

THE BULLETIN

OCTOBER 10TH, 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 the Firefighter Health and Safety Section read about the changes coming to the NYS Volunteer Firefighter Cancer Benefit Program and new reporting protocols as of January 1, 2027, posted here and on the CAFDA.net web site. Be sure to see Page 7**
- **Congratulations to the newly elected officers of the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York. President Dave Denniston, 1st Vice President Ralph Raymond and 2nd Vice President Bob Monkelbaan. We look forward to next year's Annual Meeting, Conference and Vendor Show will be returning to the Saratoga Springs Hilton/City Center.**
- **NYSAFC mourns the loss of Past President Robert E. Holley, who passed away on October 4, 2026. Holley was a past chief of the East Quogue Fire Department in Suffolk County, where he served for more than 50 years. A member of NYSAFC for more than five decades, he led the association as president from 2006-2007. In recent years, Bob and his wife, Lois, supported the association by volunteering at NYSAFC's New York Fire Book Store during our Annual Conference & FIRE Expo. Our heartfelt condolences to the Holley family, as well as to Bob's colleagues in the Suffolk County fire service. The NYSAFC officers and staff join in honoring Bob's legacy and his unwavering commitment to strengthening the emergency services and our organization**
- **BUDGET SCHEDULE** PAGE 4 also on CAFDA.net
- **ELECTION SCHEDULE** PAGE 9 also on CAFDA.net
- The Nominal Compensation discussion entries are on the last pages of the Bulletin.
- Congratulations to Jared Pearl of the Maynard Fire Department in Oneida County on his 34 years of service and 12 years as Chief of the Department. Chief Pearl established the bunk in program at Maynard, was an EMT and SFI, also all around professional volunteer.
- This week I had the pleasure of attending the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York Annual Meeting/conference/vendor expo in Saratoga Springs at the Hilton-City Center. The Annual Meeting will take place in Saratoga one more year then move to Buffalo. It was a good experience, catching up with old friends, reinforcing my knowledge base and visiting with a multitude of vendors. If you are one of the approximately 4500 commissioners in the state, you owe it to yourself attending one of these events at least once in your career. Either the state conference or the CAFDA conference in April in Lake George. You will come away learning something and making some new friends for life. Do it for yourself and your fire district.

TRAINING OPPORTUNTIES:

CAFDA

Proudly Serving the Capital & Surrounding Areas

FALL EDUCATION SEMINAR 2026

Date: Saturday, November 7, 2026
Location: Guilderland Fire District
2303 Western Ave, Guilderland, NY 12084

Not limited to Only Commissioners!

Chief Officers, Company Officers, Secretaries, Treasurers, etc. are invited, and encouraged to attend!

SCHEDULE

7:00 – 8:00 am: Registration/Continental Breakfast
8:00 – 2:00 pm: Pledge to Flag & Welcome by CAFDA Officers & Directors
Understanding & Navigating the Pitfalls of Workers' Compensation: Alex Dell
Insurance: "PPE" for Your Fire District: Dustin Hall
Are You Really a Chief: Tim Boel
Lunch with the Expert Panel Participants

Help Us Plan!

Please reserve your seat now by *responding no later than Friday, October 30th*

CAFDA Members: $25.00 **Non-Members: $35.00**

Multiple Registration and Payment Options Available:

1. Online via Credit Card (separate registration required for each individual attending)
2. Check payable to Capital Area Fire Districts Association
3. Pay at the Door (please mail/email completed registration form)

CAFDA

P.O. Box 242
East Schodack, NY 12063

www.CAFDA.net
Secretary@CAFDA.net

CAPITAL AREA FIRE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION

WWW.CAFDA.NET

2026 REGISTRATION FORM

FALL EDUCATION SEMINAR

Saturday, November 7, 2026

Guilderland Fire District, 2303 Western Avenue, Guilderland, NY 12804

See Attached Training Flyer for Class Schedule and Topics!

CAFDA Members: $25.00 per attendee **Non-Members: $35.00 per attendee**
(Continental Breakfast and Lunch Included)

Fire District/Organization: _____

Membership Status (select one): ___ Member of CAFDA or ___ Non-Member of CAFDA

Attendees (include full name & at least one email so we can confirm registration & prepare certificates, as well as contact phone numbers in case of inclement weather notifications):

Attendee Name & Phone Number:	**Email Address:**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Total Number Attending:_____

Registration Now Open - Assist us with Meal Planning - Reserve your Seat Soon!
Respond no later than Friday, October 30th

Payment Options:

1) Online Credit Card (separate registration required for each individual attending):
   Go To: https://cafda.net/event-registration/
2) Check enclosed payable to ***Capital Area Fire Districts Association*** for: $_____
   Mail To: **CAFDA** PO Box 242 East Schodack, NY 12063
3) Pay at the Door ☐ (check box at left; please mail/email completed form in advance):
   Email to: Secretary@cafda.net

From CAFDA

REGISTER NOW FOR THE FALL EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP at CAFDA.NET

1. ***Join us at the NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING on Thursday October 1st at 7pm, Clifton Park Fire Station and Zoom Link: CAFDA General Membership Meeting Time: Oct 8, 2026 07:00 PM Eastern Time https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82935704354?pwd=mjRF7a9DOKCSkpnHqxkCstMMzrkduQ.1***
2. ***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". SEE PAGE 40 FOR FLYER AND REGISTRATION FORM, REGISTER ON-LINE NOW AVAILABLE AT CAFDA.NET***
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. ***CAFDA Commissioner Training Dates for 2027 will be held in Averill Park on February 6th, Thomas Corners on February 20th, Clifton Park on March 6th, Schoharie on March 20th, Berkshire on March 27th and Warrensburg on April 3rd.***

