THE BULLETIN

JULY 4, 2026

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

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- **"In 2026, we celebrate America's 250 years of freedom, with liberty and justice, by honoring all those who have given their lives to serve their country and preserve its freedom." Have a happy and safe 4th of July! The United States continues to be the greatest nation in the world because of the exceptional ideals upon which it is built. The promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness remain just as powerful today as 250 years ago, when the Declaration of Independence was adopted in Philadelphia, and the course of history was forever changed. There is more that unites us, than divides us. Our founding fathers had a magnificent vision that endures today. Happy 4th.**
- A recording of the video Future of the Fire Service, panel discussion and open forum is available on the AFDNYS.org website.
- ***Quick Response special event for first responders, July 11th. Free for first responders and their families see the flyer on the last page of this Bulletin.***
- **June 30th was the deadline for your external auditor to submit the annual external audit for the 2025 *fiscal year and the LOSAP audit to the Office of the State Comptroller.***
- **The Delaware County Board of Supervisors approved funding for a complete countywide fire service assessment to identify strategies to preserve and strengthen volunteer fire protection services. Congratulation to the Board for taking some action.**
- ***BUDGET SCHEDULE PAGE 4 also on CAFDA.net***
- ***ELECTION SCHEDULE PAGE 9 also on CAFDA.net***

TRAINING OPPORTUNTIES:

From CAFDA

1. ***Join us at the NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING 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.

3. 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".

4 CAFDA Commissioner Training for 2027 will be held in Averill Park, Thomas Corners, Clifton Park, Schoharie and Warrensburg.

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

CAFDA TRAINING AND EVENT DATES				
Day/Date	**Time**	**Type**	**Location**	**Notes**
FY 2026				
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

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

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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

When you review the summary of the legislation that is related to the volunteer fire service in the state, it will become clear that the Majority Party legislators in the senate and the assembly do not genuinely care about you and I; they have a much different agenda which does not support the survival of the volunteer fire service. Out of all the substantial bills (approximately 60) related to the fire service introduced; only seven made it through both chambers and one of those bills requires something that has a negative impact on membership; additional training. The one thing we are unified in complaining about!
The legislators have demonstrated by their actions that they are more concerned with their pronouns and progressive agenda, than the health of the volunteer fire service in this state.
There were 25K bills introduced during the 25/26 session; how many can the legislators pay real attention to? Note that only bills introduced by the Majority Party have made it through the committee process to a floor vote and to the Governor's desk. We will wait to see what she signs into law.
Next time one of these politicians asks "what they can do for you" the answer is "genuinely support us" and pass the legislation that we endorse that will improve participation in the volunteer fire service!

PROGRESS REPORT:

- Bill signed, extends provisions of shared purchasing, or piggybacking.
- Bill signed, makes recycling of ebike and escooter batteries mandatory.

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
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	2/13/26 SIGNED CHAPTER 87

			PROGRAM AND TO PROMOTE CONSUMER SAFETY, CONVENIENCE, AND AWARENESS	
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

WASHINGTON WATCH

The Latest Issue of Firefighter Strong is Now Available!

The NVFC's annual publication, *Firefighter Strong*, is filled with information, resources, tips, and tools to engage volunteers, foster a healthy and safe environment, and build strong leaders. The 2026 edition has been mailed to all volunteer and combination fire departments in the U.S., so keep an eye out for it in your department mailbox and share it with your crew. Don't want to wait to read it? The digital version is now available on the NVFC website. **Access it here**.

From Federal DOL/OSHA

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

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCIAL NEWS

***FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET PROCESS SCHEDULE 2026*

On or before September 29th

- Adopt proposed budget for 2027, including fund balance estimate for end of 2026
- File proposed budget with District Sectary
- Post budget on fire district's website
- Provide copy of proposed budget for 2027, including fund balance estimate for end of 2026 to town clerk of towns in which district is located

September 30th to October 5th

- Post notice of **budget hearing** on fire district website and signboard (if district maintains a website/signboard)
- Provide copy of notice of budget hearing to town clerk of towns in which district is located. Town clerks must also post the notice on clerk's bulletin board and town signboard)

On or before October 15th

- Publish notice of budget hearing in official newspaper or, if not official newspaper, in newspaper having general circulation in district, and publicly post notice
- **Treasurer Performs Following Task on Comptroller's Website**: After adopting proposed budget complete tax cap levy form for New York Comptroller's Office and "save" but do not submit. Determine if proposed budget will exceed tax cap

Annual Budget Hearing Date Selected

- 2026 Date October 20th [**can be any day in the third week of October**]

October 20th to November 4th

- Subject to certain restrictions, make changes, alternations and revisions to proposed budget. After hearing, can lower budget but not raise.
- **Before adopting Fire District Annual Budget** determine if the tax levy will exceed tax levy cap and if so the Fire District must pass a resolution by a 60% vote of its board to override the tax cap

On or before November 4th

- Before passing any resolutions necessary to override the tax cap levy and adopting the Fire District Annual Budget "submit" the Fire District budget/ tax cap form to the New York State Comptroller's Office on the form prescribed by them
- Adopt fire district annual budget

On or before November 7th

- Fire district secretary delivers two (2) certified copies of fire district annual budget for 2026 to town clerk of towns in which district is situated, (TL§181[3][c]) **and obtains receipt.**
- Make certain the final budget submitted includes any changes made to proposed budget after Budget Hearing, there is no going back!!

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 this week.

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

'**It's time to declare a staffing mayday': 21 ways VFDs can break the mold

Chief John Buckman II

We have been saying for years that we have fewer volunteers today than in the past. That is a true statement. *But what have we done about the problem? We sure talk about it a lot. Some programs have been created at both the local and national levels. But what have we really done about it?*

I would suggest that we have done very little other than complain.

