayer resources.

The District's 2025 budgeted appropriations totaled approximately $1.7 million. During the audit period, the District paid 751 claims totaling approximately $1.9 million.

**Audit Summary**

*The Board did not properly audit all claims before payment*. As a result, the District incurred unnecessary costs totaling approximately $9,700 and was exposed to an increased risk that improper, unsupported or unauthorized expenditures could be paid. We reviewed 137 claims totaling approximately $367,000 and determined that 115 claims totaling approximately $357,000 (84 percent of the claims reviewed, and *97 percent of dollars examined) did not have sufficient documentation to support a proper audit and should not have been approved and paid for*, for various reasons, including:

- *No Board approval or authorization to pay.*
- *No competitive procurement.*
- *No evidence that the goods or services were received.*
- *No documentation to determine what was purchased.*
- *Noncompliance with the District's policies.*

Therefore, the District may have incurred unnecessary costs, and residents may have paid more than necessary for the District's goods and services. Although the Board did not have the information needed to determine that charges were for proper District purposes when it approved the claims for payment, *we determined that all 137 claims were for appropriate District purposes, excluding the excessive per diem payments*.

The report includes four recommendations that, if implemented, will strengthen the District's claims audit process and improve accountability over District expenditures

## THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

### *A Renter's Mentality: Why Rotating Officers Fails*

Chief, David Rhodes

**Someone once asked me** for my thoughts on rotating battalion chiefs and company officers. Having experienced rotating every two years for a period of time as a battalion chief and having seen the impacts firsthand, I quickly responded with a follow-up question: *What is the department's reason for rotating officers?* I had a hunch, so it didn't surprise me when the answer was *"to break up cliques."*

*When my department was rotating battalion chiefs every two years, the reason given was "professional development." The intent was to make them well-rounded and expose them to other areas of the city or different job functions altogether*. Both of these goals are understandable. Every organization wants strong

leaders and healthy workplace cultures. The question is whether rotating officers is the best way to achieve those goals.

In general, I am opposed to rotating chiefs and officers simply to address other root-cause issues within a department. On the other hand, I am 100% in favor of professional development.

*The problem is that rotating officers often leaves development to chance while creating serious operational issues along the way.* A true mentoring program that includes active job shadowing is a tremendous professional development tool. This type of program is difficult because it requires planning, staffing adjustments, overtime, and a lot of additional work. Departments sometimes hit the "Easy Button" and simply rotate officers. Doing so is an extremely inefficient form of development because it assumes experience will naturally transfer through reassignment.

*Developing officers with intention is far more effective. An officer assigned to training should spend weeks or months working alongside experienced training personnel. The same applies to inspections, fire prevention, special operations, or field supervision. Participants gain experience while maintaining a safety net. They see the day-to-day work, ask questions, and learn the "why" behind decisions rather than just receiving a briefing and inheriting responsibilities.*

I am a huge fan of a captain serving as the battalion aide or chief officer aide as a requirement for battalion chief eligibility. That is a built-in shadowing program that develops future leaders without significantly impacting staffing or overtime if those positions already exist.

Simply moving people around creates disarray, a loss of experience, and a reduction in institutional knowledge. Even if there is a briefing between the outgoing and incoming officers, it is not enough to create a true understanding. It is simply that: a briefing.

*In some cases, it sets individuals up for struggles and failure. An officer with no prior training experience may suddenly be assigned to training. Someone with no background in inspections may be assigned to inspections. The reverse can be equally challenging. A chief who has spent 10 years in fire prevention may suddenly be assigned to be a field operations battalion. These transitions can work, but they are far more successful when they're accompanied by structured mentoring and shadowing.*

Another problem with rotating officers is that it creates what I call a renter's mentality. Being a battalion chief is a lot like being a college football coach. You have a constantly changing group of players. People retire, get promoted, quit, or transfer. And new members take their place. Yet successful programs still rely on stability in leadership. To my knowledge, there has never been a successful college football program that intentionally rotated head and assistant coaches every two years.

In urban and many suburban environments, it takes years to fully understand the buildings, occupancies, hazards, and operational challenges within a territory. It also takes time to develop trust and credibility with officers and firefighters. *When leaders know they will be moved in a short period of time, there is less incentive to invest in long-term improvements, relationships, and local expertise. Ownership gradually gives way to temporary stewardship.*

That loss of ownership has consequences. Operationally, it can reduce situational awareness and familiarity with local hazards. Managerially, it can weaken trust, continuity, and accountability. Even highly motivated leaders can find it difficult to fully invest in something they know they will soon leave behind.

Too often, rotation becomes a solution for problems it was never designed to solve. In some organizations, it is used to address personnel conflicts, discipline issues, or perceived political concerns. Departments should address those problems directly rather than relocating someone to another battalion or station.

The same holds true for company officers. The trust, intuition, and implicit communication required to perform highly technical tasks in risk-filled, immediately dangerous to life and health environments do not develop overnight. They are built through years of working together. Firefighters begin anticipating each other's actions without words. Officers learn the strengths and weaknesses of their crews. Teams develop a shared understanding that improves decision making when seconds matter.

Departments already face challenges maintaining continuity because of staffing shortages, overtime, and fill-in assignments. Adding mandatory leadership rotation on top of those realities can make developing dynamic situational awareness even more difficult.

*I strongly recommend against routine rotation practices and instead recommend focusing on robust mentoring and shadowing programs, while managing discipline and performance issues on an individual basis.*

Professional development should be intentional, not accidental. There should be clear objectives and a complete list of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the position. Operational effectiveness should be strengthened, not disrupted. And for heaven's sake, don't mistake a highly motivated crew or battalion that gets along and performs well for a threat.
LISTEN ON YOUTUBE: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBd9ffj4XsQ

## THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

***Fire District Election Schedule for 2026 available on the CAFDA.net website.***
CAFDA.net

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### *$1.6M Pocketed by Ex-Assistant Fire Chief in Hambden Township, OH*

Molly Walsh

A longtime fire official for Hambden Township stole about $1.6 million from the township's nonprofit fire organization over more than three years and *spent the money covering gambling losses*, prosecutors announced Monday.

Richard L. Vandevander, 59, former assistant fire chief and treasurer for Hambden Volunteer Fire Department Inc., was indicted by a Geauga County grand jury on five felony charges.

Vandevander faces first-degree felony charges of aggravated theft and telecommunications fraud, along with third-degree felony charges of money laundering, falsification in a theft offense and forgery. The indictment says the theft occurred from Jan. 9, 2023, through May 15, 2026.