CAFDA TRAINING AND EVENT DATES				
Day/Date	**Time**	**Type**	**Location**	**Notes**
FY 2026				
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/Breakfast Buffet
Saturday, January 6	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Averill Park Rensselaer County	Snow Date 2/7
Thursday February 11	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	
Saturday February 20	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Thomas Corners Glenville Fire Dist #7 Schenectady County	Snow Date 2/21
Thursday March 4	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg**	Clifton Park	
Saturday March 6	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Clifton Park FD Saratoga County	Snow Date 3/6

Saturday March 20	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Niagara Engine Co #1, Schoharie Schoharie County	Snow Date 3/22
Saturday March 27	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Berkshire Fire District Fulton County	Snow Date 3/28
Thursday April 1	7:00 PM	**Board of Directors Mtg**	Clifton Park	
Saturday April 3	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Warrensburg FD Warren County	Snow Date 4/4
Wednesday April 7	8:00 AM	**Financial & Fiduciary Responsibilities**	Fort William Henry Conference Center	Instructors from OSC
Thursday, April 8 - Saturday April 10, 2027	To Be Announced	**CAFDA Conference '27**	Fort William Henry Conference Center	Lake George
Thursday, April 6 - Saturday April 8, 2028		**CAFDA Conference 2028**	Fort William Henry Conference Center Lake George, NY	

From Other Organizations

NYSAFC is Bringing Hands-On Training to Your Area!

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

THE THREE-HOUR **FLASHOVER** program is coming to **Albany** (September 26-27) Guilderland Fire Chief's Association, Ontario (October 10-11), **Schenectady** (October 17-18) East Glenville Fire District and Orange (November 21-22) Counties.

View the Calendar and Register...

2026 Seminar Series with Chief Mike Lombardo Resumes in September

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

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

FREE FIREFIGHTER WELLNESS SEMINAR SERIES FROM NYSAFC AND PERMA

"In the Mouth of the Dragon: Fire Dynamics and the Cancer Risk on Today's Fireground"

With Director/Chief Frank Leeb

(First Responder Center for Excellence/FDNY)

This two-hour program will help participants develop a clearer understanding of the relationship between modern fire behavior, toxic smoke, and occupational illness – and how informed tactics, disciplined decision-making, and fireground awareness can reduce risk.

2026 Locations and Dates:

On-site and pre-registration available.

Seminar begins at 7:00 p.m.

Registration area opens at 6:30 p.m.

Suffolk County – October 7

Oneida County – December 9
Fulton County – December 14
LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT THIS LINK:
https://ygc8ha5ab.cc.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001o9hCtluVAB0476vX-cZjVvqHRmCxsoU9KP1ysekKcaUKmTrLIyUm9MYE27KlZGa8SfVj6i_vyF1LCA5NEtJOVP4CsAq1mRK_CqqD37uVsJpqRM7iioF6rda1M28AQPaz3gl9mHrjqcHFSk235YEe1tRRN65ua9bEg9e-SasQTT4HaYcImbZWgOpUBf_YOalJ&c=ts5YTR8fTiZUrzXYf0woGb7NfLL_J2QllZMAXQm8kEvKQgY4u4qZHA==&ch=tChtpqKC9nh6nvNTFs3T9qQIyI_yslbkvSVrvr4mUPXbgl62_Z1NNg==

Beyond the Sirens, Rethinking Emergency Response

As first responders we receive extensive training in an effort to ensure we operate vehicles as safely as possible. Our goal is to get to an incident quickly, but without a collision. Despite efforts to make emergency vehicle operations safer, we see many accidents that could be prevented. We will review and discuss best practices that should be followed to prevent what could be a nightmare for your department. We will also explore mounting evidence that suggests unnecessary use of red lights and sirens is problematic, and the need to change our habits to better serve our communities. Please Join us for this interactive session and leave with real solutions to this national problem.

Wednesday October 21st, 2026 at 7PM
Rotterdam Fire District #6, 6 Old Mariaville Road, Schenectady, NY 12306
*Pre registration requested, Scan the QR Code to Register

Scan Me

ALSO at:
The City of Watertown Fire Department at the following dates and times:
October 14 @ 1:30 PM or
October 14 @ 6:00 PM or
October 15 @ 1:30 PM or
October 15 @ 6:00 PM

Be Your Own Advocate ESIP WEBINAR SERIES

Time are tough for a lot of fire departments. Increasingly we find that the only support we can find is that which we “drum up” for ourselves.
Join Dave Denniston for a webinar looking at the importance of your agency’s reputation and standing in your community and discuss ways you can help your own cause.

Thursday 10/15/26 at 7:00PM
REGISTER HERE:
https://us.list-manage.com/FY1fOstqAEh?e=781e9a2c81&c2id=df3ef39abf096be1508115a6ea1a79c8&m=fDSFBBMEIWcu2PcBHhB6LpIYQgiADIJ8hSQeCJbZCbpPsVJbJUQDG2dWWGXm

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

From Albany

Volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers in New York *could* soon receive a significantly larger state income tax credit under legislation awaiting action by Gov. Kathy Hochul. The New York Legislature has passed legislation that would increase the state income tax credit for eligible volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers from $200 to $800 per person.

