THE BULLETIN

AUGUST 29TH, 2026

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

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- ***Knowing how to treat people is probably the most important skill of a leader.***
- **The North Hoosick Fire Department lost another good member on Friday, August 21st. Edward Bornt passed away from a long hard-fought battle with cancer. Ed was a 51-year lifetime member of the department holding several officers positions including Chief, Asst. Chief, President, Vice President, and Board of Directors. More information will be shown as it becomes available. May he R.I.P. (June 16, 1955 - August 21, 2026.)**
- **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.**
- Congratulations to the new officers of FASNY. I am hopeful that this is the right team to help move the fire service forward in NYS. There is a lot of work to do. Enjoy the events of today and let's roll up our collective sleeves tomorrow and get this train back on the right tracks.
- There's Still Time to Enter for the Chance to Win an MSA Cairns® 1836 Fire Helmet. NVFC members who are active firefighters **have until noon ET on August 31** to enter for the chance to win an MSA Cairns® 1836 Fire Helmet. Showcasing the iconic traditional design with innovative features that address today's fire service needs, it is lightweight, comfortable, and features a low ride height and Defender Visor that adjusts in and out to fit a range of face sizes and shapes or over eyewear. This is the third of four entry periods in 2026. Learn more and enter.
- See: **Setting the Record Straight – Fire Service Organizations Express Concern Over Lack of Support for Nominal Compensation Initiative** at the end of the Bulletin.

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) Guilderland Fire Chief's Association, Ontario (October 10-11), **Schenectady** (October 17-18) East Glenville Fire District and Orange (November 21-22) Counties.

View the Calendar and Register...

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.

- 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.

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.

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

From Washington

NVFC Advocacy Quick Tips

1) Know your legislator's district/state. Politicians want to know how policy will impact their constituents.
2) Have an agenda and prioritize your message points. Time with legislators is extremely valuable.
3) Keep your message simple and concise. Focus on delivering your key message points.
4) Provide specific examples, data, or anecdotes to support your message. Tell a real story.
5) When you don't know the answer to a question, admit it and promise to look into it and get back to them.
6) Be a good listener, even if a legislator disagrees with aspects of your position.

7) Know specifically what you are asking for on each message point before you go into the meeting.
8) Don't move from one message point to the next before making your "ask."
9) Take notes so that NVFC staff can follow up on commitments and questions that arise.
10) Leave the interview on a high note. Summarize key points in a positive manner.

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***

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

AVERILL PARK – SAND LAKE FIRE DISTRICT NO.2 – CLAIMS AUDITING

Audit Objective

Did the Averill Park – Sand Lake Fire District No. 2 (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) properly audit claims?

Audit Period

January 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026

Understanding the Audit Area

An effective audit of claims is often the last line of defense for preventing unauthorized, improper or fraudulent claims from being paid. When a fire district has a strong claims auditing process, the control consciousness of its staff is enhanced because officers and employees are aware that a careful review of claims will occur before public funds are disbursed. Because it is the Board's responsibility to ensure tax dollars are spent properly, efficiently and in the best interest of taxpayers, the Board should conduct a thorough and deliberate audit of claims before directing the Treasurer to pay them.

The District paid 337 claims totaling $432,998 during the audit period.

Audit Summary

The Board, as a whole, did not properly audit claims because it did not conduct a thorough and deliberate audit of all claims paid during the audit period. We reviewed 62 claims totaling $280,832 and determined that none of the claims were audited and approved by the entire Board as required. **We determined that the 62 claims were properly supported and for valid and legal purposes.** However, the lack of a claims audit increased the risk that claims for improper purposes could be paid, or that irregularities could go undetected and uncorrected.

This report includes two recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the effectiveness of the District's claims audit process. District officials generally agreed with our recommendations and have initiated, or indicated they planned to initiate corrective action.

- A Milford, Connecticut flooring company owner claims city officials violated state and local law in how they handled a flooring job at the fire department. Buddy Prete, owner of Ultimate Interiors, filed suit in late July against the city. The suit states officials violated Connecticut General Statutes and the city's purchasing rules by splitting a single project into separate orders to avoid public bidding requirements. Milford public works director Christopher Saley, a Democrat who lost his primary bid to represent the party in the 118th House District seat race in November, was not named as a defendant in the suit, but he and his alleged actions are mentioned prominently in the filing. Saley didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

- HAMBDEN TOWNSHIP, Ohio — Hambden Township Fire Chief Scott Hildenbrand said the nonprofit department is tightening financial controls and replacing its accountant after an alleged $1.6 million theft went undetected for years. More than one person will now sign off on payroll, Hildenbrand said, and multiple people have access to the department's banking app so transactions can be monitored. "This is a huge embarrassment to all of us," Hildenbrand said. "… I guarantee you we are doing everything we can so this can never happen again." The department is also working with its bank to determine whether electronic transfers can require approval from more than one person. Hildenbrand said that while checks can require two signatures, the department learned that its bank did not have a similar requirement for transfers. The department also plans to replace the accountant it had been using to prepare its tax filings and review its finances. *The alleged theft exposed a broader problem with relying on personal relationships instead of financial safeguards*.

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

***Earned, Not Given: The Leadership We Don't Teach

Douglas Ferrigno

KEY TAKAWAYS

- Leadership in the fire service is influenced by the social dynamics between crews, subordinates, and officers, and does not solely depend on rank.
- Many firefighters lack training in leadership skills, which can lead to ineffective management and poor treatment of subordinates.
- Validating others' perspectives during discussions fosters trust and encourages open communication among team members.

