THE BULLETIN

JULY 18, 2026

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

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- A recording of the video Future of the Fire Service, panel discussion and open forum is available on the AFDNYS.org website.
- ***BUDGET SCHEDULE PAGE 4 also on CAFDA.net***
- ***ELECTION SCHEDULE PAGE 9 also on CAFDA.net***

TRAINING OPPORTUNTIES:

From CAFDA

1 ***A DAY AT THE RACES to be held again this summer, Friday, August 7th, in the Picnic Paddock Area, lunch included.***

- ✓ August 7th, 1:00pm til 6PM
- ✓ Lunch food, snacks, water & soda will be provided. BYOB in adherence with Track Policies see here: https://www.nyra.com/saratoga/visit/
- ✓ Gates open at 11am, post time is at 1pm
- ✓ **CAFDA Member Fire District officials and their guests (one guest per official), and Business Partner principals are invited and entry is free!**
- ✓ **Non-Member fire district officials and their guests (one guest per official) are invited to attend; reservations fee is $35 per person and must be paid when making your reservations.**
- ✓ **Everyone attending *must individually* register (*no group reservations*) online through this website, just click on this link: *DayAtTheRaces*** (https://cafda.net/event-registration/)
- ✓ **Your tickets with each individual's name, will be available in an envelope at the "WILL CALL" window at Gate B on Union Avenue.**
- ✓ **If you make reservations, please show up for this free annual family event there is a cost for the tickets and for the food that CAFDA is funding.**
- ✓ **When you enter the Paddock area you will receive wristbands by showing your ticket!!**

2 ***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

3. 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".

5 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**			
Friday, August 7, 2026	1:00 PM	**Membership Activity**	Saratoga Race Course	**NYRA Day at the Races!**
Thursday, August 13, 2026	7:00 PM	**Board of Directors Meeting**	Clifton Park	
Thursday, September 10, 2026	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	
Thursday, October 8, 2026	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	Officers/Director Nominations
Saturday, November 7, 2026	8:00 AM	**Annual Fall Workshop**	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

ESIP
EMERGENCY SERVICES INSURANCE PROGRAM
BY McNeil&Co.

NOTE:

Webinar Schedule Moved to Thursday

Our ESIP webinar series is moving to Thursday nights starting this week. They will remain bi-weekly going forward.

Please note: We utilize the Zoom platform. Please plan on logging in early to make sure that you can connect to the platform successfully. Also, the name on your certificate will be the name that you register with so spell it correctly. If you have any issues, please call 607-246-7532.

Beyond ISO Grading Score: How to Navigate ISO and Strengthen Your Fire Department

Join us on: Monday, July 20th, 2026 at 2pm ET

Your fire department's ISO rating is more than a score; it is a powerful tool to support vital funding, staffing and operational growth. **In this webinar**, two veteran fire chiefs share how they've used the ISO process to build stronger cases for additional resources to improve service delivery while increasing both citizen and firefighter safety.

Learn about the common pitfalls in ISO reporting and how to address then before your inspection. Through real-world examples, discover how collaboration, planning, and communication can elevate your department. If you're looking to turn ISO grading into opportunity, this webinar is for you.

REGISTER AT THIS LINK:

https://endeavor.omeclk.com/portal/wts/ug%5Ec%7C9e%7Cv8vqejyywqjDkAgh%5Ej%5E8qV7fbT82TtoCzYgHDh8jO7mV3CP0N64%7CCoeOER5rGka

NYSAFC is Bringing Hands-On Training to Your Area!

FIRE BEHAVIOR ON THE INSIDE

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

FLASHOVER

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

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

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

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

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

2026 Dates and Locations are available at the website for this series.

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

From Albany

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**	**PENDING SIGNATURE**

			COMPLIANCE ORDER, THE COMPLAINANT SHALL ALSO BE PROVIDED A COPY OF SUCH ORDER	
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

WASHINGTON WATCH

No new news this week.

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

No new audits released this week.

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

If You Want to Set the Standard, Be the Standard

David Hupp

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Standards in the fire service are crucial for maintaining proficiency and service delivery to communities.

- Model leadership involves demonstrating the behaviors and attitudes expected from team members to foster a positive organizational culture.
- Commitment to standards in the fire service requires physical, mental, and emotional dedication from its members.
- Leaders should embody the standards they set, promoting a culture of excellence and inspiring accountability within their teams.

When discussing the desire for excellence in the fire service, we inevitably bring up standards. The discussion usually centers around how lowering standards to accommodate subpar performance is detrimental to our proficiency, execution, and service delivery to our communities—a fair assessment. If we lower our standards just to meet them, we aren't only shortchanging ourselves, we are shortchanging the community we serve. But "standard" can be a nebulous term. Without a full understanding of what a standard is, how can we effectively elevate it? Additionally, how can we hold others accountable to it?

THE CONTEXT

The word standard is defined by Merriam-Webster as "a level of quality, achievement, performance, etc., that is considered acceptable or desirable." . If we feel members are not meeting the standards we set, and then choose to lower the standard, we are essentially allowing unacceptable behavior and performance. Prior to the standard being lowered, such performance would not have been allowed. Fire service leaders are left with a no-win situation: allow the unacceptable performance (fail), or lower the standard so the unacceptable now becomes acceptable (degradation). Between a rock and a hard place, leaders often choose the lesser of two evils of not failing, thus lowering and degrading the overall performance.

There is, however, a third, more obvious option that requires both effort and tact: elevate fire service performance to meet the original standard. Its simplicity belies the transformative effort, sustainability, and accountability needed to achieve this endeavor. How can this be accomplished? If you want to set the standard, you have to be the standard.

MODEL LEADERSHIP

Being the standard is grounded in solid organizational leadership theory. The idea of modeling the behavior that you want replicated is known as model leadership. Model leadership can lead to transformational change in an organization's culture by demonstrating the behaviors, attitudes, and ethics that leaders expect from others. Kennedy and Figueiro of NeuroLaunch discuss the impact: "The impact of such leadership on team performance and organizational culture is profound. *When leaders model the right behaviors, it's like dropping a pebble in a pond—the ripples spread far and wide, influencing every aspect of the organization*. Teams become more engaged, productivity soars, and a positive culture takes root, fostering innovation and resilience."

Model leadership involves several practices, including being an early adopter and proponent of change, being prepared and present, delivering sincere recognition as motivation, using effective conflict resolution tactics, and embodying the mission. Modeling leadership requires circumventing several pitfalls. It requires a balanced outlook using critical thinking, i.e., keeping your biases in check. Promoting psychological safety is also crucial, as it fosters an environment that encourages honest feedback. And lastly, one must be consistent, even when one is experiencing adversity (especially then).