The legislation would also make another important change. Under current New York tax rules, volunteers generally cannot claim the $200 income tax credit if they also receive a property tax exemption based on their volunteer service. The new legislation would allow eligible volunteers to receive both the income tax credit and the applicable property tax exemption.

The legislation still requires action by Gov. Kathy Hochul before the changes can take effect.

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

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

S8832 KAVANAGH (D)	**A9504 GLICK (D)**	**1/2/126 PASSED SENATE 2/10/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER AMENDMENT IS TO FACILITATE THE INCLUSION OF E-BIKE AND E-SCOOTER BATTERIES IN THE RECHARGEABLE BATTERY RECYCLING PROGRAM AND TO PROMOTE CONSUMER SAFETY, CONVENIENCE, AND AWARENESS**	**2/13/26 SIGNED CHAPTER 87**
S10075 SOLAGES (D)	**A11162 ZELLLNER**	**6/2/26 PASSED SENATE 5/29/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**EXTEND THE PROVISION OF THE COMPETITIVE BIDDING STATUTE [GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW §103] WHICH PERMITS PIGGYBACK PURCHASING. THE STATUTE HAD A SUNSET PROVISION MEANING THAT IT WOULD EXPIRE ON JUNE 30, 2026. THE BILLS PROPOSE TO AMEND THE STATUTE TO EXTEND THE SUNSET PROVISION UNTIL JUNE 30, 2027**	**6/26/26 SIGNED CHAPTER 147**
S6368B SKOUFIS (D)	**A3126B LUNSFORD (D)**	**4/22/26 PASSED SENATE 3/30326 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXECUTIVE LAW, IN RELATION TO REQUIRING THAT WHEN A COMPLAINT IS MADE TO LOCAL CODE ENFORCEMENT OF A VIOLATION OF THE UNIFORM FIRE PREVENTION AND BUILDING CODE OR LOCAL BUILDING CODES WHICH RESULTS IN THE ISSUANCE OF A COMPLIANCE ORDER, THE COMPLAINANT SHALL ALSO BE PROVIDED A COPY OF SUCH ORDER**	**PENDING SIGNATURE**
S9502A MARTINEZ (D)	**A10885B STERN (D)**	**6/2/26 PASSED SENATE 6/1/26 PASSES ASSEMBLY**	***TO AUTHORIZE* LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO ADOPT A PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF PAID FIREFIGHTERS WHO ARE KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.**	**PENDING SIGNATURE** PENDING PASSAGE BY EACH LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY RESOLUTION
S7316 HINCHEY (D)	**A8008 LUNSFORD (D)**	**5/18/26 PASSED SENATE 6/1/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**REQUIRES THE FORFEITURE OF BENEFITS TO BE PAID PURSUANT TO A SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM TO VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS WHO HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF FELONIES COMMITTED AGAINST A VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY, FIRE DISTRICT, OR FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT.**	**PENDING SIGNATURE**
S5614 ADDABBO (D)	**A3681A WOERNER (D)**	**6/2/26 PASSED SENATE 1/28/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**AN ACT TO AMEND THE GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW, IN RELATION TO REMOVING RESTRICTIONS ON THE FREQUENCY CERTAIN AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATIONS MAY CONDUCT BINGO GAMES**	**PENDING SIGNATURE**
S4675 JACKSON (D)	**A688 BUTTENSCHON (D)**	**5/6/26 PASSED SENATE 4/29/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXECUTIVE LAW, IN RELATION TO PROVIDING MINIMUM BASIC TRAINING RELATED TO HANDLING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVOLVING INDIVIDUALS WITH ANY PHYSICAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY TO ALL FIRE-FIGHTERS**	**PENDING SIGNATURE** REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING
S6233A MARTINEZ (D)	**A6790A MCMAHON**	**6/1/26 PASSED SENATE 5/14/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**THIS BILL INCREASES THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' AND AMBULANCE WORKERS' PERSONAL INCOME TAX CREDIT FROM $200 TO $800 FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND FROM $400 TO $1600 FOR ELIGIBLE MARRIED JOINT FILERS. ALSO ALLOWS FIRST RESPONDERS TO TAKE THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT ALSO.**	**PENDING SIGNATURE**

From Washington

📌 "Pocket Rescission" Sets Up Another Funding Fight. Congress was informed five days before the end of the Fiscal Year that the White House intended to cancel nearly $1 billion in Congressionally appropriated funding. This executive move – a "pocket rescission" – has long been controversial. The president does have the power to send Congress a request to rescind previously appropriated funding which triggers a 45-day pause on that funding while Congress determines whether they will agree to cancel the funding. However, the White House has argued that when such a request occurs within 45 days of the Fiscal Year ending, the funding is automatically canceled when the Fiscal Year ends.
This action drew bipartisan criticism from Congress, but also from the non-partisan Government Accountability Office. Determining how to prevent future pocket rescissions is likely going to be a large piece of the government funding negotiations that will resume when Congress returns in November.

📌 NIOSH Survey to Improve Firefighter Death and Serious Injury Investigations Update. Following NIOSH's request for survey submissions a few months ago to better understand the human factors that impact firefighter LODD and serious injury, they currently have nearly 700 submissions! The survey closes in January, so if you have not filled out the survey yet, follow the links below.
➡️ Take the NIOSH Survey Here! https://airc.cdc.gov/surveys/?s=7NCYHEWXL8RK8RNP

From Federal DOL/OSHA

- **Keith Sonderling was confirmed by the Senate to lead the Department of Labor, he has served as Acting Director since April of this year.**

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

LE ROY FIRE DISTRICT, GENESEE CO. – PURCHASING: TRAVEL, MEALS AND REFRESHMENTS

Audit Objective

Did the Le Roy Fire District's (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) ensure travel, meal and refreshment purchases were adequately supported and for a proper District purpose?