Leadership seems to be a buzzword today in the fire service. Although I do not have a college degree or letters that follow my name in an email signature like many do, I have three generations of fire service history in my family, and more than 17 years of real-world experience in my department that was not taught in any book. I have tested and worked my way from firefighter to company officer to deputy chief and tour commander.

I have seen some terrible firefighters and officers during my career, and I also have seen some of the best firefighters and officers. Counterintuitively, I have learned way more from the terrible firefighters and officers than I have from the great ones—they teach you how not to be, how not to treat people, and how not to "lead" people.

I have made great strides in working on myself in my personal life. I have more than eight years of therapy under my belt, learning how to be a better person, how to speak to people and treat people, and how to understand people. ***You can't change people; people have to want to change themselves***. You only have the power to change the way you react or how you engage someone. You can only control yourself.

LEADERSHIP, CULTURE, MORALE, AND INFLUENCE

The four elements listed above are all tied together. Leadership is a social term that is granted by your crews, your subordinates if you are an officer, and even your higher ups. Leaders don't have to be officers—*most great leaders show themselves long before they ever ride the front seat.*

Great leaders have an ability to influence. Think about your experiences with your best officers, the traits that make them great—it likely doesn't include rank. Everyone has the same opportunity to have bars or bugles on their collar, but when some people obtain those bars or bugles, you wouldn't follow them into the kitchen for lunch, let alone into a burning building.

When we think of fire service training, we may think of engine operations, ladder operations, rapid intervention, and EMS—all extremely important parts of what we do. We take classes on them, our training officers put out monthly trainings on these subjects, and we all need it. *The basics are 95% of our fireground operations.*

But what happens when we get promoted? Go from riding backwards to riding frontwards, or from being in charge of a company to being in charge of a battalion or a shift, depending on department size. Most of us get notified of a promotion and then report to our next shift in a new role. We get thrown to the wolves and are

just left to figure it out. The test said you were good enough to be in that role, but will your people feel the same way? *The expectations of you have changed, the way you look at the job changes, but how you treat people should never change*.

A LACK OF TRAINING

That's where we are failing our people—the lack of training on when and how to be a leader, when we need to be a manager, and ultimately how to treat people. People preach leadership this and leadership that and that's great, until a subordinate challenge your authority. Then what happens? People have almost zero training on how to handle those situations. Yes, everyone reads the book for test day and says the right things when it matters, but when that person looks you in the eyes and challenges you, how will you handle it? What skill set do you possess to do that? How did you obtain that skill set?

How you handle these situations sets the tone and shows what you will allow. Will you uphold the standard, or will you lower it because you lack the skills to handle such a situation? This happens somewhere every day in every firehouse across America. Every firefighter who has friends in outside departments knows that across the country we all have the same problems, just on a smaller or grander scale. Most of the problems I am speaking about are our own: how we treat each other, the disrespect whether intentional or unintentional, the culture that gets passed down that needs to stop. How can it stop if you are uninformed? How can it stop if you lack the influence or skills to stop it?

That's why *knowing how to treat people is probably the most important skill of a leader*. When you know how to treat people—that builds trust, and trust builds influence. Knowing how to treat people isn't just being nice and kind, even though that is ultimately the foundation of treating people properly. Those traits are taught from a young age and somehow, we lose them (I still don't understand how that happens). We see the same pattern all the time; people get promoted and suddenly they treat their people as if they are beneath them. They do less, make their people do things that they never did, and their people know they won't ever do. If this is you, how much influence are you going to have? It's a safe bet to say…not much.

LISTENING AND VALIDATION

When people have disagreements, speak about their ideas, or get in a discussion regarding their point of view of a topic, their end goal is to not be right, or have their idea be the end-all be-all. Most people are seeking validation. People want to be heard and understood. Being validated and being right are not the same thing. When people are validated, they open up, their defensiveness drops, and a conversation can continue on the correct track. When people are validated that means you can see or understand where they are coming from or how they came to their own conclusion—whether they are correct or not is not the point. "I hear what you are saying and can see where you are coming from, but I feel this way regarding it." If you automatically respond with defensiveness or dismiss them because you were listening to respond and not listening to understand, how far do you think you are going to get?

This is not just a fire service problem; this is an everyday life problem. I am going to say it again, most people listen to respond, not to hear and understand what people are saying. Our lives have become so digital with everyone texting and emailing that we have forgotten how to have disagreements, conversations, and speak to people in person. People also learned they can treat people poorly—cyberbullying—and say whatever they want on the Internet and or digitally to anyone because, at the end of the day, the odds of running into that random person in real life are slim to none.

Remember, everyone is going through something in their lives that you cannot see or they do not talk about. We have zero control over any of these issues in other people's lives. What we can control is the environment they walk into every day when they step foot through the bay doors. Are we creating an environment that is welcoming and inviting, allowing their guard to be down and being able to forget about their problems for the shift? Or are we creating hostility and additional stress for people?