It is time to gear up. It is time to declare a staffing mayday. After all, we can't continue to operate our departments in the ways of the past – ways that have ultimately resulted in an inadequate number of volunteers for today.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

I know some fire chiefs have implemented automatic aid for emergency response, but that is not addressing the *real* problem, particularly as staffing through automatic aid often arrives 15-20 minutes into the event.

The real problem can be boiled down to a simple phrase: The world has changed. People no longer have the free time to devote to becoming a volunteer firefighter and/or EMT. Many would rather give money to the volunteer fire department than their time.

Is this the fire department's fault? I don't think so, but we must acknowledge reality: ***Expectations of members have changed but, in many cases, fire departments staffed with all volunteers are still trying to operate following the model of the past.***

A TYPICAL DAY

Let's take a realistic look at what it takes to be a volunteer firefighter – and how that fits into a common schedule.

For many, serving as a volunteer requires a minimum of 8 hours per week. Here's the breakdown of an average citizen's 24-hour day:

- 8 hours sleep
- 8 hours work
- 2 hours meals
- 2 hours commute
- 2 hours family time
- 2 hours discretionary time

If you consider how to prioritize your values – faith, family, friends and work – then add in some discretionary time, how much time do you have for additional responsibilities?

Many older members joined the volunteer fire department as our one discretionary activity. Many younger individuals now have multiple discretionary activities. That is not to say this approach is better or worse; it is just different – and it means we are competing for their time.

DARE TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Many organizations that are experiencing staffing problems are stuck in a rut, doing the same old thing over and over. Stop the old way of thinking and doing. Be bold. Look around and see what other volunteer organizations are doing that help make them successful.

There is no one simple solution, but there are multiple opportunities, and each department will have to try different approaches to find what fits best. Following are some ideas, in no particular order:

1. Change leadership: *Maybe, just maybe, the individuals in leadership roles are not the right people*. It may be just one or it could be multiple levels of leaders. Sometimes one leader over time can change the direction of the ship and take an organization off course. A toxic leader who has nothing good to say about the organization or the members will kill an organization faster than almost any other single aspect. A toxic leader can infect other leaders and the next thing the organization discovers is the leadership is sick figuratively.

2. Reduce the number of officers: *Too many cooks can spoil the soup – a phrase all too appropriate for many of our organizations that have fewer people*. Who is really qualified to fill the officer spot?

3. Reconsider your officer selection process: Are you still using the "good ol' boy" promotion system? If so, is the system giving you the quality of leaders you are seeking? If not, what are your options – appointment, elections, a promotional process that includes testing both written and performance*? Ensure that you are getting the qualified person to promote.*

4. Give application bonuses: Yes, money! Look around your community. There are businesses paying bonuses just to get someone to come to work. Could this work at the VFD? [*so far in NYS the laws prevent this*]

5. Reduce service: This is certainly not a popular option, but it *is* an option. *Perhaps we don't have to respond to every EMS call when an ambulance with paid staff will also be responding. When you reduce service, you also reduce training expectations.*

6. Use selective dispatching: Depending on the size of your department, when you get that call for "grandma fell and can't get up," do you need to activate 20 or more pagers? The reality is that you only need two people to respond.

7. Develop and implement an active recruiting program: The **IAFC** and **National Volunteer Fire Council** offer programs to help recruit new volunteers. Take advantage of these free resources in your community.

8. Market your VFD: Use flyers, brochures, yard signs, banners, social media, bulletin boards, website, anything, to tell the story of your VFD. Send articles, photos and videos to various media outlets. Look to the church for an opportunity to share your message.

9. Apply for a SAFER grant: The **Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant** can be used for a variety of recruitment and retention activities by career, combination and volunteer departments. *Some components of the SAFER application carry a higher funding priority. Departments that match these factors are funded more frequently:*

- *Physicals for new applicants*
- *Annual medical exams for all members*
- *Training of applicants to the NFPA FF II level and as EMTs*
- *Hiring a retaining and recruiting coordinator*

The hiring component of the grant supports applications to hire new firefighters. You might also consider changing the status of your compensation plan for existing volunteers.

10. Offer referral bonuses: Pay a bonus to current members who recruit a new member. The bonus would be paid when the new volunteer comes off probation. [*so far in NYS the laws prevent this*]

11. Increase benefits for existing volunteers: When was the last time you looked at your benefit program? The bigger concern is those of you thinking right now, "What benefit program?" Remember, however, that there are both tangible and intangible benefits. Have you defined these benefits? Are they posted in the fire station? Are the benefits explanation a part of the application process?

Here are some tangible benefits that may already exist in your department:

- Health insurance
- Workers' compensation
- Award programs
- Uniforms
- Protective clothing

Some of the intangible benefits may include:

- Camaraderie
- Friendship
- Reduced stress
- Increased self-confidence
- Sense of purpose
- Social activities
- Happiness
- Advancement of personal and professional career goals
- Improved leadership skills
- Improved problem-solving skills
- Improved ability to work with others who might be different than you
- Satisfies a need to contribute and/or make a difference

12. Develop a duty system: Get volunteers to commit to staying available and make responses for a specific day from a specific time to time.

13. Pay per response: Compensate for responding for calls. This has not been a strong motivating factor in my experience. The volunteer would still decide when to respond based upon their availability. It's somewhat like treating being a volunteer firefighter just like a part-time job, but in reality, it is often far more than a part-time job to be actively involved as a volunteer firefighter. *[so far in NYS the laws prevent this]*

14. Pay for training attendance: This can be a motivator, but only if the pay is adequate. *[NYS Stipend Program]*

15. Hire part-time members: Start by covering daytime shifts on weekdays. Two people on duty at the station could handle more than 85% of your emergency dispatches.