Model the behavior that you want to see in others. If you want others to listen to you, then you had better learn how to listen to others yourself to make informed decisions. If you want others to be technically proficient, then you had better set aside time to drill alongside them. If you want others to dedicate time away from their families to volunteer, then you had better enable the organizational culture to become positive and not toxic.

Using a model leadership approach in the fire service, being the standard requires two things: commitment and accountability.

COMMITMENT

When a commitment is made with our mind, body, and soul, we can set the standard for others to follow, thus literally leading. Being the standard requires an all-in mentality—thus the mind, body, and soul expression.

But instead of being just an expression, it can be a mantra, or even a framework to ensure we embody the standard for others to follow.

How many people in your department could do 10 pull-ups if their life depended on it? (Body, or physical fitness). How many of us could create a strategic plan? (Mind, or critical thinking). How many of us can speak up and stand our ground, even when we know we will lose friends doing what's right? (Soul, or dedication). It's clear that, as an industry, we all have an opportunity to improve in our level of commitment.

Disclaimer. Do you have to be perfect? No. Do you have to be in peak physical shape? Not necessarily. But you do have to make that commitment in some fashion that shows you see it as worthwhile to perform the job effectively in keeping your community safe. This is a physical job that requires physicality. This is a mental job that requires intellect and reasoning. This is a dedicated job that needs your soul to be in it. These requirements constitute the "standard."

BODY

Commitment to a standard in the fire service requires a level of physical fitness. If we want to be a trailblazer, we have to be fit enough to do it. However, a practical mindset is required. The volunteer service is a melting pot of different backgrounds, body types, ages, and medical conditions. It's unreasonable to expect that everyone at any age should be able to demolish a CrossFit or HYROX workout. What is reasonable is for our fire service members to do something. If you can manage weightlifting or situational exercise, that's great. If cardio or HIIT fits your lifestyle better, excellent. If age or condition means evolving into low-impact exercise like an elliptical, exercise bike, or swimming, that's okay, too. To be the standard, a commitment to being consistent in physical fitness is what matters.

MIND

Commitment to a standard in the fire service also requires a level of mental fitness. A sharp mind can grow dull if neglected, so we must use critical thinking consistently. In addition to identifying and overcoming any biases one holds, it's also important to have a growth mentality and to seek out novel ways of leading and problem-solving. As pertinent examples, see my other Firefighter Nation articles below or my book, V.I.P.E.R. Improvement: Fire/EMS Department Leadership and Management. In these pieces, you will find tools such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), SBAR communication, BURN change management, and flowcharting, among many other approaches to professional growth. Without a strong mind and the ability to solve problems and make decisions, being a standard is all but impossible.

SOUL

Commitment to a standard lastly requires a committed soul. If your soul isn't in it, people can tell, leading to a disingenuous vibe that in turn leads to disengagement. If you want to embody model leadership and be the standard, dedication is needed. In practice, this means showing up prepared and ready to go for drills. It means volunteering for tough assignments like overnight shifts, running the ambulance, or cleaning duties. It means being steady, solid, and reliable in crisis with emotional regulation, bringing calm to intense situations. It means being meticulous with safety, reinforcing it as a priority and not something optional. This is what it means practically to be dedicated as a leader—to have your soul in it.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is holding others to a standard through empowerment of ownership and trust to deliver results while being held responsible to clear expectations. Inc.com's Gordon Tredgold defines accountability using a direct link to both model leadership and commitment: "Leadership defines culture, and if you want to create a culture of accountability, then it starts with you. You need to model the behaviors that you want to see in your organization. If you want people to take ownership, then you have to be seen to take ownership, when you make commitments you have to be seen to meet those commitments."

When we hear the old adage of earning respect, it doesn't mean being the loudest in the room shouting orders; it means demonstrating a commitment to excellence, which is the foundation to then build accountability. If accountability is built on shaky ground, your department will crumble.

Once the standard is set with a commitment to mind, body, and soul, hold others accountable to the standard with clear communication, fairness, and motivation.

COMMUNICATION

Clear communication sounds basic, but it requires diligence. To drive accountability with clear communication, it needs to be S.M.A.R.T., closed-looped, and reciprocated with active listening. As indicated above, one element of accountability is setting clear expectations. This can be delivered using the S.M.A.R.T. format. Goals should be specific and not overly general, measurable and tied to a number, attainable and not impossible to meet, reasonable and within the scope of work that makes sense, and time-based with a deadline.

Closed-loop communication ensures there is a shared understanding of the expectations being communicated. The leader (sender) communicates the expectation or standard, the receiver paraphrases that expectation back to the sender, and the sender either confirms or amends any details based on the receiver's response if there are any gaps. This ensures the communication is clear and accurate, which means that accountability is also clear and accurate.

Finally, clear communication for accountability doesn't merely entail dictation from an officer. It is a two-way street and requires leadership to listen, as well. Active listening is being fully focused on the speaker, not just hearing them or being distracted. It involves understanding what the speaker is saying, making them feel heard and valued. This means having proper nonverbal communication as well, with good eye contact, not playing on your phone, and nodding for encouragement. Active listening also involves absorbing the speaker's information and then responding with meaningful questions, clarifications, and feedback. This contributes to clear communication by reducing misunderstandings, promoting openness and psychological safety, and building trust. By having clear communication, expectations and standards can be effectively related, promoting accountability.

FAIRNESS

Fairness and accountability have a cyclical relationship. Fairness ensures that accountability is applied justly, while accountability applies fairness by making ethical behavior visible. If accountability doesn't include fairness, then it can become biased, punitive, or political, which will erode both trust and morale.

Transparency and organization can help make accountability fair. A business improvement tool that can assist in this endeavor is the RACI tool. RACI is a table that organizes a task by responsible party (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed). For a task, the person identified in the Responsible section is the person assigned to do the actual work. The Accountable section is the person who is ultimately answerable or liable for the task being completed. The Consulted section is populated with anyone who adds feedback or input before the task is completed. The Informed section is populated with anyone who needs to be kept up to date on the status of the task. As an example, consider a chief tasking their operational officers to develop a drill schedule. The responsible section might be populated with company officers who are expected to actually run the drills. The Accountable section would include the training officer, whose ultimate responsibility is to curate the training program. The Consulted section might include the safety officer to give feedback on safety concerns, and the deputy chief to give input on the content of the drills. Lastly, the Informed section would include the chief and assistant Chief, so they can be kept updated on the status and progress.