Audit Period

January 1, 2023 – March 2, 2026

Understanding the Audit Area

Ensuring that travel, meal and refreshment purchases are adequately supported with documentation and for proper district purposes helps safeguard public funds, promotes transparency and accountability and provides assurance that district resources are used prudently and in the best interests of the district and its taxpayers. During the audit period, District officials paid for 134 travel, meal and refreshment purchases totaling $23,350.

Audit Summary

The Board did not adequately oversee the District's travel, meal and refreshment purchases to ensure they were properly supported with documentation, complied with District policies and served legitimate District purposes. *Of the 134 purchases totaling approximately $23,000 that we reviewed, 117 purchases totaling approximately $22,100 contained one or more exceptions. As a result, District officials paid approximately*

$17,000 for purchases that were unnecessary or not appropriate District expenditures. The purchases accounted for 74 percent of the travel, meal and refreshment purchases made during the audit.
Specifically, we noted the following exceptions. Some purchases included more than one exception:

- *71 non-travel-related meal or refreshment purchases, totaling approximately $13,800 did not qualify as **actual and necessary District expenses**.*
- 44 travel-related purchases totaling approximately $8,000 *did not have evidence of prior approval or completed expense vouchers as required by the District's travel policy*, and 14 non-travel-related meal and refreshment purchases totaling approximately $2,200 did not have adequate supporting documentation such as itemized receipts to demonstrate that they were for a proper District purpose.
- 32 travel-related purchases that included meal and lodging expenses *exceeding the District's travel policy limits for lodging costs and per diem meal allowances by approximately $2,800*.

Although the Board was generally required to perform a proper claims audit before they were paid, *the Board did not audit or approve travel, meal and refreshment purchases before payment*. Had each Commissioner conducted a thorough and deliberate claims audit, they would have noted that a significant number of travel-related purchases did not comply with the District's travel policy and that non-travel-related meal and refreshment purchases did not have adequate supporting documentation to demonstrate that they were proper District charges. Furthermore, had the Board established a written policy identifying which non-travel-related activities qualified for meals and refreshments, District staff and volunteers would have had clearer guidance on allowable expenditures and the proper use of District funds.
The report includes three recommendations that, if implemented, will strengthen the Board's oversight of travel, meal and refreshment expenditures and improve the District's claims audit and payment process.
Read the Complete Report Here:
https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/le-roy-fire-district-2026-59.pdf

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TOWN LINE FIRE DEPARTMENT, ERIE CO. – CAPITAL PROJECTS
Audit Objective
Did the Town Line Fire Department (Department) Board of Directors (Board) and President properly plan for and manage the fire station building capital project?
Audit Period
January 1, 2022 – November 19, 2025
Understanding the Audit Area
Capital projects should be properly planned and managed to help ensure that the project is completed in a cost-effective, transparent and timely manner and that the resulting facility adequately meets a fire department's current and future operational needs. Effective planning and oversight help officials establish realistic project scopes and budgets, evaluate financing options, monitor project costs and timeliness, comply with legal and procurement requirements and minimize the risk of cost overruns, delays or unnecessary expenditures. Proper project management also promotes accountability to the taxpayers by ensuring that funds are used effectively and that project decisions are adequately documented and supported.
A fire department board of directors (fire department board) is responsible for overseeing and managing capital projects. The Board and membership initially approved $1 million in the Department's 2022 annual budget to fund a capital project (Project) to expand the size of the Department's Fire Station Number 1 (one of its two existing fire stations). In 2023, after the Board selected its construction management and general contracting company, the Board and membership increased this estimated amount by $300,000, for a total of $1.3 million.
Audit Summary
The Board and President did not properly plan and manage the Project. *By adopting a written multiyear capital plan, creating a detailed and itemized budget, approving all change orders and adhering to the Department's purchasing policy, they could have gained a clearer understanding of the Project's requirements.* This would have allowed for a more accurate cost estimate and timeline, which could have potentially avoided unnecessary costs. Consequently, the Treasurer paid approximately $1.6 million in Project expenses, which surpassed the initially estimated costs of $1 million.
Specifically, officials did not:

- *Create and adopt a written multiyear capital plan* that would have helped officials understand the Project's needs and overall scope by outlining the work to be performed and an expected progress timeline with a completion date.
- *Develop an itemized budget for the expected lifespan of the Project*. An initial Project budget would have helped officials understand the estimated costs, guarded against wasteful spending and provided a mechanism for monitoring the Project.
- *Properly approve change orders totaling approximately $215,000 for unanticipated work*. Had officials initially properly planned the Project and reviewed construction contracts before the Project began, the Board and President may have identified that a substantial amount of work needed to complete the Project was not initially included in the construction contracts.
- *Purchase goods and services for the Project according to the Department's purchasing policy. This included hiring a general contractor for the project, and paying the general contractor approximately $1.4 million,[1] without issuing requests for proposals (RFPs) or obtaining the required number of written proposals.*

The report includes nine recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the Department's capital project planning and management procedures.