16. Pay for duty time: This would require the volunteer to be on station, immediately available for response. [*so far in NYS the laws prevent this*]

17. Retool your training: Ensure that training is relevant to the job you expect your member to perform, and that it is well planned and executed. *Don't waste the volunteers time with bad training*. Further, ensure you're able to answer the following questions related to training your volunteers:

- What will the volunteer gain from training?
- Is the training in alignment with the fire department goals?
- How will the training be conducted?
- Who will teach the training?
- What is the budget for training?
- What training materials are necessary?
- What are the logistics of conducting and completing the training?

18. Share your concerns to elicit help: Inform the elected officials and the public of the staffing problem and the consequences. *It is not the sole responsibility of the fire chief/fire department to provide fire protection services. Put the problem in the hands of the elected officials and the public. Engage the community in exploring possible solutions.*

19. Compensate the fire chief/assistant chief with a stipend: This funding would be for these positions to take care of the administrative functions and plan training, schedule vehicle maintenance, etc. [*so far in NYS the laws prevent this*]

20. Compensate someone to do general administrative functions: This involves the paperwork required to manage a professional organization – response reports, training reports, tax filing, funding, spending of budgeted funds, maintenance reports and meeting management. Make sure that every meeting has an agenda along with an expected outcome. Does the person leading the meeting have the right skill set to manage the meeting in an efficient manner? Running a meeting is not just about approving the minutes. Running a meeting requires someone who can guide the discussion so that everyone has a chance to share their viewpoint and make a decision. [Fire Company could legally do this]

21. Look for simple ways to motivate your members: Here's a list to get you started:

- Make it fun
- Be happy
- Show appreciation
- Be nice
- Listen
- Be social
- Accept life balance issues
- Don't waste the volunteers time
- Reduce firehouse drama
- Be realistic about your volunteer expectations
- Establish realistic and achievable goals for the organization
- Establish realistic and achievable goals for the membership
- Invest time in developing a validated training program
- Develop a personal relationship with your volunteers
- Respect your volunteers values
- Leaders should be accessible to the volunteers
- Expect success
- Eliminate unnecessary or dumb rules that don't have a positive outcome

TIME TO EMBRACE CHANGE

When Ben Franklin formed the Volunteer Fire Company in Philadelphia in 1736, they had two missions – provide fire suppression and fire prevention activities. The model we are using today for staffing a volunteer fire company feels pretty similar to the now-centuries-old model Franklin employed. Using the same staffing model is simply not appropriate for a modern-day delivery of fire protection services.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

*****Where you aware?***

The Law for NYS Fire Districts

Under New York State law (**Article 19-c of the General Municipal Law**), fire districts are legally classified as "municipal corporations". This law mandates strict reporting and training guidelines that directly shape a district's disaster recovery and incident response protocols:

- **Mandatory 72-Hour Incident Reporting:** Fire districts must report any cybersecurity incident or ransom demand to the *New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES)* within **72 hours** of discovery. [1]
- **Ransomware Deadlines:** If a district decides to make an extortion or ransom payment, they must notify DHSES within **24 hours**. A full written explanation detailing the amount, the reasoning, and compliance steps must follow within **30 days**. [1, 2]
- **Annual Cybersecurity Training:** All fire district employees and officials must complete annual cybersecurity awareness training. [1]

Building a Compliant Plan for a Fire District

While you do not need to follow the dense NY Department of Financial Services financial framework, your district's cyber disaster recovery plan should be built around the NYS DHSES Reporting Portal. A resilient local government plan should emphasize:

1. **Low Materiality Thresholds**: Because state law requires reporting any incident without a minimum size threshold, your internal plan must define "incident" broadly enough to catch minor compromises (like a single phished email or a lost device) before the 72-hour window closes.
2. **State Assistance Triggers**: The DHSES is required to provide advice and technical support following an incident. Your recovery plan should include clear steps on how and when to request this state-level emergency assistance.

Cybersecurity Training Requirement (State Technology Law § 103-f)

- Starting January 1, 2026, local government employees who use technology as part of their official job duties must take annual cybersecurity awareness training
- The state will make training available at no cost
- Equivalent cybersecurity awareness training may also be provided by other sources
- Training must take place during compensated regular work hours

Consult with your municipal/fire district insurance provider for the availability of training, AMSURE, ESIP and VFIS all offer cybersecurity on-line training for employees.

Fire District Election Schedule for 2026

October 8th, 2026

Last day to adopt resolution permitting absentee ballots at the Annual Election. Absentee ballots are optional for fire districts. If previously approved, does not have to be redone.

October 23rd, 2026

Request County Board of Elections to provide a list of registered voters as of November 16th and to provide the list to the district by November 17th and order voting machines or other equipment and telephone coverage for the night of the election, if desired and available.

October 29th 2026

Last day to adopt resolutions designating Fire District Board of Elections, including Chairman and Election Inspectors and/or Ballot Clerks, fixing compensation of the individual members of the District Board of Elections

November 4th - 11th, 2026

Publish Notice of Election (and publicly post) in district newspaper including the following information: the date, place and hours of election; listing offices and propositions, if any, on the ballot; whether candidate petitions are required; the last day for voter registration; the procedure for absentee ballots, if any, and optionally designating the date(s) on which the Inspectors of Election will meet to prepare the register, where the meeting will be held, and the hours of such meeting

November 16th, 2026

Last day for voters to register at County Board of Elections to be Eligible to vote on December 8th, 2026 in Annual District Election

November 17th, 2026

County Board of Elections to mail lists of registered voters to Fire District Secretary.

November 18th, 2026

Last day to file petitions for candidates for office, if required, or notify secretary in writing of intent to run for office if petition not required.