By using RACI, accountability and roles are clearly defined and evenly distributed, promoting an atmosphere of fairness.

MOTIVATION

There is a misconception that accountability is inherently punitive. In reality, accountability is neutral, but when paired with motivation, it becomes a developmental tool rather than just a disciplinary one. When people know what they're responsible for and why it matters, they feel more grounded, secure, and purposeful. This clarity of accountability reduces ambiguity, which is a major drain on motivation. For a culture of accountability to become ingrained via motivation, positive reinforcement is a potent tool. By adding recognition and energy to the accomplishments of our fire service members, we seek to perpetuate that success both across the department and into the future. Just as in model leadership, where we as leaders are modeling the behaviors and skills that we are setting as a standard, positive reinforcement is the natural complement to this leadership style, acknowledging instances when our team members meet and exceed that standard themselves.

BE THE STANDARD

If we as an industry are concerned about the lowering of standards to accommodate subpar performance, then the reasonable, yet difficult, task is to elevate performance. An effective approach to this challenge as a leader is for you to become the embodiment of that standard via a model leadership approach. This requires both a commitment of mind, body, and soul, and accountability driven by communication, fairness, and motivation. This approach creates an authentic and transformational leader. By embodying the values they expect, leaders don't just enforce accountability; they inspire it, forging a department where excellence becomes contagious. Authenticity in action transforms leadership from a position into a presence, one that permeates every shift, every scene, and every standard.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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

Ex-Deltana, AK, Fire Chief Sentenced for $441K Theft that Closed Department

A former fire chief, whose theft of funds resulted in the closure of his rural department, was sent to prison last week. Ex-Rural Deltana Volunteer Fire Chief Michael Paschall admitted to stealing over $400,000 from the department's accounts.

He was sentenced to three years in prison, with one year suspended, 10 years of probation, and was ordered to pay approximately $441,000 in restitution. The day after Alaska state troopers were notified of the suspected theft, Paschall left to take a job in North Carolina.

Four days later, the department had to shut down after officers learned the insurance policies for vehicles and workers' comp had been canceled without their knowledge. It was the chief's job to maintain the documents.

In January 2025, DVFD Fire Chief, Josh Olson told Delta Wind News: said: "I am incredibly proud to lead a team of 15 dedicated responders who have remained steadfast in their commitment to serving the Deltana community. Throughout all the challenges, our volunteers have never wavered — they continue to train hard and respond whenever our community needs them most." He also praised the Delta Junction Fire Department for its support during the trying time.

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

PREVAILING WAGE RATE NOTES OPEN THIS LINK:
https://cafda.net/information-on-the-nys-dol-prevailing-wage-rates-for-fire-districts/

POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Still looking for some.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

- Volunteer EMTs with Pleasant Mount Emergency Services on Route 371 near Union Dale, Pennsylvania are ready to answer the call whenever emergencies happen. Unfortunately, the service in Wayne County is now in its final months and is scheduled to close at the end of September.
  "One of the challenges rural companies face is can they fund themselves absent of reimbursement and can they find the volunteers, younger ones to staff," said Lt. Joe Bachtel of PMES.
  "We are in the zone where we do not have a call volume to support a paid group and too much of a volume for two people to handle," PMES Capt. Dave Magliacane said.
  Bachtel and Magliacane, both in their 70s, said they respond to 90% of the calls because of the lack of younger volunteers. Last year, the service responded to 332 calls across its 92-square-mile coverage area and beyond.

"We are responding to other communities," Bachtel said. "Happy to do it, but it drives our call volume through the roof." Officials said that ambulance coverage for the area's 2,500 residents will be provided in the short-term by nearby ambulance services.

- Norwich — The Yantic Volunteer Fire Co. released a statement Friday expressing disappointment with the city's release of details of an interim offer to reopen the department. "The city has once again chosen to conduct negotiations through the media, rather than complete the private discussions already underway," the release stated. The city news release on Thursday detailed a verbal offer made to Chief Bobby Allen and Deputy Chief Frank Blanchard during a breakfast meeting last week that would allow the Yantic department to reopen temporarily, after the city shut it down in February for failing to agree to the August 2025 unified command policy. The offer would allow the department to reopen until its lawsuit against the city is settled. That lawsuit, filed in February by the Yantic, Taftville, Occum and Laurel Hill volunteer departments, charges that City Manager John Salomone and the city's fire chief, Sam Wilson, did not have the power under the city charter to establish the controversial unified command policy. That policy established a new command structure with Wilson at the top and standardized training, communications and emergency response protocols for paid and volunteer fire services in the city.

- Two firefighters with South Pend Oreille Fire and Rescue (SPOFR) were injured after a wildfire overran multiple strike teams on the Chelan Hills Fire in eastern Washington on July 4. According to the department fast-moving fire engulfed the firefighters, destroying four fire vehicles, including a SPOFR brush engine, a Stevens County Fire District 11 engine and two state apparatus. Two firefighter/EMTs from SPOFR and one firefighter from Stevens County Fire District 11 were treated for injuries and later released from the hospital.

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

44

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:

- Two firefighters are recovering from their injuries after a fire truck hit a semi-truck in LaGrange County, Indiana. Shipshewana fire department tanker was heading south on State Road 5 with its emergency lights and siren on when it *went through a red light and collided with an eastbound semi.*
- A Stamford, Connecticut firefighter and the driver of another vehicle were treated for injuries when the vehicle crashed into a Stamford fire truck on the Merritt Parkway. The injuries were reportedly not considered serious, but the vehicle that collided with the fire truck rolled over during the crash.

Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, Accidents in the News

- A young firefighter died two weeks after being badly hurt in a crash while responding to a fire call, according to the Malaga, New Jersey Fire Company. Robert (Bobby) Reider, 23, was trying to get to the scene of a fire on Saturday, June 27 when his car went off the road, officials said. Reider was flown to a nearby hospital were he died on July 10 from his injuries.

- An aircraft involved in fighting the Gold Mountain fire near Ouray, Colorado crashed into Silver Jack Reservoir in southwestern Gunnison County on Sunday evening, officials said. The body of the pilot, believed to have been the only person on board, was recovered from the reservoir later Sunday night by the Montrose County Sheriff's Office dive team.
- Slocum, Texas Fire Safety Chief Dan Hernandez, 71, collapsed on Tuesday and later died in a Tyler hospital. Hernandez was stricken on the way to an emergency call.