***Prosecutors said Vandevander embezzled approximately $1.6 million through a series of transfers and checks he wrote to himself.***

When checks required additional signatures, prosecutors accuse Vandevander of forging them. ***He also provided financial information from QuickBooks that omitted the transfers and checks payable to himself, according to the Geauga County Prosecutor's Office.***

About $800,000 of the money allegedly stolen came from a $2 million state grant awarded for construction of Hambden's new fire station, prosecutors said.

About $1.2 million of the state grant had been properly spent on costs related to the fire station project. Prosecutors say the remaining roughly $800,000 was included in the theft.

A separate federal grant of approximately $6.7 million is handled differently. The U.S. Department of Agriculture holds those funds and releases money as construction bills are submitted, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said the extent of the nonprofit's financial problems became clear shortly before the theft was publicly disclosed.

***Click on this PDF to see notes from DOL related to Prevailing Wage Rates for Construction, Article 8***

## POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

### *POSITIVE OUTCOMES*

- We have seen communities charge fees for repeated nonemergency lift assists, but Reading, Pennsylvania, is now targeting nuisance fire alarms. City Council unanimously approved a flat $500 fee after firefighters responded to more than 300 avoidable alarms in just three months. The previous system allowed the first false alarm free before gradually increasing charges for repeat incidents. Officials say the goal is to push property owners to repair defective or poorly maintained alarm systems. Fees may also be appealed or waived when owners correct the problem.

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- The Spencerport Fire District, Monroe County, is offering a new program to give teens a firsthand look at the fire service. Spencerport's Junior Firefighters Program is open to age 14-17, *replacing the former explorer program and "creating a more direct path for young members"* with a goal of reaching full membership when they turn 18. The district held a two-day "mini academy" Monday and Tuesday,

giving participants hands-on training in firefighting basics. Tuesday's session included a live vehicle fire demonstration, allowing them to learn about the growth stages of a vehicle fire before putting it out. "This puts trained responders of all ages in the neighborhoods, so this could be their family member that learns CPR, this could be their neighbor where they apply 'stop the bleed,' so these skills and one of the magical things about the volunteer fire service are these are neighbors and citizens taking care of citizens," said Captain Bill Hallinan, the program's director.

## ***FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES***.

### ***Another Fire Station Fire: Cuba, KY, Crews Remain Operational***

While the Cuba fire station sustained significant damage from a blaze last week, firefighters are still responding.

Cuba Fire Captain Joseph Siedel was at home when he got the alert on his pager.

“When I realized it was our department, I left as soon as I could. This place is like your baby. It’s your life. It’s a secondary home. You’ve been here with your family building trust in a career," he told WPSD.

"As soon as I arrived on scene, the bay doors were open and full of smoke. Our assistant chief, Chris Travis, ran in and got a truck to pull out. I put on some oxygen (sic) and just started grabbing all the gear. Immediately, we called for mutual aid because we didn't know what we were exactly working with, or if we could even get back there to get the trucks out.”

Siedel was overcome by the extreme heat. His heart rate was 170 and temperature of 102. “I was more focused on getting our supplies out because that's critical. Human safety is number one, but I pushed it just a little bit. I had to be taken to the emergency room, but I bounced right back.”

He quickly added that despite the damage, the Cuba firefighters remained operational as the apparatus was OK. “...We do not have any electricity, but we are still able to serve the community. If I got a page right now, I would open up that bay, and we would leave. They have nothing to worry about, and we’ll respond to mutual aid, as well. We have everything under control, as if there’s an emergency at the moment.”

## SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SER1VICE

## FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

### *FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES*

# *53*

***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/

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## Apparatus Accidents in the News:

- Four people, including two Chicago Fire Department firefighters, were taken to the hospital after a crash on the city’s West Side. According to Chicago police, a fire engine collided with a white pickup, sending the fire truck over a curb, into a stoplight and then into a tree. All four people were taken to the hospital for checkups, the engine suffered major front end damage.
- Four people were injured when a Charlotte Fire Department apparatus collided with a vehicle near SouthPark mall. No firefighters were injured. Four people from the other vehicle were treated at the scene and transported by Medic to a local hospital for evaluation,” the fire apparatus was running an emergency call at the time of the collision.
- Two Gainesville, Florida firefighters have been suspended for a day with pay following a wreck Monday at a south Gainesville intersection. Investigators determined the fire truck failed to use due regard when it went through a stop sign at the intersection, striking the passenger side of the van and causing the van to overturn. No injuries were reported in either vehicle.

- A crash between an MTA transit bus and FDNY Engine 94 sent 19 people to the hospital, including multiple firefighters. The bus sustained significant front-end damage on the passenger side, and its windshield had broken glass. The engine does not appear to have been traveling under the red, and had a red traffic signal, an investigation continues.
- Two emergency vehicles were damaged during an accident on Interstate 10 in Mobile, Alabama on August 13 while on scene responding to a separate motor vehicle incident. Crews were working on the scene of an accident when a passing motorist struck the fire apparatus and Mobile County EMS ambulance. The department noted that its Engine 4, a 2005 Pierce Dash, was positioned intentionally to provide a protective barrier to the accident scene, following Traffic Incident Management System (TIMS) safety procedures. "That positioning did exactly what it was supposed to do — the apparatus took the impact instead of our firefighters, the EMS crew, or the patient. The cab of the engine sustained major damage and is out of service.
- It was the second Upton, Kentucky apparatus to fall victim to a distracted driver in three months. Luckily, no firefighters were injured. The front bumper was ripped off the tanker in the recent wreck, causing at least $5,000 damage. In May, however, an engine was totaled after it was rear-ended by a semi.

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## Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, in the News

- An Ingalls, Payne County Oklahoma firefighter has returned home after suffering a broken back and neck when his fire apparatus crashed earlier this month. Josh Contreras was seriously injured when his fire truck suffered a tire blown tire, sending him and Jace Wilson to the hospital. Contreras is now able to walk, News9.com reports, but his recovery will be lengthy, fire officials said. Wilson was already released from the hospital. The two firefighters were returning from an incident when their rig rolled over several times and ended up in the woods. One of them was extricated by Stillwater firefighters before being taken to the hospital.
- Polk County, Florida Fire Rescue is mourning the loss of a colleague whose mission was to bring peace after chaos. Chaplain Hector Cruz was killed in a vehicle crash Wednesday while he was traveling between stations to check on fire and rescue crews. Cruz, driving a 2026 Buick Enclave, proceeded through an intersection when the light turned green. However, the operator of a dump truck didn't stop at a red light and slammed into the driver's side of Cruz's vehicle.