November 19th, 2026

If absentee voting is permitted, mail absentee ballots to any registered voter whose registration record is marked "permanently disabled" on receipt of list from County Board of Elections. Ballot must be finalized to complete this task.

November 18th - November 23rd , 2026

Post Notice of Election on district website and signboard, if any, ***at least 15, but not more than 20 days before date of election. Remains on website until December 8th, 2026.***

November 18th - November 23rd , 2026

Copy of Notice of Election to town clerk for posting on municipal website, if any, bulletin board and signboard, if any, at least 15, but not more than 20 days before date of election.

- These notices [for websites, signboards and bulletin boards] must include time and place of election, officers to be elected, term of office and any other details regarding matters to be voted on as well as hours of polls being open for balloting. Suggest using regular Notice of Election published in district newspaper.

November 23rd , 2026

Suggested meeting date for Fire District Board of Elections to prepare register. Can be any other date you choose after receiving registration books.

December 1st , 2026

If absentee voting is permitted, last day to receive application for absentee ballot if the ballot is to be mailed

December 7th, 2026

Last day to receive application for absentee ballots if it is delivered personally to the voter or his/her agent.

December 8th, 2026

Election Day- 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. minimum may be additional consecutive hours prior to 6:00 p.m.

December 11th , 2026

File results (Canvass of Election) with Town Clerk.

December 15th, 2026

Secretary to deliver a report to the County Board of Elections indicating the persons on the list of registered voters labeled "inactive" who voted at the fire district election.

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

- Unfortunately none found this week.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

- A fire caused more than $1 million damage to the training facility of Virginia Task Force 1 over the weekend. Fairfax County Police are looking for the six young people caught on video entering a building where a semi-tractor-trailer and other transportation equipment were stored. The destruction of valuable equipment came while the Urban Search and Rescue team is on deployment in earthquake-ravaged Venezuela
- Fire departments don't buy equipment, software or technology the way that normal consumers do. When a department selects a fire apparatus manufacturer, adopts a records management system or

deploys drones for emergency operations, those decisions aren't reversed easily or quickly. They shape training, staffing, budgets and operations for years or even decades into the future.
This reality places the fire service squarely in what can be described as a captive market. Departments must continue to buy mission-critical tools regardless of market shifts, vendor consolidation or rising costs. Private equity firms understand this dynamic well. They are drawn to industries where demand is predictable, customers are slow to change and costs to switch are high. In recent years, these forces have become increasingly visible across the fire service. Apparatus manufacturing, operational software and emerging technologies, such as public safety drones, all show signs of consolidation that reduces competition and limits long-term options. Individually, these changes might appear manageable. Collectively, they point to a broader trend that fire service leaders must understand—how market structure affects operational resilience and how an erosion of choice quietly can undermine it.

- **For decades, the fire service has worn the slogan "do more with less" like a badge of honor. It's signaled grit, resilience, and the ability to get the job done despite shrinking budgets, fewer personnel and aging apparatus. However, grit isn't the same as sustainability. A culture that elevates output metrics (e.g., call volume, apparatus responses and annual report numbers) above people and equipment is costing us our health, our sleep and, in too many cases, our life. The most sobering fact is also the clearest warning: Firefighters are dying by suicide at an alarming rate. It reflects cumulative trauma, chronic stress, sleep deprivation, and organizational decisions about how and why we respond. How did we get here? Budgets tighten while expectations don't. Call volumes increase. Rather than asking whether every response truly requires every rig and every crew, many departments default to that strategy. In some cases, this approach is used to justify staffing levels or to preserve the appearance of productivity in annual metrics. The result is predictable. Apparatus are driven harder and farther. Preventive maintenance is delayed. Crews operate in a constant state of fatigue. Routine calls become another demand that's layered onto an already overloaded schedule. Vehicles and people wear out at the same time.
    - *Stop measuring success by how many rigs rolled*.
    - *Adopt intelligent dispatch triage and response leveling*.
    - *Address false alarm drivers and align incentives*.
    - *Treat staffing and fatigue as safety issues, not budget footnotes*
    - *Stop treating mental health as optional*.

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

35

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/

FASNY Firefighters Association of the State of New York

EsoGuard Esophageal pre-cancer/cancer screening

WHY SHOULD I GET SCREENED?

Firefighters - active, volunteer, or retired - have a 62% greater risk of developing Esophageal Adenocarcinoma (EAC) and a 39% higher likelihood or dying from EAC compared to non-firefighters. Esophageal Cancer can be PREVENTED through screening.

If you meet Risk Factor criteria, please review the available time slots below and click on the button to sign up.

Please bring your driver's license and medical insurance card to your appointment. Lucid has effectively eliminated out-of-pocket cost for EsoGuard screening, but your insurance will be billed. If you participate in an HRA through your insurance (not HSA or FSA), please notify a Lucid representative prior to screening…there may be an additional step to eliminate the out-of-pocket cost.

You are not responsible for any portion not covered by insurance, up to and including the total cost of the test if your insurance denies coverage. A "What to Expect After EsoGuard" document will be provided to you at the screening event or can be requested in advance.

No food or drink for 2 hours before your appointment time. You may have small sips of water leading up to your testing time if needed.

Date

07/15/2026 (Wed.)

Time

12:00PM - 8:00PM EDT

Location

125 Harry Howard Ave, Hudson NY 12534

SIGN UP FOR A TIME SLOT AT THIS LINK:

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A4FACA922ABF8CF8-64654224-esoguard#/

Fire Apparatus Accidents

- The Jackson, Mississippi Fire Department confirmed in a statement that a firetruck was involved in a crash at an intersection. The driver of the vehicle struck by the engine was transported, no information on the condition of the firefighters.
- According to troopers, the fire truck from Kernersville, North Carolina was heading north on Piney Grove Road with its lights and sirens on when it ran off the right side of the road at a curve. The fire truck overcorrected, overturned and came to a rest on the left side of the road. Three firefighters were transported and treated.