KITCHEN TABLE LEADERSHIP

Sometimes we do this without even noticing it. The firehouse kitchen table is where we solve all the world's problems. Everyone knows best at the table. We hold many hats sitting there, and everyone has an opinion on everything. People who are deemed leaders by their peers aren't just wearing the therapist, lawyer, accountant, or marriage counselor hats sitting around the kitchen table. They are the ones the members are

going to in private for advice or to vent. They are the ones who are being called off duty, the ones who are trusted to listen and understand people when they need it the most.
The best leaders understand that a lot of people don't want you to solve their problems—they just want to vent. I have found it to be good practice that, when people ask if they can speak to me about an issue, I ask them if they are looking for advice or just to vent. This allows the person to get exactly what they need and in turn trust you more than you will deliver.
Firefighters are problem solvers by nature; that's just what we do. When people call 911, they want their problems solved, and we deliver. It is only natural that we would want to solve our closest brothers' and sisters' problems and take the burden away from them. What if I told you offering unsolicited advice when someone is not looking for it can add to their burden? In my opinion, asking what the person is looking for before you just listen to respond can impact a conversation in ways you wouldn't see.
There is an old saying that says you should treat people the way you want to be treated. Quite frankly, I disagree with that statemen. People should treat people the way they want to be treated. Not everyone wants to be treated the way you do. This is why you really need to learn your people, understand them, and ultimately love them.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

When people feel that their well-being is truly cared about on and off the fireground, both inside and outside of the firehouse walls, they will feel like they can do anything. You can make all the difference in someone's life. Do you want to contribute to someone's source of happiness and well-being, or do you want to create an environment that contributes to them being unhappy? That choice is 100% yours. I am not by any means saying how we treat people alone contributes to their attitude or happiness, but fostering an environment of not causing any more stress can do wonders for a person.
This job is hard enough with all the contributing factors that are out of our control. The terrible calls, politics, and city hall just to name a few. How you treat people should not make it any harder. It is said that people ask people the questions they hope to get asked in return. Pay attention to that in your daily interactions with people.
Now chiefs, listen up: Stop hiding in your office, go visit the firehouses in your township or battalion. Have a cup of coffee, ask people how they are doing. Know about them, learn about them, train with them. They say distance creates a divide, and I believe that wholeheartedly. Making people feel like they are more than just a badge number is crucial.
When you really know your people, you can pick up immediately if something is off. A simple check-in could be the world of a difference. That could send a message to them that it is okay to express how they feel. Simply put, giving a damn about your people—having their backs and being trustworthy—will give you all the trust and influence you need to succeed.
You are nothing without your people, and until you grasp that, they will never truly trust you. Remember, you can't legislate being a good person; it requires willingness, and trust is always earned. To me, that's what leadership is. The way leadership is taught seems to always be evolving, but the core principle always remains true: ***Care about your people—actually care. It will get you further than any policy, rule, or regulation ever will.***

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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

CAFDA.net

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR FIRE DISTRICT ELECTIONS

Reprinted from Fire District Affairs

Fire districts conduct their own elections. The county board of elections does not conduct fire district elections. It provides voter registration records for use by fire districts, and it provides access to voting machines for use at the election. Fire districts can conduct their elections using voting machines or paper ballots, but if they

wish to use election machines, they get access to the machines through the county board of elections. The county board of elections also provides training for personnel on the use and operation of these machines.

The Board of Fire Commissioners is required to appoint a local election board to conduct its annual and special elections. The members of that election board must be registered voters who reside in the fire district. Elected officers of the fire district are not permitted to serve as members of the fire district board of elections.

The Fire District Secretary assists the local board of elections by securing voter registration records from the county board of elections, sending out all required notifications for the election, preparing the ballot to be used at the election, acquiring voting machines from the county board of elections when the Board of Fire Commissioners has directed that voting machines be used for the election, and submitting the canvass or report of election to the election board for signature at the conclusion of the election to certify the result. The Secretary then files the report with the town clerks of all towns within which the district is situated.

The election board conducts the election based upon the provisions in the Town Law. Town Law provides very limited rules for the procedure to be followed by the election board in conducting the election. The Election Law provides very extensive rules to guide the county boards of elections when they conduct the elections assigned to them.

The Election Law by its terms does not pertain to the conduct of fire district elections other than to provide access to fire districts to voter registration records and election machines.

To address the absence of clear guidance we have recommended that fire districts consider adopting a set of local rules and regulations to govern how their elections will be conducted by their election boards. We have placed a draft of a policy providing election procedures and a policy for challenged voters on our website [https://afdsny.org/] at the Sample Forms and Policies tab in the Member Center for your consideration. You must be logged in to access that tab.

We encourage you to carefully review these model documents and evaluate their suitability for your district. Be sure to consult with your local legal counsel to make any necessary modifications so the policies align with your district's specific needs and legal requirements.

If your district adopts a new policy to govern election procedures, it should be posted at the election site and thoroughly reviewed with the election board. Any local policy that addresses aspects of the election must be clearly understood by the election board, and the Board should be properly trained to implement it effectively.

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

None Identified this week.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

- Bristol Township, Pennsylvania. Town Council voted 5-2 to close Newportville Fire Company. 1 year short of 100 years in service. 1927-2026

- A South Line Fire District No. 10, Erie County, engine caught fire early Saturday. Firefighters discovered the fire when they noticed heavy smoke coming from the apparatus bay at their Cheektowaga station. Crews determined the fire was coming from Engine 1, (a 2018 Spartan ERV Gladiator pumper with a 2,000-gpm pump and 750-gallon tank). Mutual-aid companies helped contain the fire to the engine. One firefighter was treated at the scene for smoke inhalation. The station was not damaged, and the department said it remains fully operational. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