## 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 | 53 |
| 8/7/26 Buffalo, Erie Co. Female, unk age | |
| Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS | 104 |
| Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally | 755 |
| Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths | #1 PA 59 |
| | #2 NY 53 |
| | #3 OH 45 |
| Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1191 = 35.1 weekly | |
| Both the states of Maryland and California as well as Wash. DC require sprinklers in 1&2 family dwellings.<br>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? | |

## RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

- Plumstead Township, Pennsylvania, swore in its first career firefighters on August 12, marking the launch of its newly formed Fire and Rescue Department. The initial career crew will work alongside the township's

volunteer fire companies, strengthening emergency response while preserving the volunteer service that has protected the community for generations. Township officials described the move as a historic step toward providing more consistent and dependable fire protection through a combination staffing model.

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- Eldridge City Council members agreed to delay a final decision on absorbing the fire department to allow more time to potentially come to a compromise with the volunteer firefighters. The city council was poised to take a third and final vote Monday night to create a city fire department and hire a fire chief who would report to the city administrator. But after a three-hour meeting Saturday between council members Brian Dockery and Ryan Iossi and Assistant Fire Chief Dave Engler, officials came away from the meeting with proposals to delay a city decision and soften a deadline set by the firefighters. Previously, fire department leaders had told the council that all 20 volunteer members would quit the department Oct. 1 if the city went ahead with taking over the department. The city council voted unanimously Monday night to postpone a vote on the ordinance changes until Oct. 5 and the fire department agreed to extend its deadline to Dec. 31. For more than a year, the Eldridge Volunteer Fire Co. and the city have attempted to negotiate a transition to a city department to address volunteer burnout and cover an increasing number of medical calls with a shrinking volunteer base.

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## *3 local PA, fire departments planning to merge amid staffing difficulties*

Rachel Pierce, WPXI-TV

Three volunteer fire departments in the Quaker Valley area are planning to merge into a new regional fire district in an effort to improve staffing, reduce response times and cut costs.

The Leetsdale Fire Department, Big Sewickley Creek Volunteer Fire Department and Fair Oaks Volunteer Fire Department will combine to form the new Quaker Valley Fire District.

Lt. Ryan Buttermore of the Leetsdale Fire Department said *volunteer departments across the region continue to struggle with declining membership and the demanding time commitment required of recruits.*

"One of the biggest things really is just manpower today," Buttermore said. "The time commitment for a new member looking to join, it's pretty, pretty intensive."

*He said combining departments would increase the likelihood that firefighters are available to respond quickly from one of the district's three stations.*

"It'll reduce response times for sure," Buttermore said. "The likelihood that someone is around at one of the three stations is very high versus if it was only your station."

Department leaders also hope the merger will lower costs by allowing the departments to share equipment and eliminate duplicate resources. Buttermore noted that new fire trucks can cost more than $1 million.

The merger agreement still requires approval from the state, which officials said could happen by the fall.

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## *Albemarle (VA) to Launch Pilot Program to Cover Some Firefighter Housing Costs*

DAVID VELAZQUEZ – The Daily Progress, Charlottesville, Va.

Albemarle County is betting that a new program it's introducing will help its own government employees cope with the region's high housing costs.

The pilot program unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors last Wednesday will use $840,000 from the county's Affordable Housing Investment Fund to help county employees make a down payment on a house or to provide one-time rental assistance.

The fund traditionally supports a variety of affordable housing initiatives, such as homeowner rehabilitation projects, construction of affordable rental units, construction of permanent supportive housing, energy efficiency upgrades and noncongregate shelter service.

"A reminder of our local housing data demonstrates that our average housing costs have gone up, up, up," Jessica Dimmick, the county's principal transportation planner, said at Wednesday's Board of Supervisors meeting.

The median Albemarle County house price is roughly $554,000 today, and the median rent sits at about $2,200 per month.

The real estate market surrounding Albemarle County is the second-most expensive in the entire state, outside the Washington suburbs of Northern Virginia.
The high cost of living has pushed multiple county employees to find housing elsewhere and commute into the area, according to the county.
For example, 90 sworn Albemarle County police officers — roughly 62% of the force — live outside the county, according to Albemarle County spokeswoman Logan Bogert.
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development says the median Albemarle County income is $139,800. The starting salary of a county police officer is $60,798.
"I think it's very important, especially for our first responders, police, fire, etc., to live in the county where they service. Because when, not if, there's a disaster, you want them living here," Bea LaPisto-Kirtley, supervisor for the Rivanna District, said prior to voting in favor of the new program on Wednesday. "This is a way to help people, so that they're not living an hour away."
The five-year pilot program could provide full-time county employees who make at or below 80% of the median county income, $111,840, a forgivable $20,000 loan to be used on a down payment for a residence in Albemarle County.
The loan would be forgiven at a rate of 20% each year, meaning that it would be completely forgivable after five years of continuous employment with the county.
Full-time county employees who make at or below 60% of the median county income, $83,880, would qualify for a one-time rental assistance grant of $2,500 if more than half of their income is spent on rent.
"Currently, 85% of County employees earned less than the 80% AMI threshold," Bogert told The Daily Progress in a statement.
Additional eligibility requirements are to be established and program guidelines should be provided to employees as part of the pilot implementation, according to county documents.
Applications for each type of assistance will be reviewed by a loan committee composed of "representatives from the County Attorney's Office, Human Resources, Office of Housing, and Department of Finance and Budget," according to the county.

## FIRE STATIONS

### *Developing and Building Community Support for New Fire Stations*

Dennis A. Ross

When a public safety agency needs to purchase new property, relocate, expand, renovate, or construct a new station, where does the funding come from? Some districts or municipalities may use bonds, capital improvement budgets, or commercial borrowing as funding avenues. A bond is a funding mechanism used by municipalities or other taxing authorities to raise money for capital projects. For bond funding, the borrower asks taxpayers for permission to borrow money using future tax revenue as collateral.

**INITIAL QUESTIONS**

Financing a capital project, buying land, or utilizing municipality-owned land raises key questions. How do we plan the process or obtain public support and approval for funding? What steps do you take to minimize possible defeat at the ballot box?
Start by organizing a small committee to provide leadership and establish a consulting relationship with a qualified architectural firm, which can help define the project's scope, size, probable cost, and schedule. Professional services may include an analysis of a current facility, conceptual design of a renovated or new facility, or a land search for new property.
Project budgeting and cost estimation will help identify the amount of money needed for the facility and ancillary costs. Leveraging public opinion is a powerful way to engage the community, influence commissioners, and gain political support for funding approval. However, losing public support is almost always a fatal blow to a project.