Firefighter Maydays, Serious Injuries and Deaths

- Three firefighters were killed and at least two others have been injured while battling an out-of-control wildfire on the Colorado-Utah border.

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	44
6/25/26 Syracuse, Onondaga Co., 1 deceased under investigation	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	93
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	619
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA 51
	#2 NY 44
	#3 OH 39
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1007 = 37.2 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?	

Update on Recent Court Ruling Related to the Building Code!

Implementation and enforcement of the 2025 provisions of the Energy Code and Uniform Code that prohibit the installation of fossil-fuel equipment and building systems in new buildings, found at 19 NYCRR Section 1240.6 and Subpart 1229-2, continues to be suspended by the Court Order [please see the attached] and are neither effective nor enforceable. The Department of State will continue to monitor the case and will provide updates accordingly.

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

****"Too Much" Training Is Not a Barrier to Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

Such an important message, held over from last week!!

Joe Maruca, Brittany Hollerbach, Ken Willette

WE HEAR IT at all volunteer fire and EMS service gatherings: "We can't recruit new volunteers because there is too much training." We have plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that extensive training hinders volunteer recruitment and retention. But is too much training really the problem? A new study reveals that no, it's not. The problem isn't the amount of training. ***The problem is the topics we are training on and the delivery method.***

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Research Foundation, the North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD), and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) recently completed a comprehensive study called *Understanding the Role of Training in Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention.* The project was funded by a grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S).

The Findings

Here's what the study revealed:

- State training academies are underutilized by small departments. (*partly because it's in the middle nowhere*)
- Training is fundamental and critical to the volunteers' roles and the resources of the fire department.
- *Training must be flexible to fit into volunteer life/work schedules*.
- ***Training must be modular to allow departments to focus on the topics most relevant to them****. (which it is not)*
- Training must be hands-on and immersive.
- *When possible, training must be delivered locally. Skilled instructors are essential*.

If the volunteer fire service follows these principles, then training won't be the significant barrier to recruitment and retention that many think it is.

The study is the most in-depth and comprehensive look at training needs in the volunteer fire service to date. *While it has data on a wide range of community sizes, it focuses on fire departments serving communities with populations under 2,500*. Fire departments serving towns under 2,500 people represent about 45% of all fire departments in the United States. Until now, little data has been collected on these departments and the volunteer firefighters who support them.

The study used a variety of methods to gather data. The researchers conducted a literature review of peer-reviewed articles, reports, trade journals, and NFPA training standards. They also held regional focus groups and conducted interviews with volunteer firefighters and leaders from around the United States. However, the most compelling element of the study was the data collected through a national survey of volunteers.

The national survey gathered 2,053 responses from across the United States. Of the responses, 32% came from departments serving communities of 2,500 or fewer residents.

KEY FINDINGS

Perceptions of training as a barrier to recruitment and retention varied by role.

Chiefs and officers were more likely to identify training as a barrier, whereas firefighters were more likely to report that training was not a barrier or that they were unsure. This suggests that leaders are more attuned to the operational or administrative challenges associated with training requirements.

Training must be relevant and modular.

Time management is critical for today's volunteer firefighters. If people think their time is being wasted, they won't volunteer. *This means that the fire service needs to break training into focused modules so that each department can select the modules relevant to its resources and the risks it faces*. ***For instance, a community without an aerial ladder truck would not train new recruits on aerial ladder trucks, just as an urban department that has 100% hydrant coverage can skip tanker/tender operations training.***
This approach allows departments to focus on essential topics, reducing the time and resources needed to safely deploy new volunteer firefighters. As training becomes longer and incorporates more nonessential topics, it may create barriers to recruitment and retention.

Immersive and hands-on training is key.
We need to move out of the classroom as much as possible. A consistent message from the data is that firefighters value hands-on and scenario-based training. It's engaging and should be designed to reflect the situations they deal with. Immersive training—the use of two or more senses at once—doesn't necessarily mean you need high-tech, augmented reality goggles. *It can mean you have firefighters discussing video-based fireground scenarios in a group setting.*
A consistent message from the data is that firefighters' value hands-on and scenario-based training. It's engaging and should be designed to reflect the situations they deal with.

Local delivery is important.
A long trip to get to training can be a strong disincentive for volunteers. In many areas, volunteers must drive hours to attend training sessions. *Bringing training to local or nearby fire stations presents an opportunity that state training institutions should prioritize*.

Skilled instructors should lead local training.
A skilled instructor is someone local who is knowledgeable in the subject matter and able to create an engaging learning environment. *This does not necessarily mean a formally certified instructor, if participants did not identify certification as a priority.*

This study doesn't answer every question about fire training and how it impacts recruitment and retention for volunteer firefighters. But it does, for the first time, give us comprehensive data and clear direction. The challenge for us in the volunteer fire service is to become advocates for what the study and the data have taught us.

FIRE APPARATUS

Keeping Up with Rapidly Changing Fire Apparatus Technology

Michael Huber

While these advancements have improved safety, efficiency, and performance on the fireground, they have also placed extraordinary demands on fire apparatus repair facilities.
For fleet managers, technicians, and shop supervisors, the challenge is no longer just "fixing trucks." The challenge is keeping pace with technology that changes faster than traditional training cycles, budget planning, and staffing models were ever designed to support.