Read the complete report here:
https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/town-line-fire-department-2026-30.pdf

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LOCKWOOD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, TIOGA CO. – FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

Audit Objective

Did the Lockwood Volunteer Fire Department (Department) officials ensure that financial activity was properly supported, authorized, recorded and reported?

Audit Period

April 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025. We extended the audit period back through March 30, 2024, to determine whether contractual fire protection collections were recorded in the accounting records.

Understanding the Audit Area

A fire department (department) treasurer should record and report financial transactions in a complete, accurate and timely manner to enable the department board of directors (board) and department membership to make informed decisions, prevent fraud or misappropriation of funds, comply with reporting requirements and maintain the public's trust. Accurate and timely records are essential for establishing financial accountability and proper financial management, enabling effective oversight by the board, department membership and taxpayers and protecting public funds. The board also must ensure that disbursements are adequately supported, for appropriate fire department purposes and authorized before payment.

Department disbursements totaled $96,765 and fundraising and other collections totaled $110,266 during the audit period.

Audit Summary

Department officials did not ensure that financial activities were properly supported, authorized, recorded and reported or provide the Department Board of Directors (Board) with complete, accurate and timely information needed to effectively oversee the Department's financial operations. As a result, the Board did not have reliable information on which to base financial decisions, and the Department had an increased risk that its resources could be wasted, misused or stolen. Although the financial activities that we reviewed were generally recorded in the accounting records, *Department officials and the Department Membership (Membership) did not:*

- *Ensure that the Department Treasurer (Treasurer):*
  - *Maintained complete financial records and reports that supported collections and disbursements,*
  - *Provided accurate monthly financial reports to the Board and Membership that included monthly bank statements, bank reconciliations, canceled check images, support for the collections deposited and budget-to-actual variance reports.*

- *Ensure that the meeting minutes for the monthly Board and Membership meetings contained adequate details and documentation, such as the annual report presented to the Membership.*
- *Update the Department's bylaws or develop and enforce financial procedures.*

In addition, officials did not maintain any documentation indicating that the Board conducted periodic financial audits of the Department's accounting records or reported annually to the Membership. Furthermore, the Board and Membership did not ensure that the Treasurer filed the annual report for the Department's 2024, foreign fire insurance (FFI) tax proceeds with the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) and the 2024 annual Form 990 with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS).[1]

Because the Treasurer did not perform monthly bank reconciliations, and no one reviewed bank statements and canceled check images, the Department had an increased risk that its resources could be wasted and stolen.

The report includes 11 recommendations that, if implemented, will strengthen Department officials' oversight of financial activities, improve the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the Department's financial records and reports, enhance accountability and help safeguard Department resources

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

THE FLIPSIDE OF LEADERSHIP: LEADING GENERATIONS IN THE FIREHOUSE

Flip Griffin

Key Takeaways

- *Effective leadership requires understanding and adapting to the communication styles of newer generations, especially given the rapid development of digital language and social media.*
- *Building trust involves listening to the next generation's questions, ideas, and concerns without immediate judgment, fostering a culture of inclusion and respect.*
- *Experience, rank, and tradition remain vital, but organizations must also be willing to evolve their methods of onboarding and engagement to meet modern expectations.*

Welcome back to The Flipside of the Firehouse. This is where we talk about the things that don't always make it into reports, policies, or training manuals. The real conversations, the tension, the leadership moments that happen in the bay and around the kitchen table. The things that actually shape a crew, for better or worse.

When I was a brand-new search-and-rescue Corpsman in the U.S. Navy, I did not even get a microphone on my first helicopter flights.

Our helmets had an internal communication system that connected everyone in the aircraft. The pilots, crew chief, and experienced rescue swimmers could all talk to one another, but for my first 25 flight hours or so, I could only listen. To be clear, this was completely against regulations. There was definitely a little old-school hazing involved, and nobody should try to convince me otherwise. And to be clear, I was fine with it. But even as the new guy, I understood that there was more behind it than simply making the rookie earn his place.

Part of it was exactly that, though. I was joining a very small community of high-performance, high-risk individuals where trust mattered, and having a microphone was almost symbolic of earning your way into that crew. Before you added your voice, you had already learned the voices there. You listened to how experienced aircrew communicated, how they reacted when something changed, what information mattered, and maybe most importantly, when not to talk. You were expected to understand the community before you started trying to influence it.

The other part was far more serious. Communication during a search-and-rescue mission in a helicopter can be incredibly fast and unforgiving. Multiple people might have been talking while the aircraft was low, the pilots were maneuvering, the crew chief was calling out obstacles, and the rescue swimmer was preparing to leave the aircraft. One unnecessary transmission, one misunderstood call, or one person talking at exactly the wrong moment could step on critical information and put the entire crew in jeopardy. In that environment, knowing when to speak was every bit as important as knowing what to say.

So I listened, watched and learned. And eventually, I earned my way into the conversation.

EXPERIENCE BEFORE INFLUENCE

That was part of being new in my generation. Some of it was right, some of it probably was not, and some of it would never fly today. But the larger expectation was understood. Experience came before influence. The organization had its own way of doing things, and when you joined, it was largely your responsibility to adapt yourself to it.

I am not sure we can lead the next generation of firefighters and EMS providers the same way.

There was some wisdom in that. There still is. New people need to listen. They need humility. They need to understand that experience matters and that the person who has been doing the job for twenty years probably knows a few things they do not. But when I think about how I would lead that same young rescue swimmer today, I am not sure I would make him wait 25 hours in the aircraft before giving him a microphone.