- The Woodbridge Township, NJ Council unanimously voted to close the 118-year-old Keasbey District 4 Volunteer Fire Department, with neighboring Fords Fire Company taking over fire protection for the Keasbey area. Township officials cited low volunteer membership, declining call volume, and high fire district taxes, saying the consolidation could save Keasbey taxpayers about $1,000 annually. Five of Keasbey's eight paid firefighters will transfer to Fords, while the other three will retain jobs elsewhere in the township, and the volunteer organization will be dissolved entirely. Despite opposition and legal efforts from the Keasbey fire district, the township approved the closure, and the longtime firehouse may possibly be demolished and replaced by a warehouse.
    - A New Jersey fire department that has been serving the community for over a century now has to shut its doors, but they say it won't go out without a fight. The Keasbey Fire Department in Woodbridge Township, which first organized 118 years ago, is set to close in October and merge with the Fords Fire Department located about 1 mile away. Keasbey Volunteer Fire Chief John Manna has spent more than 30 years of his life at the Smith Street firehouse. He believes the closure is about the property."You can look around our neighborhood here. All the homes have been knocked down," he said. "The homes were purchased by a developer, and this land that the firehouse sits on is the final piece of that puzzle." Woodbridge Township Mayor John McCormac says it's not a land grab, but about safety and not enough firefighters. "Four firefighters have to be at a scene for two to go in, two to stay out for possible rescue and to command the scene," he said."When the career guys go out with the first piece of apparatus, the volunteers will come in and take the next piece of apparatus," Manna said. McCormac says all eight paid firefighters from Keasbey will be transferred to different firehouses, including Fords. "Right now, Keasbey's not cooperating, so those eight firefighters are kind of in limbo," McCormac said. "They're being held hostage by the Keasbey fire commissioners." "The mayor's office is saying that all eight have jobs, but we have no documentation," one Keasbey Fire Board of Commissioners member said. The board says it is considering filing a lawsuit against Woodbridge Township to slow down the closure. McCormac says the move will save Keasbey residents fire tax dollars. While Manna and board members claim they were blindsided by the decision, the mayor says the closure's been in the works for years and even the state recommends the two departments merge.

- While firefighters were battling a fire, the Dalton, New Hampshire homeowner jumped into an apparatus and proceeded to crash it into other rigs. Dalton and Littleton firefighters were taking a defensive position at the house due to heavy fire conditions. They learned no one was inside. During the operation, a man "commandeered the fire apparatus on the scene and began driving it recklessly around the fireground. The stolen rig struck several emergency response vehicles and personal cars while driving toward firefighters working to control the blaze, creating an extraordinarily dangerous hazard for crews on the scene. The man was taken into custody by New Hampshire State Police.

- Billings, Montana firefighters were held at bay by gunfire at a house fire Sunday that claimed the lives of multiple children and adults. Police responding to a domestic incident heard gunfire and saw a man in the backyard of a house where smoke was visible. He suffered a self-inflicted gunshot wound and was pronounced dead at a local hospital, Billings Assistant Police Chief Shawn Mayo said at a press conference Monday.

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SER1VICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

59

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/

Apparatus Accidents in the News:

- A pair of firefighters are recovering after being involved in a crash Tuesday afternoon while responding to a fire in Robertson County, Texas. Blackjack VFD Chief Robert Fowler says one of the department's trucks on the way to help with the fire *had a tire blowout and crash*ed.
- Three people were injured, including a firefighter, Sunday afternoon when a Cal Fire law enforcement truck responding to a structure fire with emergency lights and sirens on was involved in a crash with two civilian vehicles on Stockton Road in Sonora, across from the Mother Lode Fairgrounds..

Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, in the News

- Vermillion Parish, LA, Firefighter Ejected, Dies in Crash Responding to Call. Meaux-Nunez VFD firefighter Robert Hughes and a passenger were ejected while responding to a call in his personal vehicle, Hughes died at the hospital. Neither responders were wearing seat belts. An unrestrained person in the passenger seat was also ejected and listed in serious condition.
- The U.S. Wildland Fire Service announced Tuesday morning that the crew member who died on the Frijoles Fire burning northeast of Santa Fe on Sunday was Randy Lupe, a 62-year-old from the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona.

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	**54**
8/20/26 Preston, Chenango, Co. Female 62	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	**105**
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	**770**
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	**#1 PA 60**
	#2 NY 54
	#3 OH 45
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1213 = 34.6 weekly	
Both the states of Maryland and California as well as Wash. DC require sprinklers in 1&2 family dwellings. **According to realtors and builders only old homes burn, so sprinklers are not needed in new homes: so my question to you is; when does a new home become an old home?**	

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

*****New York fire service groups clash over proposal to pay volunteer firefighters***

Finger Lakes.com

A dispute over whether New York should allow limited compensation for volunteer firefighters is exposing a deeper divide among the organizations that represent the state's fire service, as recruitment and retention problems continue to strain departments across the state.

The New York State Association of Fire Chiefs and several allied fire service organizations are accusing the Firefighters Association of the State of New York of failing to consistently support legislation that *would have **allowed** local governments to provide nominal compensation to volunteer firefighters*. The groups say the proposal could help departments retain members who are increasingly balancing emergency service with jobs, family obligations, training requirements and personal expenses.

The coalition includes the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York, New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, County Fire Coordinators' Association of the State of New York and Long Island fire service legislative advocates.

Their criticism comes after legislation addressing nominal compensation failed to advance before the end of this year's legislative session. A proposal had sponsorship in the state Assembly as A10630, according to the organizations, while a similar Senate measure did not advance in time.

The coalition says it intends to return to Albany next year and continue pushing for legislation. At the center of the debate is whether New York should give municipalities and fire districts **the option** to provide limited payments or reimbursements to volunteer firefighters without fundamentally converting those departments into paid operations.