FROM WRENCHES TO LAPTOPS
Modern fire apparatus rely heavily on electronic control systems. Multiplexed electrical systems, CAN bus networks, pump controllers, and chassis-mounted diagnostics are now standard. A single fault can increase problems across multiple systems, producing warning lights that appear unrelated to the original issue.
In my world, we had a front-line engine that began intermittently losing cab power during responses. Operators reported radio resets, flickering dash displays, and a pump controller issue. Initial suspicion centered on the alternator and batteries. However, after several hours of diagnostics, technicians traced the issue to a single corroded ground in the multiplex system. *That one bad connection disrupted multiple systems, giving the impression of far more serious failures. Always double and triple check your grounds was the lesson learned, the hard way.*
In a purely mechanical time, this issue might never have existed. In today's world, it required electrical knowledge, diagnostic software, and the ability to interpret multiplex logic—not just turning wrenches.

THE TRAINING GAP IN ACTION

One of the most significant challenges facing fire shops is the widening gap between advancing technology and available training. Apparatus manufacturers continue to innovate, but training opportunities are often limited by cost, staffing, and availability.

A few years back, we placed a series of new pumpers in service equipped with an advanced pump control module and electronic pressure governor. Within months, operators reported erratic pressure readings. The shop lacked formal training on that specific system and relied on vendor support. Each incident required scheduling an outside technician, resulting in repeated out-of-service periods.

Eventually, the department invested in manufacturer training for technicians through an agreement with the apparatus manufacturer. Within weeks of completing the course, the same issues were diagnosed and resolved internally—cutting downtime dramatically and reducing vendor costs over the following year.

This is one example of the hard truth: Training is expensive, but not training often is much more expensive.

DIAGNOSTICS OVER PARTS SWAPPING

Rapidly changing technology has made trial-and-error repairs both inefficient and risky. Modern components are expensive, back orders are common, and replacing parts without addressing root causes often leads to repeat failures.

An engine experienced repeated diesel particulate filter (DPF) regeneration failure. Over several months, sensors were replaced, software updates were applied, and downtime continued. Finally, a comprehensive diagnostic review revealed excessive idle time combined with short response distances that never allowed full regeneration cycles.

The fix was not a part—it was an operational change paired with updated regeneration procedures and operator training. Once implemented, the problem disappeared.

It is abundantly important for units to achieve highway speed for a period of time to allow the engine to properly regenerate, if it is needed. The engine will identify when a regen is needed.

MANAGING VENDOR DEPENDENCE

As apparatus become more complex, reliance on vendors is inevitable. Chassis manufacturers, body builders, and component suppliers all play critical roles. However, excessive dependence can create bottlenecks and erode in-house expertise, not to mention increase downtime.

We had an engine involved in a collision. The engine was sent out for frame and suspension evaluation. The repair vendor recommended extensive component replacement at a very high price. Personnel familiar with the vehicle's maintenance history and telematics data questioned the scope and requested additional measurements and documentation.

That joint examination resulted in a more targeted repair plan—saving both time and money while maintaining safety and compliance. Remember: The name of the game is to keep rigs on the road. The rigs do no one any good sitting in a repair shop.

TELEMATICS AND PREDICTIVE MAINTENANCE IN PRACTICE

Telematics systems now provide data on engine hours, pump usage, fault codes, and driving behavior. When integrated into maintenance planning, this information can dramatically improve fleet reliability.

A nearby department noticed recurring transmission faults across multiple units of the same model. Telematics data revealed a pattern: aggressive acceleration combined with frequent short-distance responses. Using this data, the shop worked with training staff to address driving habits and adjusted preventive maintenance intervals. The result was a measurable reduction in transmission-related repairs over the next 12 months.

DOCUMENTATION AS A PROTECTIVE TOOL

As technology increases, so does the importance of documentation. Accurate records support compliance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1910, *Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Refurbishment, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Emergency Vehicles and Marine Firefighting Vessels*, protect the department from liability, and preserve institutional knowledge. As a technician, one of the best self-preservation tools is documentation. Without documentation, it becomes a back-and-forth blame game. ***It has been proven many times that courts rely heavily on proper documentation when determining fault.***

PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Electric and hybrid fire apparatus are beginning to enter service. These units introduce high-voltage systems, battery management software, and new safety hazards for maintenance personnel.
We were recently tasked with exploring the potential to go to electric apparatus. We were fortunate enough to be involved in a manufacturer focus group on the introduction of electric units into the fire service. What we found was that our infrastructure was not sufficient in both the stations and the maintenance facility to provide charging on the units. The cost to upgrade was prohibitive to move forward with purchasing.
If we had waited until the apparatus was ordered, it would have resulted in catastrophic systemic failure and not being able to use the unit. ***Just because it's new and cutting edge does not mean it is the best for the department.***
Other technologies on the horizon for fire apparatus that will mimic current auto technology are front collision warning (FCW), automatic emergency braking (AEB), and side collision through blind spot monitoring (BSM) systems as well as 360-degree camera systems. These systems are all great and provide a level of safety; however, they do add complex sensors to already complex apparatus.

EMBRACING THE MODERN SHOP
Keeping up with rapidly changing apparatus technology is not about chasing every innovation, although that is the nature of firefighters. It is about building a culture of adaptability, continuous training, and professional curiosity within the repair shop.
The modern fire apparatus shop is no longer just a support function—it is a critical component of operational readiness and firefighter safety. Jurisdictions that invest in training, diagnostics, data analysis, and documentation position themselves to succeed in an increasingly complex environment.
Technology will continue to evolve. Where it is going is totally unpredictable. My question to everyone is, how will AI be integrated into fire apparatus? I am confident it is coming. The shops that evolve and change with it will keep fleets reliable, responders safe, and communities protected. Those that do not will be on a course for challenging times.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

Four Teslas Catch Fire at MD Dealership

Liz Carey

Four Teslas caught fire at the dealership in Owings Mills on Wednesday afternoon, prompting a response from Baltimore County Fire's hazmat team.
According to fire department spokesperson Cynthia Gee Scott, one Tesla had been brought to the dealership on Wednesday with "some sort of issue," and caught fire around 4:45 p.m. The fire quickly spread to three other cars nearby, Scott said.
Fire officials arrived on scene and extinguished the fire before 6 p.m., Scott said, but remained on scene after to ensure that the cars had cooled down and wouldn't reignite. The fire department's hazmat team, as well as the Maryland Department of the Environment, also responded to the scene, and found that there was no hazardous material from the fire that could pose a threat to the public.