That does not mean I would lower the standard. It means I would change the way I brought him into it.

I think that distinction is becoming increasingly important for the fire service because we are going through a generational transition that is far more than just age. We tend to simplify these conversations into complaints about millennials, Generation Z, or whatever generation comes next. We joke about work ethics, cell phones, social media, attention spans, and work-life balance. The problem with those conversations is that they usually begin with the assumption that our generation represents the standard and everyone coming behind us is some variation away from it.

I do not believe that. I believe this generation is every bit as thoughtful, caring, capable, and willing to do what is required in fire and EMS as the generations that came before them. What is different is the world that shaped them, the reasons they may have entered the profession, how they communicate, where they place their trust, and what they expect from the organizations they join.

If we want to lead them, we have to understand that world.

INFLUENCE AND MOTIVATION HAVE CHANGED

Many of the people occupying senior leadership positions in the fire service today came of age professionally around 9/11. That period shaped an entire generation of military members, firefighters, police officers, and public servants. Service and sacrifice had a particular meaning. There was a powerful call to something larger than oneself, and many people entered these professions to serve their country or community during a time when service felt especially urgent.

That motivation influenced how we viewed the job. Missing holidays and working terrible hours was part of it. Getting the worst assignments when you were new was part of it. Keeping your mouth shut until you earned your place was part of it. You accepted those things because sacrifice itself was wrapped into your understanding of service. The organization did not necessarily need to explain why everything operated the way it did. You joined the organization, so the responsibility was largely yours to adapt to it.

The firefighter entering our station today may have a very different starting point. They grew up amid economic instability, COVID-19, political division, institutional failures that played out publicly, constant access to information, and an online world where almost every claim can be immediately challenged. They have also watched people leave careers because those careers consumed their lives. When they ask questions about schedules, mental health, family time, flexibility, or why a department operates a certain way, we sometimes interpret the question itself as a lack of commitment.

Maybe it is not. Maybe they have a different definition of what commitment should require.

That creates a legitimate collision with the current state of the fire service. We have departments dealing with staffing shortages and mandatory overtime resulting in retention problems, increasing call volume, burnout, expanding EMS responsibilities, and communities that still expect the same level of service regardless of how many people are available to provide it. At the same time, we are hiring people who place a much greater value on work-life balance and who are far less willing to sacrifice every other part of their identity for their occupation.

There are parts of this profession that cannot bend to that expectation. Emergencies do not care about dinner plans. Cardiac arrests do not schedule themselves around birthdays. A structure fire does not care whether you slept well last night. Firefighters still have to be physically and mentally prepared to perform difficult tasks under terrible conditions, and sometimes service means putting somebody else's needs ahead of your own.

Those standards cannot change.

What can change is our belief that every organizational sacrifice is automatically part of the standard. Sometimes we confuse standards with traditions, and sometimes we defend practices because we survived them rather than because they still serve a purpose. There is a difference between telling a firefighter, "This profession requires sacrifice," and telling them, "You need to sacrifice because I had to." One protects the profession. The other protects our experience.

LEADERSHIP'S ROLE IN ADAPTING TO THE CHANGES

That is where I think leadership and accountability has to evolve. For generations, the expectation was that the new employee moved almost entirely toward the organization. They learned our language, accepted our culture, followed our communication methods, and adapted to our expectations. I think the next era of fire service leadership requires movement from both sides. The next generation still needs to move toward the profession's standards, but the organization needs to move toward them in how we communicate, teach, engage, and build trust.

That is not being softer. That is being adaptable.

Communication may be the clearest example. Every generation has had slang, music, cultural references, and ways of speaking that irritated the generation before it. What we are experiencing now is different because technology has accelerated the development of language itself. Our newest firefighters communicate through text messages, group chats, short videos, memes, emojis, gaming platforms, social media, and other digital channels that did not exist when many current chiefs entered the service.

That creates opportunities for misunderstandings that we have never dealt with at this scale. A chief may believe an email clearly communicated something to the department. A younger firefighter may wonder why something important was buried in an email in the first place. An officer may interpret a short text response as disrespectful, while the firefighter who sent it sees it as completely normal. A new firefighter may ask "why" to understand context, while an experienced officer hears the same question as a challenge to authority.

Neither person necessarily has bad intentions. They may simply be looking at the same beach ball from different sides.

HOW TODAY'S COMMUNICATIONS HAVE CHANGED

That means good communication cannot just be about transmitting information. Leaders have to confirm understanding. We need to become comfortable asking people to clarify what they mean and allowing them to ask the same of us. Rank does not magically eliminate misunderstanding, and experience does not guarantee that the message we intended to send is the message somebody received.

Technology complicates this even more because older leaders often think of technology as something that was added to their lives. We remember a world before smartphones, social media, streaming videos, and instant access to almost unlimited information. Many of our newest firefighters do not. Technology is not an accessory to their world. It is part of its infrastructure.

Their phones are a camera, a map, a television, a newspaper, a classroom, a bank, a calendar, a library, an entertainment system, and a primary communication device. Social media is not necessarily somewhere they go after living their real life—is integrated into their real life. Yet the fire service sometimes talks about social media as if ignoring it will somehow make it go away.

It will not and we need to get better at using it.

That does not mean every chief needs to start dancing on TikTok or that the kitchen table should disappear behind a wall of cell phones. It means recognizing that training, recruiting, mentoring, professional development, recognition, culture, and leadership are already happening in digital spaces. The only question is whether our departments and leaders will participate effectively in those spaces.