Supporters argue the change could help remove some of the financial and time-related barriers that make it difficult for people to join or remain in volunteer departments.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION DRIVE THE DEBATE

Volunteer fire departments remain a central part of emergency response across much of Upstate New York, particularly in rural and suburban communities where fully paid departments are financially impractical.

But fire service organizations have repeatedly warned that the pool of available volunteers has been shrinking. The coalition cited a 2020 survey by the County Fire Coordinators' Association that ***identified lack of time as the primary reason for declining volunteer participation.***

Modern volunteers may be responsible for emergency calls, extensive training, meetings, fundraising, public education and department operations while also maintaining regular employment and family responsibilities. They may also absorb expenses associated with fuel, vehicle use, childcare, food, clothing and other costs connected to their service.

Nominal compensation is intended to offset some of that burden rather than replace traditional volunteer service with conventional salaries.

The proposal would not require every department to pay volunteers. Instead, supporters want state law changed so local governments and fire districts could decide whether compensation makes sense based on local staffing needs and finances.

The coalition argues that distinction is important in a state where responsibility for providing and funding fire and emergency medical services generally rests with local governments.

FIRE ORGANIZATIONS TRADE COMPETING VIEWS

The disagreement has become increasingly public.

The coalition said FASNY was invited to meetings while the nominal compensation proposal was being developed but gave inconsistent signals about whether it would support the legislation.

According to the Fire Chiefs Association's account, FASNY at various points opposed the proposal, agreed to support an amended version and later returned to opposition.

Those are claims made by the coalition. The statement provided by the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs does not include a response from FASNY to the latest criticism.

The coalition also disputes how FASNY has characterized its role in the legislative discussions and criticized an article published in the July-August edition of FASNY's *The Volunteer Firefighter* magazine, *saying it did not accurately reflect negotiations over the proposal.*

Coalition members further criticized FASNY's recently released 14-point plan addressing challenges in the volunteer fire service because nominal compensation was not included.

The groups contend FASNY's leadership ultimately pushed lawmakers to tie the proposal to state funding, helping stall the measure late in the legislative session.

The coalition's preferred approach was to first authorize local governments to offer compensation and then seek state funding during a future budget process.

FASNY's position, as described by the coalition, was that state financial support should accompany the policy so departments across New York would have the ability to participate rather than limiting the option to communities capable of funding it locally.

That disagreement reflects one of the central policy questions surrounding the proposal: whether nominal compensation should simply become another tool available to municipalities or whether New York should provide funding to make the option broadly accessible.

DEBATE COMES AS COSTS RISE FOR LOCAL FIRE DISTRICTS

The argument is unfolding as fire districts face broader financial pressure.

A report released this week by State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli found 31.5% of New York fire districts reported plans to override the property tax cap for fiscal 2026, up substantially from 18.6% in 2022.

Fire districts rely heavily on property taxes and generally received little of the pandemic-era financial assistance that helped support other local governments.

Personnel costs are also rising. The comptroller's office reported that fire district salary spending increased at an annualized rate of 7.6% between 2019 and 2025.

At the same time, statewide volunteer firefighter ranks have declined by roughly one-third over the past two decades while call volumes have increased, according to figures cited by the comptroller.

That creates a difficult equation for communities dependent on volunteer departments.

If fewer residents are able or willing to volunteer, departments can either attempt to recruit more aggressively, provide additional incentives or move toward greater reliance on paid staffing — typically the most expensive option.

Nominal compensation is being promoted as another possibility between those two models.

FIGHT EXPECTED TO RETURN TO ALBANY

The coalition says it doesn't believe every community needs to compensate volunteer firefighters.

Instead, the organizations want Albany to remove the legal barrier and leave the decision to the local governments responsible for operating and funding emergency services.

Supporters say a rural department struggling to staff daytime calls may make a different choice than a department with a stable volunteer roster, and state law should allow both to respond accordingly.

The dispute over how to accomplish that is unlikely to end with this year's failed legislation.

The Fire Chiefs Association and its partners say they'll renew the push when lawmakers return next year, putting the question back before the Legislature: whether New York's traditional volunteer fire service can remain viable under its current model, or whether keeping people in the firehouse will increasingly require communities to compensate them for some of the time and costs that come with answering the call.

QUESTION TO FIRE DISTRICTS: *Would you be willing to provide nominal compensation to your volunteers, for calls or to stand by in station i.e. Duty Crews to answer calls?*
We realize that not all departments/districts will be able to afford nominal compensation but may be able to afford gas cards, or amazon gift cards or other nominal compensatory rewards for participation. We also understand that there will need to be strict policies and administration of payments so that they are not abused by either payors or payees. It has to be fair and equally applied.
Let us know how likely it would be for you to use nominal compensation to recruit or retain volunteer firefighters for your fire district? Email your reply to secretary@CAFDA.net

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Gates-Chili Fire Department ends volunteer firefighter recruitment

News10NBC

The Gates-Chili Fire Department is no longer recruiting volunteer firefighters. The department's board of directors voted last week to end recruitment efforts after deciding there ***wasn't a return on the investment***. According to the Gates Fire District Chief Tim Goole, the department will still be accepting applications, it just won't be implementing recruitment events.

But as News10NBC has reported in other communities in our region, the problem isn't just in Gates-Chili. "The issues that we're running into for lack of volunteers is not unique to just this organization. It's not only statewide, it's nationwide," said Goole. The chief said the majority of interest in joining the department actually comes from its website, not in-person recruiting events.

FIRE APPARATUS

FAMA Forum: Public Safety Drone Programs

FAMA Technical Subcommittee

The Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association (FAMA) has produced a series of buyers guides and service guides designed to educate an apparatus committee on available products and technologies without going into details on a specific brand or manufacturer.