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

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

*****School District Partnerships Are an Untapped Tool for Community Risk Reduction Efforts***

Jessica Curran

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Building strong relationships between fire departments and school district contacts can open doors for ongoing fire and life safety education beyond annual classroom visits.
- Integrating fire safety topics into school programs can support educational goals and reinforce prevention messages effectively.
- *Fire safety educators can involve students in creating safety messages and projects that extend outreach to families and social networks, increasing community impact.*

For many fire departments, school visits are a familiar part of fire and life safety education. Firefighters arrive in turnout gear, talk about smoke alarms and fire escape plans, answer a few questions, and head back to the station. *While these visits are valuable, limiting school engagement to a single annual presentation can cause departments to overlook one of the most powerful and accessible community risk reduction (CRR) tools available to them: strong partnerships with school districts.*

At the same time, getting into schools can sometimes feel like a feat in itself. Teachers and administrators manage full schedules and competing priorities, which can make adding new programs challenging. Building strong relationships and demonstrating how fire and life safety education can support the goals of the school can make a significant difference. Having trusted points of contact within the district, such as school safety liaisons, communications staff, or public information officers, can help open doors, build trust, and create meaningful connections that extend far beyond a single classroom visit.

Departments that invest time in building relationships within school districts often discover that educators and administrators are some of the strongest allies in expanding community safety efforts.

OUTREACH BEYOND CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

School districts extend far beyond individual classrooms. They connect students, families, educators, and neighborhoods in ways that allow safety messages to travel throughout the community. When fire departments build meaningful partnerships with school districts, prevention efforts can reach households, influence families, and strengthen safety culture across entire communities.

Maximizing this impact often requires very little additional cost. It simply requires a shift in perspective. When school engagement is viewed not as a single annual presentation but as an ongoing partnership, fire departments can move beyond traditional education and begin integrating prevention strategies that directly support their CRR goals.

Strengthening these partnerships also means looking for opportunities where fire and life safety education can support the work schools are already doing. Teachers operate within structured curriculum requirements, and many safety topics align naturally with those learning objectives. *Discussions about historic fires can support social studies lessons that explore how tragedies led to modern fire codes and safety practices. The science of fire can connect to classroom concepts in chemistry or physics. When safety education reinforces curriculum rather than competing with it, it becomes a resource that supports educators' goals instead of adding to their workload.*

In this way, school districts become more than an audience for safety messages. They become active partners in identifying risks, shaping prevention efforts, and strengthening a community's overall safety culture. When

these partnerships function as a true two-way street, everyone benefits. Fire departments gain valuable insight into community needs, while schools receive trusted support, safety resources, and programs that help protect their students, staff, and families.

INVOLVING STUDENTS TO EXPAND YOUR AUDIENCE

Students today engage with information differently than previous generations. While traditional presentations still play an important role, students often respond more strongly when they are actively involved in the learning process. School districts can become active partners in community safety through student-driven safety projects.

Students can participate in creating short public safety announcements related to fire and life safety in their community. Keeping the guidelines simple helps encourage creativity while reinforcing key safety messages. Ask students to include a clear target audience, a safety fact, and a call to action.

Schools can work with departments to determine a prize for the project, or fire departments can partner with local businesses to sponsor incentives that encourage participation.

These projects allow safety messages to travel beyond the classroom, reaching families and social networks that fire departments may not otherwise reach directly.

By researching the topic and producing their own safety messaging, students become participants in the learning process rather than passive listeners. Peer-driven messaging also supports CRR efforts by allowing safety information to reach audiences firefighters may not otherwise interact with directly.

When students help create the message, they are more likely to remember it and share it.

EXPANDING EDUCATION BEYOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Fire safety education frequently focuses on elementary and preschool students. While those age groups remain important, safety education should not stop there. Departments often find that the academic demands placed on middle and high school students leave little room for additional programming.

Strong relationships with school districts and administrators often reveal opportunities where safety education can support classroom objectives while still meeting the needs of the school. In some communities, state or district safety benchmarks create natural opportunities for collaboration between fire departments and educators.

Older students frequently find themselves making decisions during emergencies, whether assisting younger siblings, preparing meals, or recognizing when someone needs help.

Conversations with middle and high school students often include topics such as when to call 9-1-1, how to clearly describe an emergency to a dispatcher, and the importance of remaining calm while answering questions. Additional discussions may include kitchen safety, lithium-ion battery hazards, and basic CPR awareness.

These interactions also provide an opportunity to introduce students to careers in public safety while demonstrating the broader role firefighters and paramedics play within their communities.

INCLUSIVE FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION

Effective fire and life safety education should reach every member of the community, including students with different learning styles and abilities. For many fire educators, there can be some initial hesitation about how to approach special education classrooms. Concerns about whether safety lessons will be appropriate or meaningful can create uncertainty.

In practice, that uncertainty often fades quickly once departments begin working alongside special education teachers and school staff. What may begin with hesitation frequently becomes one of the most rewarding and valuable partnerships a department can develop.

Educators in special education classrooms bring invaluable insight into how students learn, communicate, and process information. Partnering with these educators allows fire departments to deliver meaningful safety education while also gaining a deeper understanding of how to communicate more effectively with some of the most vulnerable members of their community.