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	47
7/12/26 Rochester, Monroe Co. Female 74	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	96
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	660
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA 58
	#2 NY 47
	#3 OH 39
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1055 = 36.3 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?	

***Some states are changing fire codes to make housing cheaper.**

Robbie Sequeira

States and cities are loosening building code requirements in an effort to lower construction costs and boost affordable housing.

States and cities are loosening building code requirements in an effort to lower construction costs and boost affordable housing. Some of these changes include allowing low-rise apartment buildings to have just one stairway, reducing how often building codes are updated and rolling back specific electrical or fire safety standards.

But critics have raised safety concerns, noting that existing rules were shaped by past tragedies and aim to prevent future harm. For example, having only one staircase could allow a developer to add another unit or expand the size of units, said Nicolle Aube, principal and founder of Civex, a planning and civil engineering consulting firm, and an American Planning Association board member.

"But then there's this flip side, that by removing these codes and protections, it carries this additional risk for the developer and the occupants of the building if the worst-case scenario happens," she said. Many states are considering single-stairway apartment laws. They generally take one of four approaches, said Alex Horowitz, housing policy director at The Pew Charitable Trusts: begin with a study, allow single-stairway buildings statewide, update the state building code while letting local governments opt out, or give localities authority to allow them. Pew has lobbied for and testified in favor of the changes.

Two national developments could make it easier for more states and cities to allow single-stairway buildings, Horowitz said. The first are proposed updates by the International Code Council, the organization that develops the model codes many states use as the basis for their building rules. An update to its multifamily code, for example, would allow single-stairway buildings to add a fourth story. Second, the bipartisan 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act moving through Congress would direct the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to develop model guidelines for residential buildings with a single stairway not exceeding six stories.

According to Pew, 19 states and Washington, D.C., introduced bills between 2022 and 2025 to study or allow single-stairway apartment buildings, and seven states passed them in 2025 alone. This year, Idaho enacted a new law that allows local governments to permit certain apartment buildings to use one stairway —

generally up to six stories without an occupiable roof, or five stories with one, along with limits on units per floor, sprinklers, stair width, and smoke and fire detection.

Colorado's law enacted last year requires certain municipalities to modify their building codes by Dec. 1, 2027, to allow five-story multifamily residential buildings to be served by a single exit. Texas' 2025 law lets municipalities authorize single-stairway apartment buildings up to six stories. Colorado state Rep. Andrew Boesenecker, a Democrat who sponsored the new law, came to this issue because the state needed to find a way to make smaller multifamily projects more feasible. He said the policy can help on infill lots where a traditional two-stairway apartment building may not fit. "Single stairway or smart stairway buildings are not only a very safe **[HOW DOES A POLITICIAN KNOW THIS?]** way to build multi-family housing, they also bring a product to market that's just not being offered," Boesenecker said. Colorado is one 16 states without a statewide building code, making local implementation a major focus. Boesenecker said lawmakers had to look at "ways that you can make it feasible through local governments to adopt this standard into their building code." He said the work to get the support of those skeptical of single-staircase legislation happened a year prior to the bill's passage, when lawmakers worked with fire chiefs, fire marshals and firefighters' unions for about a year to get them to a "neutral position" on the bill.

In Texas, Democratic state Sen. Nate Johnson said the law he sponsored will allow for architectural innovation as well as maximizing multi-family housing on odd-shaped and smaller lots. Johnson said modernizing building codes does not come at the risk of safety. "Who knows what policies once served well and now, after decades of technological advances and changes in land use, impede good design?" Johnson said. "We have regulations for a reason, and I'm not for throwing out what protects the public. Markets tend to easily meet the challenges of sound regulatory protections."

Lawmakers in Illinois, New York and Rhode Island considered single-stairway bills this year, but none passed before the legislatures adjourned for the year.

But moving in the opposite direction, Connecticut lawmakers this year repealed the single-stairway law they had passed in 2024, after objections from fire safety officials. Beyond staircases, Horowitz, of Pew, said this year saw the first legislative sessions in which states have taken a look at elevators to reduce building costs. Washington state enacted a new elevator law this year that directs the state's Building Code Council to allow smaller apartment buildings, with at most six stories and 24 units, to use smaller and less expensive passenger elevators. **[WILL EMS STRETCHERS FIT IN THE ELEVATORS IF NECESSARY? HARD TO DO CPR STANDING UP]**

Maine removed some elevator-related requirements, including for certain smoke and draft equipment and for two-way emergency video communication systems inside elevators.

Research by the Center for Building in North America, **[WHO GETS 10% OF THEIR FUNDING FROM THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND REAL ESTATE OPERATIVES]** a nonprofit research group that co-authored Pew's single-stairway report, found that installing elevators in the United States and Canada is at least three times as expensive as in Western Europe or East Asia. U.S. and Canadian installations start around $150,000, compared with roughly $50,000 in several high-income countries, the group found.

Is it safe? **[CAN ANY OF THAT BE ATTRIBUTED TO UNION WAGES?]**

Pew researchers found that modern four- to six-story single-stairway apartment buildings can be as safe as other residential buildings when they include fire-safety features such as sprinklers, smoke detectors, code-compliant drywall, self-closing doors and protected stairways. **[ALL OF WHICH HAS TO BE MAINTAINED!]**

Horowitz said Pew researchers counted every fire death in New York City and Seattle — two cities that have long allowed single-stairway apartment buildings — over 12 years. In New York City, Pew identified 4,440 modern single-stairway buildings and found their fire-death rate was the same as other residential buildings — about five deaths per million occupant-years. Pew also found that the deaths it identified in modern single-stair buildings appeared to occur in the unit where the fire started, not because smoke or fire penetrated the single stairway.

"Modern apartment buildings are much, much, much safer than other housing. It is not even close," Horowitz said. "The data is clear and policymakers are following the data in this instance."

But Sean DeCrane, the director of fire fighter health and safety operational services for the International Association of Fire Fighters, said single-stairway proposals often fail to account for residents' potential slowness to evacuate during a fire, and how firefighters use the same stairwell to reach trapped occupants.