The buyers guides and service guides are all available for free download from www.fama.org under the Fire Service Resources area.

PUBLIC SAFETY DRONE PROGRAMS: A PRACTICAL OVERVIEW

Drones have become some of the fastest-growing tools in public safety, and for good reason. What started as technology primarily associated with hobbyists and photographers has evolved into a valuable resource for fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency management organizations, and rescue teams. The FAMA Buyer's Guide on Public Safety Drone Programs provides a practical introduction to how agencies can successfully incorporate drones into their operations. While the guide covers regulations, training, equipment, and implementation considerations, the overall message is straightforward: ***Drones can significantly improve public safety operations when they are planned, managed, and used properly.***

At its core, a public safety drone program is designed to help agencies gather information more quickly and safely. During emergencies, having an aerial view of a scene can make a major difference in decision making. Whether responders are dealing with a structure fire, a search and rescue operation, a hazardous materials incident, or a natural disaster, drones provide valuable perspectives that would otherwise be difficult, expensive, or dangerous to obtain.

The guide explains that public safety agencies across the United States have rapidly adopted drone technology in recent years. Thousands of agencies now operate drone programs, and the number continues to grow. ***This increase reflects the recognition that drones offer a relatively low-cost way to improve situational awareness and operational effectiveness***. Compared with traditional aircraft, drones are far less expensive to purchase and operate while still providing many of the same benefits.

A drone program begins with understanding what a drone actually is. The document refers to drones as small unmanned aircraft systems, or sUAS. While many people simply call them drones, the term sUAS stresses that the aircraft is only one part of a larger system. A complete setup includes the aircraft itself, the controller used by the operator, and any cameras or specialized equipment carried by the drone. These components work together to gather information and support emergency operations.

One of the biggest advantages of drones is their ability to enhance an agency's capabilities. Public safety organizations are constantly looking for ways to improve response times, increase safety, and make better-informed decisions. Drones help achieve all three goals. They can reach locations quickly, provide real-time aerial views, and collect valuable information without placing responders in unnecessary danger.

Search and rescue missions are among the most valuable uses of drones. When someone is missing, a drone can cover large areas much faster than ground crews alone. Drones are also useful during accident investigations because they can capture detailed images and create accurate scene documentation. Fire departments use drones to monitor wildfires, assess structure fires, identify hotspots through thermal imaging, and support post-incident investigations. They are also increasingly used during hazardous materials incidents and water rescue operations where direct access may be difficult or dangerous.

However, purchasing a drone is only one small part of creating a successful program. The guide says that implementation requires careful planning. Agencies must consider regulations, training requirements, operational procedures, staffing, and long-term program management. A drone program is not simply about a piece of equipment—it is an operational capability that requires ongoing commitment.

One of the first considerations involves certification and regulatory compliance. In the United States, drone operations are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Public safety agencies must ensure that their pilots meet the appropriate requirements before conducting operations.

For many agencies, this begins with obtaining a Part 107 certification. This license allows pilots to legally operate drones for work-related purposes. Pilots must pass an FAA knowledge test and periodically complete renewal requirements to maintain certification. The certification process places responsibility for safe operations on the individual pilot and establishes a framework for legal drone use.

The guide also discusses
Certificates of Authorization, commonly known as COAs. These are designed specifically for government agencies performing official governmental functions. A COA can provide additional operational flexibility and shifts more responsibility from individual pilots to the department itself. While COAs can offer expanded capabilities, they also require agencies to maintain records, training programs, and operational oversight. For many public safety organizations, a combination of Part 107 certifications and COA authorizations may be the most effective approach.
Beyond certifications, agencies must understand the basic rules that govern drone operations. While the details can sometimes seem complex, the overall goal is simple: operate safely while minimizing risks to people and other aircraft. *Operators must generally maintain visual contact with the drone, avoid conflicts with other aircraft, observe altitude limitations, and follow FAA requirements related to flight operations. Emergency situations may allow for certain exceptions, but agencies must still demonstrate that they are operating responsibly and within applicable guidelines.*
An important theme throughout the guide is the need for clear policies and procedures. *Successful drone programs do not rely solely on individual judgment. Instead, they establish written standard operating procedures (SOPs) that outline how the program will function. These procedures define responsibilities, establish operational standards, and provide consistency across the organization.*
Well-developed SOPs address a wide range of topics. They explain the purpose of the program, identify who has authority to make decisions, establish rules for drone use, outline training requirements, and describe maintenance and inspection processes. They also address important considerations such as reporting requirements, operational safety, and privacy concerns. Having these procedures in place helps ensure that the program remains organized, accountable, and effective over time.
Training is another area that receives significant attention in the guide. While modern drones have become increasingly user-friendly, successful public safety operations require much more than simply knowing how to fly. Pilots must understand emergency operations, airspace considerations, safety procedures, and the specific mission objectives associated with public safety work.
The guide stresses that training should be continuous rather than a one-time event. Regular practice helps pilots maintain proficiency and stay prepared for real-world incidents. ***Many organizations use structured training programs and task books to track pilot development and ensure consistent skill levels across the team.*** Ongoing training also helps agencies adapt to changing technology, updated regulations, and evolving operational needs.
Leadership support is another key factor in program success. Drone programs require funding, personnel, equipment maintenance, and administrative oversight. Without support from organizational leaders, even well-designed programs can struggle to remain effective. Agencies that successfully integrate drones into their daily operations typically view them as essential operational tools rather than specialized side projects.
When it comes to equipment, agencies have many options to consider. The guide distinguishes between consumer-grade drones and enterprise-level systems. Consumer drones are widely available through retail stores and online marketplaces. They are generally more affordable and can provide excellent capabilities for basic applications. Enterprise drones, on the other hand, are specifically designed for professional and public safety use. These systems often include advanced features such as thermal imaging cameras, powerful zoom capabilities, weather-resistant designs, and specialized sensors. While they come at a higher cost, they can significantly expand an agency's operational capabilities.
Drone prices vary widely depending on features and intended use. Some systems may cost only a few hundred dollars, while advanced public safety platforms can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Flight times, camera quality, payload capacity, and environmental performance are all important factors to consider during the purchasing process. Agencies should evaluate their specific operational needs before selecting equipment rather than simply purchasing the most advanced system available.
The guide also acknowledges that public safety drone programs face several common challenges. Funding is often one of the biggest obstacles. While drones are relatively affordable compared with traditional aircraft, developing a complete program still requires investment in equipment, training, software, and maintenance.
Public perception can also present challenges. Some community members may have concerns about privacy or misunderstand how drones are being used. Agencies must be proactive in communicating the purpose of their