Teachers often help adapt safety lessons for life skills classrooms using visual guides, structured worksheets, and simple emergency scripts. Social stories and guided practice scenarios reinforce important concepts such as what to do during a fire drill, or when to call 9-1-1 and what information to provide to a dispatcher.

Practicing these skills ahead of time builds confidence and helps ensure students feel more prepared if they ever face an emergency. For many students, particularly those who are medically complex, interactions with fire and EMS personnel may occur outside of the classroom during times of stress or crisis. *Building familiarity with firefighters and emergency responders in a supportive learning environment can help reduce fear and make those real-world encounters less overwhelming.*

These partnerships also help fire departments better understand how to support safety education across a person's lifespan. Many students in special education programs continue to rely on structured support systems into adulthood. Early engagement helps ensure that fire and life safety education reach individuals who may remain part of vulnerable populations throughout their lives.

An unexpected benefit of these partnerships is the trust that develops along the way. When schools observe the patience, effort, and support firefighters bring to special education classrooms, relationships strengthen across the entire school community and opportunities for deeper collaboration emerge.

School districts also serve as a valuable bridge between fire departments and the diverse communities they protect. In many areas, schools represent one of the first places where families from different cultural backgrounds interact with local institutions. Through these partnerships, fire departments gain a clearer understanding of the languages spoken in their community and how different cultures view safety practices and emergency services.

Schools provide environments where families feel comfortable asking questions and engaging with firefighters. These interactions offer insight into how safety messages should be shared, whether that involves adapting materials for different languages or recognizing cultural traditions that influence safety behaviors. In some communities, these conversations highlight celebrations or traditions involving fire, fireworks, or cooking practices that carry additional risks, allowing departments to approach safety education in ways that respect culture while promoting safer practices.

FIREFIGHTERS AS MENTORS

School district partnerships also allow firefighters to serve as mentors and positive role models.

When firefighters spend time in classrooms, answer questions, and interact with students, relationships develop that extend far beyond a single presentation. Activities such as reading programs, classroom visits, after-school programs, and school events provide opportunities for firefighters to connect with students in relaxed settings while reinforcing the message that safety and community service go hand in hand. Students begin to view firefighters not only as emergency responders, but also as trusted members of their community.

USING COMMUNITY RISK DATA TO GUIDE EDUCATION

As partnerships with school districts grow stronger, those relationships often expand into deeper collaboration. Schools can become active partners in understanding and addressing community risk. Effective CRR begins with understanding the specific risks within a community, and schools provide valuable opportunities to translate that information into meaningful prevention efforts.

Community Risk Assessments and well-developed CRR plans help departments identify trends, understand hazards, and prioritize prevention strategies. Schools offer a natural environment for turning community risk data into real-world learning opportunities. School districts may also collect valuable information, such as languages spoken and other demographic insights, that can strengthen CRR assessments and planning efforts. When fire departments and school districts share information and perspectives, both gain a clearer understanding of the community and how to better serve it.

Instead of presenting fire safety in general terms, departments can tailor education to address hazards that affect their specific community. In some areas, this may involve emphasizing cooking safety. In others, it may include lithium-ion battery safety, fall prevention for families caring for older relatives, or the importance of calling 9-1-1 early during medical emergencies.

High school classes focused on media, technology, or public safety topics can analyze community risk data. Students review information such as incident types, seasonal patterns, and the calls firefighters respond to most frequently while also examining factors such as community demographics, local economics, building stock, businesses, and how geography can influence safety across their community.

USING THE FIVE E'S

From there, discussions explore what risks students believe affect their community and how those risks could be addressed through plans that tap into the five E's of CRR: Education, Enforcement, Economic Incentive, Engineering, and Emergency Response.

Student conclusions do not always match those of fire departments, but these differences often create valuable opportunities for discussion. When assumptions differ from the data, conversations naturally shift toward the gap between perceived risk and actual risk. These moments demonstrate the importance of including stakeholder voices in risk conversations and help departments better understand how community members perceive risk and where knowledge gaps may exist.

For example, students sometimes assume structure fires represent the most common emergency response. In reality, data in many communities shows that falls or cooking related incidents make up a much larger portion of calls. These discussions highlight the difference between dramatic but rare events and the everyday hazards responsible for most injuries.

When students analyze information about their own community, the issue becomes personal. The risks are no longer hypothetical. They occur in neighborhoods they recognize and homes similar to their own.

A LOW-COST, HIGH-IMPACT CRR STRATEGY

Community risk reduction is most effective when it becomes part of the culture of an entire community. Fire departments cannot accomplish this alone, and school districts represent one of the most effective partnerships for extending prevention efforts beyond the firehouse.

Departments frequently face challenges when organizing smoke alarm drives, community safety events, or large-scale outreach programs. Limited personnel and time often restrict the number of homes that can be reached.

School district partnerships help address that challenge in creative ways. Many middle and high school students complete community service hours, and safety initiatives provide meaningful opportunities for them to give back to their community. Students assist with community events, organize materials for smoke alarm installation programs, support outreach campaigns, and help distribute safety messaging.

These partnerships expand the reach of prevention programs that directly address risks identified through a department's community risk assessment.

Involvement in these efforts not only strengthens prevention programs but also helps students develop a deeper understanding of community responsibility and public safety.

By working alongside educators, students, and school leadership, fire departments can create networks of safety awareness that reach families, neighborhoods, and future generations. When students understand risk, share safety messages at home, and view firefighters as partners in their community, the impact of prevention grows exponentially.

School districts may not be the only solution for CRR, but they remain one of the most powerful and often overlooked partners in building safer, more informed communities. When fire departments and schools work together, prevention becomes part of the community itself.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad!

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
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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

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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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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