**PREPARATION**

Once your project is defined enough to illustrate its purpose, size, scope, and budget, it's time for public engagement. It's vital to get your own department members in favor. Internal dissent will not help convince your community a project is viable, and unanimous internal support is a strong starting point for any project.
Throughout the process, committee members should hold information-gathering meetings and make regular progress presentations to department stakeholders, elected officials, and the public. A qualified architect experienced in garnering support can work with your committee in numerous ways. In addition to holding informational meetings, producing action plans, generating timelines, and developing budgets, your technical experts should also help you create infomercials, generate press releases and articles, develop a blog or website section, and more, depending on the best mediums in which to reach your community.
The key to the entire support process is accurate, consistent communication. This means squelching the rumor mill before it has a chance to get started. Market the project to your taxpayers early and don't hide what you're planning. Anticipate questions regarding costs and need. How will this affect my taxes? Why do we need this? Why move?
As an architect, I have hosted many public presentations where the attendees didn't know the extensive responsibilities and training required for all types of responders or even that their firefighters were volunteers.
When using future taxes for project payment, you must prepare pertinent information for your taxpayers, including:

- **Current total tax rate [This is the #1 thing residents want to know, will my taxes go up?]**
- **Current fire or public safety tax rate**
- **Future fire or public safety tax rate**
- Total fire or public safety taxes collected during the last fiscal year
- Total taxable assessed value for the taxing district
- Average assessed value for residences and businesses

Adjusting the amount borrowed, interest rate, and payback period changes the financing criteria and how taxes will be affected. When planning to use bonds or capital budgets for future funding, be sure to account for project cost escalation to avoid budget shortfalls during the design or construction phases.

**COMMUNICATING THE NEEDS**

To help keep information consistent, create an information package with talking points to help department members speak knowledgeably and keep the facts straight. This information can also be given to the local newspaper or television station as a press release, or included on a website or blog. Create a task list for those willing to help:

- Meet with reporters for an article
- Set up interviews with local radio or TV
- Provide informational pamphlets at public events and spaces
- Give station tours to raise awareness of some of the existing problems
- Write letters to the editor to help them understand the need

All these tasks should be controlled and approved by the committee for accuracy. When disseminating project information, identify supporters and detractors. Meet with detractors to discuss their issues, as they may become supporters simply by hearing straight answers to their questions. Meet with supporters to ensure that they'll attend public meetings and vote.
Letters or interviews by citizens who have been aided by the department can be very effective, as can the support of key community figures, religious leaders, and politicians.

**EDUCATION AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

For public meetings, compile additional background data:

- The history of your department/district
- The history of your current facility
- Site location rationale, if applicable
- Response times
- Comparable tax rates for surrounding communities or districts
- Data concerning the amount of time required by responders for training, drills, and emergency calls

Invite the media and plan for a minimum of two public informational meetings, which your architect can coordinate and moderate. If the first meeting raises questions or generates negative reactions, regroup, plan, and use the second meeting to address the issues.
Develop an agenda to ensure that all important matters are covered. Present the architectural plans, budget, timeline, value engineering ideas, and tax information.

**HOLD THE VOTE**

If possible, do not schedule your vote too close to another major community bond vote or tax issue. Avoid holding your vote close to Tax Day (April 15) or a federal holiday.
Once a bond or municipal vote is approved, you have both financial backing and public authorization to move forward with your project. However, if voters reject it, don't lose faith. Begin the process again. Don't automatically assume that you must reduce the scope or budget of the project. Carefully search out and analyze the reasons why voters turned down the project.
Then, revise your approach to address and incorporate specific issues and objections. Let the public know that you'll try again with specific alterations on the pertinent issues. If you address these concerns, you may still be able to realize the original scope. Continue to educate voters and encourage supporters to show up.
After a successful public vote, use the momentum to your advantage. Don't disband the committee. Continue to advocate the project to the community and work with your architect to create the final design and documents necessary to build your facility. You've got your support and financing approved – now get that project underway!

## FIRE APPARATUS

### *Navigating Today's Used Fire Apparatus Market*

Ray Sajdak

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Fire departments face a significant capital expense and long wait times for new fire apparatus, prompting a shift towards the used fire apparatus market for cost savings and immediate availability.
- The used fire apparatus market operates through four main channels: specialized dealers, direct sales from fire departments, online platforms, and auctions, each with distinct advantages and disadvantages.
- ***Establishing an operational blueprint is crucial for defining the type of apparatus needed, including specifications and features based on operational environments.***
- *A comprehensive budget for purchasing used fire apparatus must include hidden costs such as refurbishment, NFPA compliance upgrades, transportation, and maintenance reserves.*
- Implementing an aggressive maintenance schedule and considering mid-life refurbishments can extend the service life of used fire apparatus significantly.

Fire departments across the country today will have the monumental capital expense of acquiring a new fire apparatus and a wait time of 24 to 48 months. With custom pumpers costing more than $1,000,000 and single-axle aerials approaching $2,000,000, the used fire apparatus market has changed from a contingency option into a strategic necessity.
The primary drivers for exploring the used fire apparatus market are the significant cost savings and the immediate availability of purchase. Today, a well maintained 10-year-old apparatus can often be acquired for half of its original purchase price, freeing up vital capital for other considerations, e.g. staffing, equipment, or other operational needs However, this market is not without its pitfalls. Navigating the used fire apparatus market requires a disciplined, multistep process focused on due diligence to ensure a cost-effective purchase doesn't become a long-term liability.

**UNDERSTANDING THE SUPPLY CHAIN**

The used fire apparatus market operates through four main channels, each with its own pros and cons. The four channels are as follows:

- Specialized used apparatus dealers/ brokers

    - Pros: Offer large inventory; presale inspections; and current pump and aerial certifications, in-house financing/warranties, and customization.
    - Cons: Higher purchase price due to the added value.
    - Tip: Vet the dealer by checking references and market reputation. Be cautious, as some apparatus may be brokered by multiple dealers/ brokers.
- Direct sales/purchase with fire department
    - Pros: Often provide the most transparent history and yield a lower price because of the lack of a broker markup. The seller knows the truck the best.
    - Cons: Apparatus will be sold "as is," with little to no recourse for any issues after sale. Buyers are also likely responsible for inspection, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) compliance, and transportation.
- Platforms and marketplaces
    - Pros: Allow you to build relationships with fire departments nationwide using a secure online platform. Allow you to get the transparent history of a unit directly from the selling department but give you a wider range of options compared with searching locally.
    - Cons: Nationwide selection means nationwide competition. Apparatus tend to sell quickly on these platforms, so you may need to move quickly to secure the right unit for your needs.
- Auctions and Consignment
    - Pros: Potential for lowest-price apparatus.
    - Cons: Highest risk and usually are cash only with the possibility of a "sight unseen" purchase with no warranties and a possible limited inspection time. Generally, better suited for an apparatus intended for refurbishment or parts.