programs and demonstrating how drones contribute to public safety. Transparency and accountability play important roles in building public trust.

Other challenges include staffing shortages, certification requirements, maintenance issues, software management, and sustaining long-term program oversight. *Even after a program is launched, agencies must continue investing time and effort to keep it operating effectively. Without ongoing management and leadership support, programs can lose momentum or fail to deliver their intended benefits.*

Overall, this FAMA Buyer's Guide presents drones as a powerful and increasingly important tool for public safety agencies. Technology offers significant benefits, including improved situational awareness, enhanced responder safety, faster information gathering, and expanded operational capabilities. At the same time, the guide makes it clear that success depends on much more than purchasing equipment. Effective programs require planning, training, regulatory compliance, leadership support, and clear operating procedures.

For agencies considering a drone program, the guide serves as a practical starting point. It provides an overview of the major considerations involved while encouraging organizations to continue researching and developing policies that fit their specific needs. As drone technology continues to evolve, public safety agencies that invest in well-managed programs will likely find themselves better equipped to protect their communities and support their responders in an increasingly complex emergency environment.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

- A commercial flight from Atlanta to Dallas was reportedly disrupted after a passenger's laptop caught fire inside the cabin, injuring at least five people. The incident took place aboard American Airlines Flight 2398 as the aircraft was nearing Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. The aircraft was carrying 133 passengers and crew members when smoke and flames were reported towards the rear of the plane. Air traffic control audio recordings obtained by CBS News captured the captain informing controllers about the cabin fire.

- Lithium-ion batteries that were used to charge an electric lawnmower sparked a Franklin County, Pennsylvania house fire Tuesday evening, causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages. Crews were called for a house fire in the 1600 block of Clinton Avenue in Chambersburg just after 5 p.m. and found a "well-advanced" fire upon arriving, according to the Chambersburg Fire Department. Firefighters were met with "intense" heat and saw that the fire was mainly in the front rooms and garage. There was one resident who was able to make it out of the house safely, the fire department said. A dog found inside the burning home was rescued and not hurt. The fire department said investigators narrowed down the fire's origin to the garage and further found that the batteries were off-brand and not meant to be used with the electric lawnmower's charger. It is estimated the blaze caused $175,000 worth of damage.

- A Tesla driver was killed early Wednesday after crashing into the back of a tractor hauling grapes near Elk Grove, according to the California Highway Patrol. The Tesla caught fire after the crash. Cosumnes Community Services District firefighters pronounced the driver dead at the scene, the CHP said.

- With Colorado-based Flatiron Energy withdrawing its widely unpopular proposal for an enormous battery energy storage facility in New Milford, town officials and environmentalists are relieved — for now. Flatiron late last week told attorneys for the town that it was no longer pursuing its plan for Treebeard, its name for a 140-megawatt lithium-ion battery storage facility to be built on 10 acres near the West Aspetuck River. But the company still has an option on the land, and last winter said it was also exploring other potential sites in New Milford. So far, it has not advised the town on whether it's leaving the area altogether, seeking a nearby location instead, or simply postponing its campaign for the original proposal.

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

New York Women in Fire Day



Hoags Corners VFD

All you can eat breakfast buffet, 1st Sunday of each month. $15.00 8am to 11am.
7237 NY-66, East Nassau, NY 12062

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

See you in the fall, Sunday September 20th to be exact.

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

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

Speigletown Fire Department Breakfast 2nd Sunday of each month

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

---

You're Invited! Firefighter's Home Open House September 26

Join us on Saturday, September 26th, for The Firefighter's Home Open House.

When: Saturday, September 26th from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

GENERAL INTEREST TO ALL

*****MAYBE THE FIRE SERVICE DOESN'T HAVE A REVENUE PROBLEM. MAYBE WE HAVE A SPENDING PROBLEM.***

Here's another uncomfortable conversation.

Ronald Reagan once made a point about government spending that applies remarkably well to the conversation we're having about the future of the fire service:

> "No matter how much more tax money comes to Washington, it won't amount to a hill of beans if government won't curb its endless appetite to spend."-Ronald Reagan

Now bring that philosophy into the firehouse.

Every time the fire service faces a financial problem, our first conversation seems to be:

We need more money.
Raise the tax rate.
Create an ESD.
Increase the levy.
Apply for another grant.
Increase ambulance billing.
Ask the city for another million dollars.