The IAFF cites as one example a Manhattan apartment fire on May 4 that killed three people and injured 14. The fire that trapped residents in a smoke-filled stairwell serving as the building's only means of escape. IAFF says the fire appeared to start on the first floor and spread upward through the stairwell. "When we take over the stairwell, occupant egress effectively stops," DeCrane told Stateline. "So now you're requiring firefighters to physically remove occupants out of a burning building." Dur ing a fire, residents may not leave when an alarm first sounds, he said, especially in apartment buildings where false alarms or smoke alarms from a kitchen mishap are common. Some residents do not try to evacuate until they smell smoke or believe they are in danger. ***"Just because they hear an alarm doesn't necessarily signify risk to them."***

Aube, of the American Planning Association, said state lawmakers should learn from California's approach — which in 2023 directed the state fire marshal to study single-stair buildings — before lawmakers make building codes changes.

"There is a lot of technical information that lawmakers and the public need to learn before considering removing a code," she said. ***The California Office of the State Fire Marshal released that report early this year. It said safeguards such as sprinkler and smoke detectors "do not fully substitute" for having two stairwells and notes that fire departments in the state nearly unanimously oppose single stairways***. But it suggested a variety of measures that should be implemented if single-stairway buildings are allowed.

ELECTRICAL CODES

In recent years, some states have changed parts of their fire and electrical codes, seeking to make a dent in the total cost of a project. Arizona last year barred counties from requiring fire sprinklers in accessory dwelling units.

Indiana this year barred state and local governments from requiring arc fault circuit interrupters, or AFCIs, in certain residential buildings and emergency responder communication systems in some larger structures. AFCIs prevent electrical fires by detecting arcing in damaged or loose wiring before it builds heat inside a wall. The Indiana bill's lead sponsor, Republican state Rep. Doug Miller, said the state needed to "put a stake in the ground" to meet its need of roughly 50,000 homes, according to the Indiana Capital Chronicle. The Indiana Builders Association said local rules accounted for 24% of the cost for a new home.

This year, Iowa changed parts of the state electrical code, including AFCI and GFCI requirements. Ground fault circuit interrupters, or GFCIs, are designed to protect people from electric shock by shutting off power when they detect a fault in the current. Supporters said these changes can help keep electrical costs low for builders and consumers. Iowa Democratic state Rep. Jeff Cooling, who is also an electrician, said the late-session legislation takes away some kitchen GFCI requirements, removes AFCI requirements and allows cheaper ceiling boxes in places where future homeowners may install heavy fixtures or ceiling fans. He opposed the bill. Cooling said lawmakers often talk about code changes as a way to shave costs from new housing. But as an electrician, he said ***many of those requirements were adopted for a reason and usually after high-profile injuries, fires or deaths prompted necessary review and updates***.

"None of these codes change just to change them," Cooling said. "They've changed because people have been seriously injured or killed." Cooling said fellow electricians he spoke with estimated the Iowa changes would save about $850 on an average new house. "That's a rounding error," he said. And for Cooling, that amount of savings is too small to justify removing protections at the sake of human lives. "It's not the world that we want to live in where we try to balance safety and what turns out to be low-cost savings," he said.

WAITING ON NEW BUILDING CODES

Building codes are usually updated every three years through a public process, while states and local governments retain authority to amend and enforce them.

A new law passed in Connecticut will stretch what is normally a three-year state building code update schedule into a six-year gap, pausing updates between 2024 and 2030 cycles. The state is expected to produce a report due by Jan. 1, 2029, that will evaluate the effects of a six-year cycle for building code revisions.

Housing industry groups say Connecticut is not alone in extending or pausing the time between adopting building code changes. Last year, California froze most residential code changes through June 2031. North Carolina moved its residential code to a six-year review cycle in 2023. The Connecticut proposal drew opposition from code officials and the International Code Council. Building officials and code organizations

have warned that slowing adoption of new codes can also delay updates meant to respond to new risks. Aube, the urban planner, said that code changes are not a silver bullet in the affordability puzzle. "There's not one answer," she said. "It's like making a cake, right? There's a whole bunch of different ingredients that go in."

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Off the Cuff: The Fire Service Is Fighting the Wrong Battles

Stephanie White

Spend five minutes looking at social media and you'll find no shortage of opinions. It seems we've found a version of the kitchen table that allows us to make our point with the help of ChatGPT—complete with graphics and words we've never used in real life. On one hand, those who have great information to share have found a way to spread it to the masses. On the other hand…well.

We're arguing…about everything. Shift schedules, "soft" new generation, how to handle conflict—you name it, we can fight about it. Every week brings a new controversy, a new comment section, and a new opportunity to prove someone else wrong.

Some of those conversations have value, but do all of them matter as much as we think they do in that moment?

Meanwhile, the problems that will actually define the future of the fire service continue to grow quietly in the background.

Departments across the country are struggling to recruit and retain experienced firefighters. Cancer continues to claim the lives of firefighters long after the last alarm they've answered. Sleep deprivation is still viewed as "part of the job" instead of the occupational hazard that it is. Behavioral health challenges remain common, even though the information and resources now exist. In too many departments, trust between firefighters and leadership has slowly eroded until people no longer believe they're working toward the same mission.

Those aren't just distractors: they're the issues that will determine what this profession looks like 10 years from now. ***So why are we so devoted to winning arguments instead of solving some heavy problems?***

Social media has amplified that tendency. The platforms reward certainty, conflict, and quick reactions. They don't reward nuance, patience, or long-term thinking. It's much easier to post a hot take than it is to gather the research to convince your department to change its shift schedule. It's easier to criticize a department from afar than to improve the culture inside your own station. *It's easier to point out what's broken than to spend years helping fix it. Besides, who even notices the people that fix things?*

None of us are immune to that pull. I've caught myself reading debates that seem urgent in the moment, only to realize a day later that nothing meaningful changed because of them. The profession moved forward (or didn't) regardless of who won the argument.

That's because better firehouses have never been built in comment sections or anywhere else online.

They're built in union halls when the members show up to steer their officers' voices. They're built when an experienced firefighter stays after the drill to help someone master a skill. They're built when an officer takes the time to explain the "why" instead of simply slapping paperwork and demanding compliance. They're built when departments invest in the health of their members BEFORE injuries, burnout, or cancer force them to.

Those efforts rarely go viral, and they don't get named after you. They're also the ones that matter most.

This isn't an argument against healthy debate. Our profession needs disagreement. Good ideas are tested through conversation, and traditions should never be protected simply because they've always existed. ***Debate, however, should be a tool for improvement and not the next piece of content or kitchen table gossip.***

Somewhere along the way, it has become easier to identify problems than to own solutions. It's easy to criticize leadership. It's harder to become the kind of leader people trust. You can yap about crappy officers all you want until you're the new lieutenant being pressured to write someone up for something stupid. Will you still stick up for what's right like you claimed you would?