**ESTABLISH YOUR OPERATIONAL BLUEPRINT**

*Your first and most crucial step is establishing an operational blueprint that defines the apparatus type. Are you seeking an engine with a high-volume pump capacity, a tanker/tender for rural operations, or an aerial platform for multistory buildings?* Special consideration should be given to quints for their highly desirable multifunctional capabilities that may come at a premium.

Once the blueprint is set, you must define specifications and determine the nonnegotiable features of your apparatus, these being minimum gallons per minute (gpm), water tank capacity, ground ladder complement, and compartment space for specialized rescue tools.

Finally, you have to consider your operational environment. Is the truck going to be navigating tight urban streets or rough, unpaved rural roads? This dictates the necessary chassis dimensions, turning radius, and whether a 4×4 or all-wheel drive configuration is essential. *Ignoring such a step can lead to a pleasing but functionally useless rig.*

**ESTABLISH YOUR BUDGET**

You have established your operational blueprint; now it's time to focus on a comprehensive budget that must account for several hidden costs that are standard in the used fire apparatus market. They are as follows:

1. Refurbishment: Cosmetic repairs, painting body work, and any minor mechanical upgrades. (This article does not delve into the level of refurbishment. Please find refurbishment levels in "Refurbish or Replace? That Is the Question" in *Fire Apparatus & Emergency Equipment,* July 2025).
2. NFPA compliance upgrades: New LED lighting, safety features, updating communication systems.
3. NFPA compliance: Annual pump and aerial testing required, if not current.
4. Transportation: Will the apparatus be trailered or driven?
5. Maintenance reserve: Funds for unforeseen mechanical issues during the first year of service.
6. Extended warranty coverage: Determine if the dealer/seller offers a direct extended warranty or if it works with a third-party provider. Private purchases will require you to find a third-party provider.
7. Third-party inspection: A third-party inspection by an emergency vehicle technician (EVT) should be considered to inspect the apparatus along with its service records.

**THE NONNEGOTIABLE INSPECTION CHECKLIST**

Once you've identified an apparatus, evaluation must go beyond a simple walk-around of the vehicle. ***A professional, independent, third-party inspection is highly recommended. Independent inspection will focus on the following:***

1. **Service history**: You want to be looking for consistent maintenance records covering the engine, transmission, pump, and hydraulic systems if applicable. Missing records should raise a red flag. Engine oil and transmission fluid analysis is highly recommended.
2. **Mileage and idle hours**: Fire apparatus often have lower mileage but high engine idle hours because of pumping operations, generator use, and climate control during incidents.
3. **Rust and corrosion**: Salt and road treatments accelerate corrosion. Inspect frame rails, cross members, pump housing, body compartments, and subframe.
4. **Current NFPA operational compliance**: Require pump certification within the past year to determine its rated flow capacity. Should you be purchasing an aerial, you will want the recent aerial certification along with latest five-year nondestructive testing (NDT) certification to ensure the device is safe for operation.

**KEY MARKET TRENDS**

The used fire apparatus market is robust because of its high demand. Driving this market again is the lengthy time for new apparatus deliveries. Notable trends include the following:

- High demand for versatile rigs: Pumper-tankers ("tenders") and rescue-pumpers are in high demand by rural departments because of their versatility.
- Age/value curve: Significant depreciation occurs at five to seven years, 10 years, and 20 years. Apparatus that are 10 to 15 years old often offer modern safety features at a favorable price point.
- Technology upgrades: Buyers increasingly seek apparatus that can support modern thermal imaging cameras (TICs), GPS/MDT systems, and battery-operated rescue tools.

**PURCHASE NEGOTIATIONS**

After identifying the right apparatus, a review of the rig's service records, and a positive third-party inspection, you are now ready to negotiate the purchase price. Consider all required repairs or imminent components needing replacement, e.g., tires, pump repairs, aerial work, or body work. These repairs will provide you with leverage in the negotiations. Once you have a firm purchase price, it's time to sign the purchase agreement. The agreement should detail the following:

- The final sale price.
- Confirmation of "clear title" for prompt transfer of ownership.
- All current NFPA compliance documents for the pump or aerial.
- Itemized list of any agreed-on modifications or repairs (including cost).

**MAINTAINING YOUR INVESTMENT**

Once in service, your apparatus begins its next life. T*o maximize the rig's longevity, implement an aggressive maintenance schedule to include additional preventive maintenance (PM) checks—more than a new truck would require. Focus on the drivetrain fluids, hydraulics, pump, and aerial components if applicable.*

If the truck predates digital integration, consider installing a telematics system to better monitor engine hours, GPS location, and mechanical performance, which will aid in your maintenance scheduling.

***Finally, if it is not already completed at purchase, you may consider a mid-life refurbishment, which would include an engine overhaul, pump rebuild, body work, and repaint that would extend the service life of the apparatus for another 10-15 years. This would be a fraction of the cost of a new rig.***

## GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

### *Fatal Fire in Illegal NY Boarding House Caused by E-Bike Battery*

Finn Lincoln – syracuse.com

A failure of an e-bike battery caused the fire that killed a man in an illegal Syracuse boarding house in June, city fire officials said.

The victim was William R. Clark, 79, of Syracuse, said Capt. Erik Caster, a spokesperson for the department.

Codes investigators found a series of code violations in the remnants of the fire, including deadbolt locks on the inside of bedroom doors, officials said.

Fire investigators ruled the fire to be accidental, Caster said. The fire was caused by a failed lithium-ion e-bike battery in a first-floor bedroom.

The death was avoidable, Fire Chief Michael Monds said on the day of the fire. Responding firefighters encountered multiple code violations inside the home that hindered firefighters and potentially life-saving efforts, Monds said.

*The city's codes office confirmed the violations. The property owner was illegally renting out individual rooms in the home, and many doors had deadbolts that limited movement inside, said Jake Dishaw, deputy commissioner of codes and zoning for the city.*

There are no specific regulations in Syracuse that prohibit bringing e-bikes into homes or residential structures, said Sol Muñoz, a spokesperson for the city. Discussions are under way at the state level on laws governing the storage and charging of these batteries, she said.

Earlier this year, firefighters from Utica highlighted the dangers of e-bikes in apartment buildings when a battery caught fire on the 12th floor of a complex.

New York City's housing authority established a policy in 2024 limiting e-bikes in apartments because of the potential for fires.

Firefighters were called to the scene at 2407 S. State St. at 9:17 a.m., June 25, after a fire was reported with someone potentially trapped inside.

First-arriving firefighters encountered heavy smoke and fire shooting from the house, Monds said then.