THE ROLE OF TRUST IN TODAY'S WORLD

That matters because we are also living through a larger shift in trust. People increasingly build trust around individuals rather than institutions. They listen to podcasters, creators, coaches, subject-matter experts, and online personalities because those people communicate directly with them and often feel more authentic and accessible than a large organization does.

We call those people influencers. The fire service tends to roll its eyes at that word, but I think we should reconsider it. An influencer earns attention, develops trust, communicates ideas, and affects behavior. That sounds an awful lot like leadership to me.

Influencer is another word for leader.

The difference is that influence cannot simply be assigned by rank. A badge gives you authority. Bugles give you positional responsibility. Neither guarantees that anybody trusts you enough to be influenced by you. If a 23-year-old firefighter spends hours every week listening to a firefighter online who teaches tactics, fitness, leadership, mental health, or fire behavior, that person may have tremendous influence over how that firefighter thinks about the profession. Meanwhile, the company officer sitting across from them at the kitchen table may have positional authority but very little actual influence.

We can complain about that reality, or we can learn from it.

If our people are looking elsewhere for leadership, maybe our first question should not be, "Why are they listening to that person?" Maybe it should be, "Why aren't they listening to us?"

The answer often comes back to engagement. People want to feel known. They want to understand why their work matters. They want to see where they are going. Those needs are not unique to Gen Z. Most of us wanted the same things when we were young firefighters, sailors, soldiers, paramedics, or cops. The difference is that many of us were willing to wait years before expecting them from the organization. The next generation is less willing to wait, and I am not convinced that is entirely a bad thing.

FINDING A PLACE WITHIN THE FIRE SERVICE

A firefighter asking where they fit into the department's future gives us an opportunity to show them. A firefighter's question about why a policy exists allows us to teach its history and purpose. A firefighter with a different idea gives us an opportunity to examine whether our current approach is actually the best. We do not have to accept every suggestion, change every policy, or turn the station into a democracy. Giving somebody a voice is not the same as giving them the final vote.

That is especially important for experienced leaders to understand. A probationary firefighter does not have the same operational experience as a captain who has been riding the front seat for twenty years, and they should not. Experience matters. Rank matters. Competency matters. There will always be moments in this profession when an order must be followed immediately because someone's life depends on it.

But the kitchen table is not the fireground. We have far more opportunities to listen than we sometimes use.

That is where I come back to that microphone in my helicopter helmet. Making me listen for those first 25 hours taught me something valuable. I learned how an experienced aircrew communicated. I learned when to speak, what information mattered, the rhythm of a mission, and how professionals communicated when things got busy.

I would still teach those lessons to a young aircrewman today. I would still expect humility, preparation, competence, discipline, and respect for experience. I would find a way to give them the microphone sooner so I could hear what they were seeing, too. More importantly, I would want them to understand from the beginning that becoming part of the crew meant eventually contributing to it, not simply surviving long enough to earn permission to speak.

That is the challenge facing the fire service. We do not need to recreate our careers through the next generation. We need to prepare the next generation to carry the profession after we are gone. That requires us to protect the standards that define fire and EMS while being willing to change the methods we use to introduce people to those standards.

So here is my challenge this month. Find one of the next-generation firefighters in your department and sit down with them. Have a cup of coffee, grab lunch and sit at the kitchen table after the rigs are checked. Tell them one of your sea stories because those stories matter. They carry our history, our mistakes, our humor, and our culture.

But when you finish yours, ask for one of theirs.

Ask what brought them into the fire service. Ask what they want from this career. Ask what frustrates them about the organization. Ask where they get their information and who they listen to. Ask what they think the department does well and where they think it could improve. Then resist the temptation to immediately

explain why they are wrong, how much worse you had it, or what they will understand after another ten years on the job.
Just listen.
You do not have to lower a single standard to give a young firefighter a voice. You do not have to surrender your experience, your authority, or the traditions that still matter. You have to recognize that leadership is not forcing the next generation to become a copy of ours. It is preparing them to become the best version of themselves while carrying forward the values this profession cannot afford to lose.
Maybe that starts with something as simple as giving them the microphone a little sooner.
And as always…
If something in this column makes you pause…
If it creates an ah-ha moment…
If it causes you to see something differently…
Or if it is something you dismiss now but remember later when you need it…
Then it is doing its job.
That is why I am here.
That is the flipside.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

New York Court Rules on Fire District Authority Amid Dispute With Volunteer Fire Company; The Schuyler Heights Saga