It's also easy to blame the next generation for lacking commitment. It's harder to ask whether we've given them something worth committing to. *When the new kid sits down at the table with that first cup of coffee, are they hearing excitement for the shift? Or complaints about how everything sucks?*

Real progress has always required the harder path. Sometimes it's an incredibly unpopular path. Are you ready to not be liked in a society that is now always checking how many "likes" they've gotten?

The fire service doesn't need more people who can win online arguments. It needs more people who can build cultures that others want to be part of. It needs officers who see leadership as stewardship rather than authority. It needs firefighters willing to invest in the person riding backward with them, even when no one is watching. *It needs organizations that recognize their greatest asset isn't a new rating, a fire chief with a new outside side gig, or a new puff piece in the paper. It's people who climb onto those apparatus every shift. They are where every ounce of effort should be going.*

Every generation inherits a project that will never be finished. Our responsibility isn't simply to protect what we've been given or criticize what isn't changing. It's to leave the job stronger than we found it. That won't happen because we won this week's debate.

It will happen because enough firefighters chose to focus on the battles that actually matter. When history looks back on this generation of firefighters, it won't remember who had the sharpest opinions or the loudest voice online. It will remember whether we strengthened the profession, took care of one another, and prepared the next generation to do this job better than we did.

Think the next generation is "soft"? Posting on the Internet instead of getting your hands dirty in real time is soft.

The fire service will always need champions who are willing to risk a lot to save a lot in their own departments. You might not get likes or even followers, but when you walk out the door for the last time—you won't feel like you stood in the front yard and watched it all burn down while posting about it.

FIRE APPARATUS

Evaluating Plastic Fire Apparatus

Jeffery Gaskin

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Durability and customization are among the benefits of fire apparatus that forgo conventional metal construction for polypropylene bodies.
- At least four fire apparatus manufacturers produce aerials, mini-pumpers, pumpers, rescue-pumpers and/or tankers that have polypropylene bodies.
- A polypropylene fire apparatus body will expand and contract more during temperature changes than a metal body does. Because of this, one manufacturer typically uses roll-up doors rather than hinged doors.

The Rye Brook, NY, Fire Department (RBFD) recently took delivery of a rescue-pumper that has a polypropylene body. If you asked the fire department two years ago whether it ever would want a plastic fire vehicle, members probably would have said no. However, if you do some research on poly-body apparatus instead of dismissing the option, you might be surprised at what you learn. I certainly was.

LEAD-UP TO PURCHASE

The purchase of the rig, which was built by Spencer Manufacturing of South Haven, MI, was the result of a goal to replace a 22-year-old Saulsbury Apparatus triple-combination pumper that was built on a Spartan cab and chassis. Given the overall quality of Saulsbury's materials and fabrication, RBFD's apparatus committee initially planned to refurbish the existing vehicle.

The rig was purchased as a demo unit and was underpowered. The compartment body also presented fixture and layout challenges. The department considered remounting the pump enclosure and compartment body on a new cab and chassis assembly. With the uncertainty about the cost of pending emission changes for new engines, the body changes that were needed, and the long lead time to order a cab and chassis assembly, the cost to refurbish was close enough to that of a new pumper that the department decided to explore other options.

Research began with an investigation into what demos and/or stock units were available. The apparatus committee was proactive at contacting dealers and manufacturers to see what was available. Choices, cost, delivery time and customization varied between brands, and there were some good options to consider.

I recently finished a project with Spencer Manufacturing and suggested that the apparatus committee look at the demos on the company's website. (I had seen poly-body apparatus on display at a trade show and talked to manufacturers and did some research on them, but I didn't expect that the apparatus committee would choose one.) After discussing finances, build cycle, delivery information, compartment layout, water capacity and other aspects of the apparatus, the village of Rye Brook decided to purchase the Spencer Manufacturing solid-poly body rescue-pumper.

POLY-BODY VEHICLES EXPLAINED

Spencer Manufacturing has offered solid-poly body fire apparatus, including pumpers, rescue-pumpers, tankers, mini-pumpers and aerials, for more than 20 years. Historically, the company builds 15–20 solid-poly body apparatus per year, but interest keeps increasing, and the company currently has 28 vehicles on its build schedule.

Spencer Manufacturing's body supplier is APR Plastic Fabricating, which also serves as a supplier to numerous other fire apparatus manufacturers.

Midwest Fire offers poly bodies on its tankers and recently announced the addition of an all-poly custom pumper to its product line. Darley's mini-pumper offerings are built with poly bodies, and Osco Tank and Truck builds poly-body tankers for the fire service.

In other industries, poly bodies are embraced more widely and are used for many heavy wreckers, some propane trucks, and other vehicles for construction and farming.

What exactly is a poly-body apparatus? Instead of a pump enclosure and compartment body that's fabricated from aluminum, type 304-L or 3CR12 stainless steel or fiberglass, the vehicle is made from copolymer polypropylene sheet stock. The material is known for its strength and durability characteristics. Different additives are used in the chemical blending depending on the material's intended use and desired results. For example, UV-protection additives are blended into material that's used for unpainted vehicle exteriors.

The material that's used in the fabrication of the tank, body and compartments is 0.5–1.0 inches thick, depending on the strength that's needed. It's cut and welded together in the same way that its metal counterpart is. Interestingly, the tank, body and compartments are fabricated as a single unit, whereas a metal fire vehicle's body material are cut, fabricated and mounted on the truck chassis and then the booster tank is installed separately. The Spencer solid-poly body materials that are needed for fabrication of a complete body, tank and compartments are cut (the compartment doors aren't). The cut materials are assembled into a single unit that then is mounted onto the chassis.

According to Chad Falls of APR Plastic, any metal that's needed for the body superstructure is completely encased in plastic, so the metal isn't exposed to the elements or road deicing chemicals.

THE DETAILS

In addition to the obvious advantage that apparatus that are made this way won't rust, rot or corrode, Quintin Spencer of Spencer Manufacturing explains that the solid-poly body allows for more customization in design. This is possible because the one-piece fabrication has far less wasted space: The reduced number of physical barriers allows for more choices in layout than a metal body vehicle does.

Poly bodies also seem to hold up reasonably well in accidents, which also might be related to their one-piece fabrication. They are repairable, just as their metal counterparts are.