*Firefighters entered the home through a second-floor window and found an unconscious man in the hall, Monds said. The man was later pronounced dead.*

No one else was hurt. Four people were displaced, according to the American Red Cross.

"The way this house was situated, that person didn't have much of chance, even with our great firefighters," Monds said at the scene.

*He highlighted that in structures without permits, first responders do not know who they are looking for or where to look. Monds said there was confusion about how many people were in the home. He had been told by some residents that everyone got out safely, while others said someone was still inside.*

***The home had been illegally operating as a boarding house, Dishaw said. That meant the owner was renting out individual bedrooms without proper zoning and code permissions.***

The owner, Lamar Kearse Sr., had illegally converted two first-floor rooms into bedrooms, Dishaw said. The building was a single-family home that should have had only four bedrooms, all on the second floor.

There were also deadbolts on bedroom doors throughout the house, meaning many of the rooms could only be unlocked from one side, which was a code violation, Dishaw said.

The home did have working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms, Caster said.

The deadbolts and extra rooms in the home had all been installed by the tenants staying there, Kearse told syracuse.com | The Post-Standard. The tenants were all people who worked for him, and one was a friend of theirs, he said. He said he visited the property multiple times a week.

Kearse owns more than 10 one- and two-family residences in the city of Syracuse, according to Onondaga County property records. He said the workers staying on State Street helped with work at other properties.

*The home had not been inspected for at least 10 years, Dishaw said. Kearse had filed for a family-based exemption, saying he was renting the home to a direct family member, which exempted him from inspections otherwise required every three years.*

Family members had previously stayed at the home but were not anymore, Kearse said.

Kearse said he does not own a rental registry certificate that allows him to be a landlord in the city. However, he does rent to family members, which he can do under the family-based exemption.

"It was a very tragic incident," Kearse said. "Of course, I'm still bothered by it."

Kearse received code and zoning violations for the illegal use of the property and locks, Dishaw said. He also received a violation for the fire damage.

*The city has not yet pursued action against Kearse for the violations, Dishaw said. He could face further penalties if he does not start to repair the home to get it back in working order and in compliance with regulations.*

For now, the home still shows heavy fire damage and is unfit for occupancy, Dishaw said. It will need heavy restoration work.
"The city wants this structure back online, we want to see a full repair and get it occupied the way it's supposed to be," Dishaw said.
Dishaw said his office uncovers a few illegal boarding houses a year, but never before in the context of a fatal fire.
Kearse said he expects the house to be torn down but is awaiting further conversations with insurance agents.

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## ***WA Battery Project Developer Seeks to Sidestep Local Regulation***

Greg Kim, Seattle Times

After hitting permitting snags, a controversial battery project near Snoqualmie is taking its application to the state level, a move that could sidestep local regulations. [TAKING LESSONS FROM NEW YORK STATE}
Jupiter Power, the developer of the proposed 45-acre battery facility, said Tuesday it was planning to pursue site certification with the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council, a body that can recommend overriding local rules, with the final decision resting with the governor. [AKA NEW YOUR CREATE A BODY NOT ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PEOPLE AND NOT ELECTED TO OVERRIDE LOCAL AUTHORITY]
The move breathes new life into what could be King County's first massive energy storage project, which appeared to be teetering under the weight of local opposition.
"The project will help address the energy shortfall in the region, and support Washington's transition to renewable energy," [THEY HAVE A NEW GREEN SCAM TOO] Hans Detweiler, Jupiter's vice president of development, wrote in a statement. "We will continue collaborating closely with King County and local stakeholders as the process transitions to EFSEC and work to address concerns that may arise.
Last week, Jupiter put its application with King County on hold, weeks after Snoqualmie Mayor James Mayhew told King County that a portion of the project falls within the city's jurisdiction, which currently has a temporary ban on grid-scale battery projects.
In May, the company had said its project was located in unincorporated King County and that it was "not aware of any impact" that Snoqualmie's moratorium on new battery facilities would have on it.
However, on July 30, Mayhew wrote a letter to King County saying the construction of the project's electrical line connecting the batteries to a nearby *Puget Sound Energy substation would require work within city-**regulated wetlands.* ***[NO PROBLEM FOR A NEW GREEN PROJECT, DO WHATEVER YOU WANT]***
Jupiter Power did not say whether Mayhew's letter contributed to it pursuing its site application with Washington state instead of King County.
The state pathway didn't exist until a few years ago. A law passed in 2022 gave developers of stand-alone battery storage projects the option to seek state approval, part of a broader effort to streamline permitting of infrastructure needed for Washington's clean-energy transition.
Utilities and power planners say battery projects are needed in Washington, especially west of the Cascade Mountains, to store and deliver renewable energy when wind and solar aren't available or when transmission lines are constrained. But residents don't want them near their communities.
*The project has faced intense backlash from Snoqualmie residents who are concerned about the fire risks from lithium-ion batteries and say Jupiter Power has been late to inform and involve their community in planning.*
"We believe that Washington communities asked to host (Battery Energy Storage System) facilities should be at the forefront of these decisions and deserve a seat at the table," Snoqualmie Valley for Responsible Energy, a nonprofit formed to oppose the project, said in a statement. "***Jupiter and PSE are running away from accountability for siting decisions and from safety concerns.***
**[MONEY TALKS AND BULL EXCREMENT WALKS]**

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## ***New York Women in Fire Day***




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***Hoags Corners VFD***

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***Speigletown Fire Department Breakfast 2nd Sunday of each month***

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***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

### *'Do More With Less' Is Killing Firefighters, Literally*

Matthew Koch

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- *Squeezing more work from fewer personnel increases injuries*, overtime and burnout rather than creating sustainable performance.
- Fire departments should explore alternatives to low-acuity calls, to limit the need to send an engine company, a truck company, a rescue company or an ambulance to every minor complaint or low-priority medical issue.
- Fire departments should stop measuring success by how many vehicles are dispatched and replace activity-based metrics with outcome-based metrics, such as residential fire survival and time to fire control.

For decades, the fire service has worn the slogan "do more with less" like a badge of honor. It's signaled grit, resilience, and the ability to get the job done despite shrinking budgets, fewer personnel and aging apparatus. However, grit isn't the same as sustainability. *A culture that elevates output metrics (e.g., call volume, apparatus responses and annual report numbers) above people and equipment is costing us our health, our sleep and, in too many cases, our life.*

The most sobering fact is also the clearest warning: Firefighters are dying by suicide at an alarming rate. It reflects cumulative trauma, chronic stress, sleep deprivation, and organizational decisions about how and why we respond.