But there's another question leaders have an obligation to ask:

Are we spending the money we already have as efficiently and effectively as possible?

Because nationally, this isn't pocket change.

U.S. state and local government current expenditures for fire protection reached approximately $79.2 BILLION in 2024, according to Bureau of Economic Analysis data. In 2000, that figure was about $26.2 billion.

That means in a 24 year period the fire spending jumped 200% while inflation was only 82%.

Some of that increase is obviously inflation, population growth, compensation, expanded EMS missions, technology and increased equipment costs—but the scale should still make us willing to examine how the money is being used.

And let me make something VERY clear:

I'm not advocating cutting firefighters, closing stations or sending people into burning buildings without the resources they need.

I'm advocating something much harder:

JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE.

- Does that $1.3 million custom engine materially improve the protection of the community over a substantially less expensive apparatus?
- Or could a factory built Engine at $750,000 do the same job?
- Does replacing apparatus on a predetermined calendar make sense when its condition, maintenance history, mileage and actual utilization say otherwise?
- Do we need another administrative position?
- Do we need another software subscription?
- Another specialized apparatus that responds once or twice a year?
- Another piece of equipment because the neighboring department bought one?
- Or are we buying things because there is money in the budget?

That's a very different question.

And then there's one of government's strangest incentives:

“USE IT OR LOSE IT.”
Let's be accurate here.
There is no universal rule requiring fire departments to empty their budgets at the end of the fiscal year. Local governments handle unspent appropriations differently.
But anyone who has worked around government budgeting knows the incentive that can develop:

> “If we don't spend it this year, they'll think we don't need it next year.”

That mentality can produce exactly the wrong behavior.
A department that saves taxpayers $200,000 shouldn't be punished with a $200,000 reduction simply because it operated efficiently.
We should reward efficiency—not punish it.
Imagine a different model.
A department budgets $10 million.
Through good management, preventive maintenance, reduced overtime, smarter purchasing and operational efficiency, it spends $9.6 million.
Instead of scrambling in September to spend the remaining $400,000...
Let some or all of it roll forward into a protected capital and resilience account.
Now that money can eventually purchase:

- Apparatus without massive financing costs.
- SCBA.
- Turnout gear.
- Station repairs.
- Cancer-reduction improvements.
- Training facilities.
- Technology.
- Fire-prevention programs.
- Or cover an unexpected financial emergency.

That's not hoarding taxpayer money.
That's financial planning.
Private businesses call that retained capital and reserves.
Families call it savings.
Government shouldn't create incentives where being financially responsible this year threatens your budget next year.
And this connects directly to another conversation we've been having.

WHAT ACTUALLY BENEFITS THE CITIZEN?
That's the metric I want.
Not:

> “Did we spend our entire budget?”

Ask:

- Did response times improve?
- Did firefighter or civilian injuries decline?
- Did property loss decline?
- Did prevention reduce incidents?
- Did staffing match actual community risk?
- Did apparatus availability improve?
- Did our ISO/PPC position improve?
- Did we extend the useful life of equipment?
- What measurable public-safety outcome did taxpayers receive for the money?

Because spending money isn't an accomplishment.
Producing an outcome is.

The Census Bureau's government-finance system already categorizes expenditures by functions including fire protection, police, administration and numerous other services. We have far more financial data available today than departments had generations ago.
So use it.
Combine financial data with NERIS data, response times, apparatus utilization, maintenance costs, staffing, community risk and loss history.
Then start calculating something we rarely discuss:

RETURN ON PUBLIC-SAFETY INVESTMENT

Maybe $1 million belongs in suppression.
Maybe it belongs in staffing.
Maybe it belongs in EMS.
Maybe it belongs in prevention.
Maybe $300,000 of it shouldn't be spent at all this year.
That's okay.

Saving money shouldn't automatically mean we're failing to provide service.
And spending more money shouldn't automatically mean we're providing better service.
That's the cultural change I'm arguing for.
I don't want the cheapest fire department possible.
I want the most effective fire department the community can reasonably afford.
There is an enormous difference.
Before asking taxpayers for another dollar, leaders should be able to look them in the eye and say:

We examined the calls, the risk, our staffing, the apparatus, and administration cost.
We eliminated unnecessary spending.
We protected reserves.
We invested in prevention.
And after doing all of that, here's what we actually need.
If the answer is another $5 million, I'll stand beside you and help make the argument.
But if we haven't done that analysis, maybe asking for more money isn't the first step.

Maybe leadership starts by asking:

Where is the money already going?
What measurable benefit is the citizen receiving?
What could we stop doing?
What could we do differently?
And why are our budgeting policies sometimes incentivizing spending instead of stewardship?

We cannot make the fire service financially sustainable simply by continuously finding new sources of money.
At some point, we also have to control the other side of the equation.
The spending.
Fund what matters.
Measure what works.
Save when we can.
Spend when we must.
And stop confusing a bigger budget with a better fire department.
Because the taxpayer isn't simply our funding source.
They're our customer, our stakeholder—and ultimately the person whose money we've been entrusted to spend.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

My wife asked if she could have a little peace and quiet while she cooked dinner…
So I took the battery out of the smoke detector!!

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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President, Tom Rinaldi, Commissioner, Stillwater Fire District
1st Vice President, Ellen Martin, Deputy Treasurer Clifton Park Fire District

DIRECTORS:

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

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

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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:
All correspondence & Capital Area Fire Districts Association Mailing Address should be directed to:
CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063 or EMAIL: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET
Financial issues should be addressed to: TREASURER@CAFDA.NET
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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.