No material or process is perfect, though, and a polypropylene body will expand and contract more during temperature changes than a metal body does. Because of this, Spencer Manufacturing typically uses roll-up doors rather than hinged doors on its solid-poly body apparatus. These are ordered differently to compensate for the increased expansion and contraction, but an end user won't notice a difference.

The RBFD's rig shows no outward indication of being a poly-body vehicle and has several excellent features. The compartment interior walls are all white, which makes them easy to clean at night and helps the compartment lighting pop, to offer better visibility when looking for tools and equipment. The compartment floors are all black except for the Dri-Dek, which hides the dirt that always ends up there. The pump panel is well laid out and easy for the pump operator to read.

The third and fourth compartments that are on the left side of the vehicle showcase each compartment's poly-body version of metal framing systems, which is abundant both vertically and horizontally. As

equipment caches change and grow over the life of a rig, compartments easily can be rearranged. Adding or subtracting shelves and trays, a tool board or a pull-out dropdown no longer requires structural changes to the body, which represents a huge savings on time and labor.

LASTING EFFECT

I don't believe that poly-body fire apparatus will replace their metal counterparts, but I do believe that they will become more widely accepted and used in the fire service. Spencer says returning solid-poly body customers consistently buy solid-poly body rigs again, a good indication that poly bodies are here to stay.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

- The Manchester, Connecticut Fire Department said crews were sent to the Walmart at 420 Buckland Hills Drive at 10:29 a.m. for a report of fire on the roof. Arriving companies found several banks of solar panels on the roof actively on fire, the department said, noting a store employee already had expended several fire extinguishers before their arrival, knocking down much of the blaze.

- A year before a massive fire at a Boyle Heights cold storage building sent polluted smoke into surrounding communities, the operator of the facility came to Los Angeles City Hall with a request. Lineage asked about removing an emergency shutdown switch from the solar panels on the roof of the structure, according to the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety. A spokesperson for Lineage said that the company was inquiring about what it described as a safer alternative to rapid shutdown devices. Though intended to protect firefighters from shock, some shutdown devices have also been linked to increased fire risk. Ultimately, the company did not receive any variances or exemptions as a result of its efforts, the spokesperson said. Neither Lineage nor the city would provide any details about what kind of shutdown system was in place at the time of the fire. Altus Power, which owns the solar panels, declined to specify, citing the ongoing investigation into the fire. But the solar panels have become a focus of the fire. According to Lineage, company officials believe the fire began while third-party subcontractors were testing the rooftop solar array at the nearly 500,000-square-foot warehouse.

Solar Panels Catch Fire on Roof of CT Walmart

Dan Landrigan

Firefighters responded to the Walmart in town Sunday after solar panels caught fire on the roof, officials say. In a post on Facebook, the Manchester Fire Department said crews were sent to the Walmart at 420 Buckland Hills Drive at 10:29 a.m. for a report of fire on the roof. Arriving companies found several banks of solar panels on the roof actively on fire, the department said, noting a store employee already had expended several fire extinguishers before their arrival, knocking down much of the blaze.

Crews finished extinguishing the fire, secured the solar system, and checked the remainder of the roof and store for extension, officials said. Beyond the panels themselves, the roof sustained minor damage, according to the department. The store was closed for about an hour while fire crews operated and it has since reopened, the department said, noting no injuries were reported.

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

Gansevoort Fire Department Car Show

Saturday August 8th, 10am until 2pm, rain date August 9th
1870 Route 32 Gansevoort, NY
Chick BBQ, Raffles, T-Shirt sale, Trophies in several categories
Registration $15, Day of Show $20

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

See you in the fall, 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

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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

Gabriel House, One Year Later: What Has Happened Since the Historic Fire Killed 10

Hadley Barndollar, masslive.com

It has been one year since a five-alarm fire tore through the Gabriel House assisted living facility in Fall River on a muggy Sunday evening.

Once the flames were doused and the chaos subsided, 10 people were dead and more than 30 were injured, marking the deadliest fire in Massachusetts in more than four decades.

It was an unfathomable disaster that rocked the city of Fall River and the entire state. And it ultimately spread across the nation — the National Fire Sprinkler Association said it had never seen such a death toll in a building with working automatic sprinklers.

But revelations — some uncovered by a MassLive investigation — would soon show that the sprinkler in the resident room where the fire started never activated, and that the building was filled with sprinkler heads recalled more than two decades ago. The sprinkler system was also missing a mandated five-year internal inspection.

The July 13, 2025 tragedy triggered dozens of lawsuits, state-level reforms in the assisted living industry and a push to change national sprinkler inspection standards.

However, many key questions raised after the deadly fire — including culpability, compensation for victims and their families and whether major policy changes will follow from lawmakers — have yet to be resolved.

Here are some key developments in the Gabriel House fire that transpired over the last year:

THE INVESTIGATIONS CONTINUED

The criminal and civil investigations into the fire remained active throughout the year, led primarily by the Bristol County District Attorney's Office and the state Department of Fire Services.

The death investigation has since moved to the state Attorney General's Office, which continues to investigate whether any civil or criminal action is warranted.

No individual or entity has been charged or found liable for the failures that allowed the fire to spread across the three-story building that was formerly a motel.

SPRINKLER SYSTEM FAILURES BECAME THE FOCUS

One of the more significant developments after the fire centered on sprinklers manufactured by Central Sprinkler Company, which were recalled in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Fall River Fire Chief Jeff Bacon warned fire departments across the state that the recalled sprinkler heads linked to Gabriel House could also be present in buildings throughout Massachusetts, raising concerns that the problem extends far beyond a single facility.

Approximately 35 million sprinkler heads were subject to the recall, and the Fall River Fire Department discovered them in several other buildings shortly after the Gabriel House fire.

The fire department recently announced it is partnering with the National Fire Sprinkler Association to advocate for changes to national and local standards that would require sprinkler contractors to check for recalled sprinklers.

At present, the responsibility lies with the building owner to identify and replace recalled sprinklers. If the proposed changes are successful, checking for recalled sprinkler heads would become a requirement in the inspection process, and the presence of any recalled heads would mean the system is "impaired" under fire department standards.

After the Gabriel House fire, a MassLive investigation found loopholes in sprinkler inspection systems nationwide, with critics arguing that compliance often relies heavily on self-reporting and is inconsistently enforced.

In a statement issued Friday ahead of the anniversary, George K. Regan Jr., spokesperson for the Gabriel House and owner Dennis Etzkorn, reiterated that the sprinkler system had been inspected by contractor Fire Systems Inc. just five days before the fire. No concerns were raised about recalled heads or the system's operation, the spokesperson said.