How did we get here? Budgets tighten while expectations don't. Call volumes increase. *Rather than asking whether every response truly requires every rig and every crew, many departments default to that strategy*. In some cases, this approach is used to justify staffing levels or to preserve the appearance of productivity in annual metrics. The result is predictable. Apparatus are driven harder and farther. Preventive maintenance is delayed. Crews operate in a constant state of fatigue. Routine calls become another demand that's layered onto an already overloaded schedule. Vehicles and people wear out at the same time.

Industry research and fire service publications consistently show that squeezing more work from fewer personnel increases injuries, overtime and burnout rather than creating sustainable performance.

**BUSY WORK UNDERMINES PREPAREDNESS**

In many organizations, activity itself becomes the objective. Administrative and command-level decisions, which often are rooted in legacy practices and reporting expectations, generate institutional busy work. This includes unnecessary responses, redundant apparatus assignments, and procedural requirements that are designed less around actual risk than around keeping personnel visibly occupied and numbers high. This manufactured busy-ness might protect budgets or make departments appear productive on paper, but it carries a real cost. Fatigue accumulates. Readiness erodes. Underlying staffing and operational problems are concealed rather than addressed. Busy work doesn't improve preparation or preparedness. It quietly undermines it.

Many firefighters point particularly to the constant stream of low-priority EMS responses as a major contributor to exhaustion. In many departments, this has become one of the largest drivers of fatigue and burnout. Departments and municipalities should be willing to explore alternatives for chronic low-acuity calls, including community paramedicine programs, nurse triage systems, mental health response teams, transportation assistance (e.g., Uber or taxi voucher partnerships) and community risk reduction (CRR) initiatives. Proactive community health programs can reduce unnecessary 9-1-1 utilization and limit the need

to send an engine company, truck company, rescue company or ambulance to every minor complaint or low-priority medical issue.

**OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL COSTS**

There also are clear operational and financial consequences. *Excessive or unnecessary responses degrade readiness. False alarms, duplicate dispatches, and multiple apparatus responses to low-risk incidents consume fuel, add wear to equipment, and increase exposure to response-related crashes and injuries*. Municipal analyses and public safety technology providers estimate that each false alarm response costs several hundred dollars. When multiplied by thousands of calls each year, those funds no longer are available for training, behavioral health support, or replacing worn pumps and breathing equipment.

**BURNOUT**

Burnout and sleep deprivation aren't abstract concerns or soft issues. Chronic shift work, mandatory overtime, and the expectation that firefighters simply push through lead to impaired decision-making, slower reaction times, higher rates of cardiovascular events, and declining morale and retention. Evidence consistently shows that stress and overexertion are leading contributors to duty-related medical deaths. Long-term fatigue also drives chronic health conditions that are costly for departments and devastating for families.

**WHAT'S SUSTAINABLE**

The shift in perspective to mitigate these things requires leadership courage. It demands that chiefs, officers and municipal leaders challenge long-accepted assumptions about productivity and preparedness. Reducing unnecessary responses, adjusting dispatch models and prioritizing firefighter recovery won't weaken the fire service. They will strengthen it. *Communities don't benefit from exhausted crews, worn apparatus or agencies that are trapped in reactive cycles.* They benefit from departments that are deliberate, rested and focused on true risk. Sustainable service isn't about doing less. It's about doing what matters, consistently and safely, for the long term.

**WHAT MUST CHANGE NOW**

***Stop measuring success by how many rigs rolled***. Call counts and apparatus response numbers are easy to report, but they reward quantity over appropriateness. Replace activity-based metrics with outcome-based measures, such as residential fire survival, time to fire control, response efficiency to true emergencies and CRR results. Transparent reporting should explain when and why resources were expanded or reduced, not simply list activity totals.

***Adopt intelligent dispatch triage and response leveling***. Evidence shows that departments can identify categories of calls where lights-and-sirens or multi-apparatus responses aren't warranted. Allowing nonemergency responses or single-unit dispatches for low-risk incidents reduces crash exposure and equipment wear without compromising public safety. These changes should be piloted with clear data collection, so outcomes are measurable.

***Address false alarm drivers and align incentives***. False alarms impose real costs in dollars and crew fatigue. Many jurisdictions successfully reduce repeat activations through education, fee schedules and enforcement. Time and money that are covered through these efforts should be reinvested in training, preventive maintenance and behavioral health programs.

***Treat staffing and fatigue as safety issues, not budget footnotes***. Relying on chronic overtime to fill vacancies increases long-term costs through injuries, turnover and degraded performance. Staffing models must be data-driven and incorporate predictable rest, recovery time and training. Exhausted crews make more mistakes, and risk-tolerant scheduling is a false economy.

***Stop treating mental health as optional*.** The behavioral health burden in the fire service is well documented. Investment in peer support, confidential counseling, mandatory critical incident follow-up and normalized help-seeking isn't a luxury. It's a core safety function. Departments that invest in these areas demonstrate stronger retention, fewer suicides and better operational performance.

**A DIFFERENT KIND OF PRIDE**

Pride in the fire service shouldn't be measured by how exhausted a crew is at the end of a shift or how many miles that a pumper accumulates for an annual report. Pride should be measured by how well a department

protects its members, preserves its equipment and delivers the right resource to the right incident at the right time.
Doing more with less sounds noble until reduced staffing, chronic fatigue and deferred investment begin to take a measurable toll on firefighters. Tradition and toughness can be honored without glorifying self-sacrifice. The next generation of firefighters deserves leadership that values sustainable service over unsustainable output. The lives that are at stake demand nothing less.

## TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

I was at lunch with an old friend and pointed to two elderly men across the room and said, "That will be us in 10 years." He just laughed and said, "That's a mirror!"

## 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.

Duties of the Treasurer:

I. Shall collect all dues, be the custodian of all funds of the Association, and shall keep all Association funds in such bank accounts as may be designated by the Board of Directors

II. Shall send to all member organizations the Membership Forms and Dues Invoices for membership

III. Shall pay the bills of the Association, keep accurate financial records of all transactions and shall present a brief report at each meeting

IV. Shall submit a detailed financial report to the Board of Director's at year's end, which is to be audited by the Auditing Committee and approved at the March General Membership meeting

V. Shall be bonded at the expense of the Association in the amount of $100,000.

VI. Shall transfer money into and out of investment accounts upon approval of the Board of Directors.

VII. Shall be paid a salary as determined by the Board of Directors

## WHO ARE YOUR CAFDA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2026?

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

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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 join in!***
***If your Fire District is a member, you are a member!!***

***Please advise your secretaries that all correspondence should be mailed to:***
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## *Wish to become a member of CAFDA, go to CAFDA.net/membership to apply.*

# 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 2026. 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.***

## Setting the Record Straight – Fire Service Organizations Express Concern Over Lack of Support for Nominal Compensation Initiative

*Organizations Renew Call for Collaboration to Address Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Challenges*

New York State, August 2026 – Representatives from the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York (AFDSNY), the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, the County Fire Coordinators' Association of the State of New York (CCASNY), and Long Island Fire Service legislative advocates are expressing concern over what they describe as a lack of meaningful support from the Firefighters Association of the State of New York (FASNY) regarding efforts to advance nominal compensation for volunteer firefighters.