Aside from one email about recalled heads to a Gabriel House administrative assistant in Sept. 2024 — which Etzkorn claims he never heard about — the spokesperson said "the sprinkler company raised no concerns with Gabriel House over the ten years they were contracted to conduct inspections" up until that point.

LAWSUITS MULTIPLIED

Civil litigation quickly became a dominant storyline in the aftermath of the fire, as dozens of survivors and families of the deceased filed suit against Etzkorn and other parties connected to the facility.

The numerous wrongful death and negligence lawsuits moving through Bristol County Superior Court claim widespread failures involving maintenance, fire protection systems, inspections and resident safety and well-being.

Plaintiffs quickly learned that Etzkorn did not carry liability insurance, which Massachusetts law does not require assisted living facilities to maintain.

The litigation grew increasingly contentious in December 2025, when Etzkorn and his fire inspection contractor, Fire Systems Inc., filed cross-claims against each other, with both parties seeking to shift responsibility for the recalled sprinklers and inspection failures.

Fire Systems Inc. said an inspector in September 2024 identified recalled sprinkler heads, and that many attempts were made to alert Etzkorn and his staff. Etzkorn, however, claimed that notifications never reached him or anyone involved in the building's care and maintenance.

Last week, the Fall River Herald News reported that a Superior Court judge is allowing a bank to claim over $971,000 of Gabriel House's insurance proceeds to pay off the property's mortgage. That leaves victims with nearly $1 million less in money to share if they prevail in their lawsuits.

Etzkorn has repeatedly declined direct interviews since the fire. He has communicated sparingly, speaking only through a spokesperson and written statements.

In the most recent statement ahead of the anniversary, Etzkorn's spokesperson said, "For a quarter of a century, Gabriel House worked hard to provide a home for many people who truly needed one. Our residents were more than tenants — they were our neighbors, our friends, and part of our unique Gabriel House family. We still mourn their loss deeply, and forever will."

FALL RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTED REVIEW

In October 2025, the Fall River Fire Department released a long-awaited internal review of its response to the five-alarm fire. The report — which documented a heroic response by fire, police and EMS personnel to save lives — examined operations, staffing, communications and the rescues of 53 people.

It detailed a slew of unique challenges firefighters faced as conditions rapidly deteriorated across the assisted living facility.

The review renewed discussion about firefighter staffing levels. The department was quick to raise the issue in the immediate aftermath of the fire.

According to the report, 33 firefighters were on scene in under 15 minutes. But according to the National Fire Protection Association standard for a fire like the one at Gabriel House, 42 firefighters should have been on scene within the first 10 minutes.

Last week, ahead of the anniversary, the Fall River firefighters union renewed its call for more staffing.

HEALEY ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHED STATEWIDE REFORMS

*In the immediate aftermath of the fire, Gov. Maura Healey ordered all 270-plus Massachusetts assisted living facilities to submit emergency preparedness plans to the state. [**LET'S ALL DO A LOAD OF PAPERWORK, THAT WILL FIX IT!!]***

Facilities were also required to complete a fire safety assessment survey and issue a letter to residents and families outlining emergency plans.
Healey's administration later launched a broader effort to strengthen coordination between assisted living operators and their local fire departments. Announced in October 2025, the initiative aimed to improve information sharing, emergency planning and inspection oversight.

ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCES COMMISSION
When the Gabriel House fire struck, the state already had an active Assisted Living Residences Commission tasked with improving industry regulations. It quickly pivoted with the deaths of 10 assisted living residents to focus on fire safety and disaster preparedness.
The commission spent the next several months finalizing recommendations for Healey and the Executive Office of Aging and Independence, which were delivered at the turn of the new year.
At the time, Healey said her administration was "taking immediate action to begin the implementation of a majority of the regulatory and administrative recommendations in this report."
Many wondered whether Gabriel House would spur major reforms, as past tragedies such as the Station nightclub and Cocoanut Grove fires did. *At present, **nothing has materialized in the Legislature** specific to Gabriel House.*

OSHA LEVIED PENALTIES
In February, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration fined Gabriel House's operator, Etzkorn, roughly $180,000 after identifying 13 workplace safety violations connected to emergency preparedness and employee safety.
The federal findings marked the first major penalties stemming directly from the fire.

ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUED NEW CONSUMER PROTECTIONS
In June 2026, Attorney General Andrea J. Campbell announced final consumer protection regulations for assisted living facilities statewide. The rules strengthened protections for disclosures, billing transparency, service agreements, evictions and operator accountability.
Although not exclusively a response to Gabriel House, the regulations were issued amid heightened scrutiny of assisted living oversight and operations following the fire.
Residents of Gabriel House were primarily low- and middle-income people who couldn't afford private-pay facilities — approximately 75% were on the state's Medicaid program, MassHealth.
The subsidized assisted living model drew criticism after the fire, with some arguing it could not sustain adequate facility upkeep and resident care.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

Getting older sucks, I used to wake up feeling like a million bucks…
Now I wake up feeling like a bounced check!!

CLASSIFIED

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

WHO ARE YOUR CAFDA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2026?

OFFICERS

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,
Skip Smith, Commissioner, West Crescent/Saratoga
Joyce Petkus Treasurer Greenfield/Saratoga,
Ed Woehrle Commissioner Niskayuna #1/Schenectady
Art Hunsinger, Ex-Officio Member Clifton Park Fire District.
We would consider expanding the number of Directors if individuals from other counties would volunteer to participate!!

APPOINTEES

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

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

Please advise your secretaries that all correspondence should be mailed to:
All correspondence & Capital Area Fire Districts Association Mailing Address should be directed to:
CAFDA PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063 or EMAIL: SECRETARY@CAFDA.NET
Financial issues should be addressed to: TREASURER@CAFDA.NET
518-407-5020

Wish to become a member of CAFDA, go to CAFDA.net/membership to apply.

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.CAFDA.NET

Stay tuned for some new Business Partners for 2026.

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

We want to thank all of our Business Partners for renewing their partnership for 2026. You are invited to our monthly membership meeting and to any of our social events..

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The D'Amato Law Group LLP
Gregory Serio, Partner
Alyssa B. Snyder, Partner
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518.426.3800
Email: gserio@dlgny.com or asnyder@dlgny.com
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Ducharme, Clark & Sovern, LLP
Jack Clark, Fire District Attorney
646 Plank Rd. Clifton Park, NY 12065
518-373-1482
Ducharmeclark.com

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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.


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