The coalition states that volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention remain among the most significant challenges facing the New York fire service. Supporters of nominal compensation believe that providing limited compensation or reimbursement for time and expenses could help address those challenges while preserving the volunteer nature of the fire service.

Volunteer firefighters dedicate substantial time to emergency response, training, meetings, fundraising, public education, advocacy, and maintaining operational readiness. In addition, volunteers often incur personal expenses related to fuel, vehicle use, childcare, meals, clothing, and equipment.

According to a 2020 survey conducted by the County Coordinators' Association of the State of New York, the main reason for the decline in volunteer firefighters is a lack of time. The demands on a volunteer firefighter due to the amount of required training, family obligations, secondary employment, and dual-income schedules often preclude people from joining or sustaining their membership.

"Many volunteers are balancing family responsibilities and multiple jobs while continuing to serve their communities," proponents said. "The concept of nominal compensation is intended to recognize those sacrifices and help remove barriers to service."

Currently, New York state does not allow this option to the authorities responsible for providing fire and emergency medical service. This needs to be addressed legislatively by elected officials in Albany. The Association Fire Districts of the State of New York (AFDSNY), New York State Association of Fire Chiefs (NYSAFC), County Coordinators' Association of the State of New York (CCASNY), and Nassau-Suffolk Long Island Fire Districts Legislative Committee collaborated with state officials to work on legislation to allow, on a voluntary basis, nominal compensation for volunteer fire department personnel.

These organizations, the actual stakeholders, represent the leaders who are responsible for making sure that communities have adequate and timely emergency services when people need it. There was a draft bill that had sponsorship in the New York State Assembly (A10630), along with a similar bill that unfortunately did not get to the New York State Senate in time before the legislative session ended. The aforementioned groups are committed to moving this initiative forward next year.

Supporters note that one of the original concepts discussed was expanding reasonable expense reimbursement for volunteers, an idea that was raised during joint discussions among state fire service organizations.

According to coalition representatives, FASNY was repeatedly invited to participate in meetings and discussions surrounding the development of nominal compensation proposals. While FASNY claims that they have supported this legislation from the beginning, that is totally untrue. On more than one occasion, FASNY has stated they will not support it at all. However, they have also stated they would support it, as amended by the coalition, but then the next day reverted to their position of opposition. Coalition members contend that participation by FASNY leadership has been inconsistent and opportunities for collaboration have not been fully realized.

"We have always believed that meaningful progress requires all statewide organizations to work together," coalition representatives said. "The volunteer fire service is strongest when we present a united front on major issues affecting recruitment and retention."

The organizations also expressed concern regarding what they view as conflicting public messaging concerning the state of volunteer firefighting in New York. While many fire service leaders have openly acknowledged
ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, coalition members believe certain public statements have minimized the severity of those issues.

Additional concerns raised by coalition members include:

· The absence of nominal compensation proposals within FASNY's recently released 14-point plan addressing volunteer fire service challenges.

· A perceived lack of member engagement regarding the organization's position on nominal compensation.

· Reports of internal communications that, according to proponents, discuss efforts to oppose or delay nominal compensation initiatives.

· Public comments and social media interactions that seemingly discouraged open discussion among volunteer firefighters with differing viewpoints.

Despite these concerns, coalition members emphasize that their goal is not to create division within the fire service. “This issue is bigger than any single organization,” coalition representatives stated. “Every volunteer firefighter in New York deserves to have their concerns heard and their service valued. We remain committed to working with any organization that is willing to engage in constructive dialogue about solutions.”

The coalition also believes it is important to address a recent article published in the July/August edition of The Volunteer Firefighter magazine. Unfortunately, the article presents a significantly different picture than what coalition members have experienced firsthand throughout this process. Several statements and characterizations in the article are inaccurate, incomplete, untrue or fail to reflect the reality of the discussions, negotiations, and actions that have occurred.

As a result, readers should be aware that the article does not fully represent the facts surrounding the issue of nominal compensation and the efforts undertaken by coalition members to advance this important legislation on behalf of New York’s volunteer firefighters.

FASNY’s mission, as stated on their website is, “To serve the volunteer fire and EMS services, and the public they serve, through education, advocacy, recruitment and retention, recognition and community service.” Their organizational vision is, “To be the respected voice for legislation, regulation and standards while serving as the preeminent resource for recruitment, education and retention for the fire and EMS personnel.” FASNY was established in 1872 and has provided an important voice for the volunteer fire and EMS service in New York state. However, they have no responsibility to provide fire and EMS service delivery. That is the responsibility of local government entities (towns, villages, fire districts) throughout the state. Respectfully, FASNY can be more accurately compared to a “union” for the volunteer fire and EMS service with a responsibility to advocate for benefits to support our brave first responders.

Unfortunately, they believe that because of the amount of financial assets they have, they are THE VOICE for the fire and EMS service at large. Although they do have a strong presence in the halls of Albany and political influence, they are not THE VOICE of the entire fire service. They are just “A” voice. Although they were at the table and agreed to support the nominal compensation initiative, it became evident that a small minority of FASNY representatives decided to undermine the effort being undertaken by the “stakeholders.” They lobbied against the legislation and were able to stall its progression. Their main argument was that funding provided by the state is necessary so that all fire departments would have the ability to provide nominal compensation. The stakeholders are not against the need for funding; however, it was felt that it was most important to get the legislation passed so we could begin to assist our volunteer firefighters and fire departments and then go to the Governor and the Legislature during the budget process to obtain funding. By then, we had hoped to share success stories to use as evidence in the fight for funding. FASNY’s shortsightedness, asking for funding with only days left in the session, caused the bill to die in committee.

New York state is a home rule state. Fire and EMS service delivery is a local responsibility, including its funding. Nominal compensation may not be necessary in all communities based on a local risk assessment, but for those fire departments that have a need or desire to provide that incentive, the legislation simply gives that authority on a voluntary basis. This is a win-win for both the community and for the members of those fire departments.

The coalition is encouraging volunteer firefighters, fire officers, fire district commissioners, and elected officials to review the nominal compensation concept and participate in discussions about the future of volunteer emergency services in New York state.

**Provided by the NYS Fire Coordinators Association and Task Force and was this week sent out to all the fire coordinators in the state.**