A New York court has ruled that *a fire district acted within its authority in adopting policies governing access to its firehouse and rejected a challenge to the district's refusal to approve a fire company's nominee for chief engineer.* The court also transferred a challenge to the termination of the fire company's president to the Appellate Division for review.
The decision was handed down today by the Albany County Supreme Court in a dispute between the Schuyler Heights Fire Company, Inc. and the Schuyler Heights Fire District. The case was brought by the fire company, its former president, Elijah Jenkins, and current President Jeffrey Belschwinder.
The dispute reflects a broader conflict between members of the fire company and the district's Board of Fire Commissioners over the respective authority of the separately incorporated volunteer fire company and the fire district, a political subdivision of the state. Here is our earlier coverage of the case.
Jenkins became president of the Schuyler Heights Fire Company on January 1, 2025. According to the court, a dispute developed over company financial records that Jenkins claimed had not been turned over by DeAnna DiPofi, a former company treasurer who also served on the Board of Fire Commissioners.
On June 25, 2025, Jenkins hired a locksmith to gain access to a safe located in the firehouse believed to contain the financial records. The district owned the firehouse, but ownership of the safe was disputed. After the locksmith was unable to open the safe, Jenkins used the district's Jaws of Life in an attempt to open it. The fire company subsequently installed cameras inside the firehouse.
On August 26, 2025, the Board of Fire Commissioners brought disciplinary charges against Jenkins for his actions. Jenkins responded by issuing letters purporting to suspend several company officers, including two members of the Board of Fire Commissioners. *The board then amended the charges against Jenkins to include insubordination based in part on those suspensions and his continued activities as company president.*
The board appointed attorney Steven C. Kasarda to serve as hearing officer under General Municipal Law § 209-l. Following a November 4, 2025 hearing, Kasarda found Jenkins guilty of the charges and recommended that he be terminated. The Board of Fire Commissioners adopted the recommendation.
The dispute also extended to the selection of a chief engineer. The fire company nominated Kenneth Keefer Sr. for the position, but the Board of Fire Commissioners rejected the nomination. The company subsequently nominated Keefer a second time.
In addition, the board adopted two policies governing use of the firehouse. *A "Guests in the Firehouse" policy generally prohibited guests from the apparatus floor except during public events and certain other circumstances, and prohibited guests from attending company meetings at the firehouse without prior board approval.*

A second policy prohibited use of the firehouse lounge for any "event or function where credit is given, or if anyone is required or invited to attend." The district maintained that the restriction was based on the fact that the second-floor lounge was not accessible by elevator and could not be reached by some elderly and disabled individuals.

In March, the fire company, Jenkins and Belschwinder filed an Article 78 proceeding challenging the disciplinary actions and the two policies. They contended that the Board of Fire Commissioners had improperly intruded into matters involving the internal governance of the fire company.

The relationship between the company and district continued to deteriorate while the case was pending. The company eventually issued a "Formal Notice of Cease of Operation," declaring that it was separating from operational involvement with the district and directing its members not to participate in district operations while remaining members of the company.

Acting Justice Adam W. Silverman rejected the contention that the fire company could unilaterally separate itself from the fire district. Although a volunteer fire company may be separately incorporated, the court explained that New York law places it under the control of the governmental entity responsible for providing fire protection.

Quoting prior New York case law, the court said a fire district possesses "virtually total supervision and control over all aspects of the creation and staffing of fire companies as well as over the rules and regulations governing firefighting practices and procedures."

The court distinguished between the corporate affairs of a volunteer fire company and the operational responsibilities of a fire district. The fire company's officers are responsible for the civil operations of the nonprofit corporation, ***while firefighting operations, including the roles of the fire chief and line officers, are subject to the authority of the Board of Fire Commissioners.***

Applying those principles, Justice Silverman upheld the district's policies governing guests and use of the lounge. While acknowledging that restricting use of the lounge could be counterproductive and that restricting guests could make the firehouse "less welcoming and less likely to recruit and retain members," the court concluded that those considerations did not make the policies arbitrary or place them outside the district's authority.

The court also rejected the challenge concerning Keefer's nomination as chief engineer. Under Town Law § 176(11-a), members of a fire department nominate a candidate for chief, but the nomination is subject to approval by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Justice Silverman concluded that the commissioners were not required to explain their rejection of Keefer. Citing prior authority, he noted that a board of fire commissioners "may reject the nomination for any reason or no reason." Once the board rejected Keefer, the department was required to submit a new nominee rather than simply re-nominate him.

With regard to Jenkins' termination, the court concluded that jurisdiction to decide whether the disciplinary determination was supported by substantial evidence rested exclusively with the Appellate Division. Justice Silverman therefore severed that portion of the case and transferred it to the Appellate Division, Third Department.

The disciplinary challenge involving Belschwinder was dismissed as moot because the district had abandoned the disciplinary proceedings against him and he was no longer suspended.

The court denied the remaining relief sought by the fire company and the individual petitioners. Thus, Jenkins' challenge to his termination will continue before the Appellate Division, while the challenges to the district's firehouse policies and the rejection of Keefer's nomination were unsuccessful.

The fire district's attorney, Brad Pinsky, commented on the ruling::

- *This is a big deal for fire districts in New York.*
- *The members challenged the right of the fire district to create rules for the election of chiefs, to reject a chief, to reject the same nominee.*
- ***This is the first court decision ever to hold that the district has such rights.***
- *The court also held that the district can create rules for guests in the firehouse.*

[BUT, THEY STILL DON'T HAVE A FIRE COMPANY TO RESPOND TO CALLS, AND THE MENANDS FIRE COMPANY IS STILL USING THE FACILITY AFTER THEIR DEVISTATING FIRE. THE SAGA CONTINUES, WHERE IT WILL END IS ANYONE'S GUESS.]

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

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

POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

P O S I T I V E O U T C O M E S

***Sterling Heights (MI) Hosts Civilian Fire Academy

Miles Oates – live.com

Residents who have ever wondered what it is like to ride on a fire truck, respond to emergencies or wear firefighting gear will have a chance to find out this fall through the Sterling Heights Fire Department's Civilian Fire Academy.

The four-week program, which begins Sept. 10, is designed to give residents an inside look at the daily operations of the fire department and the responsibilities of firefighter-paramedics. Participants will take part in hands-on activities including vehicle extrication, technical rescue, fire attack training, CPR certification and demonstrations of firefighting equipment.

Interim Fire Chief Michael Amormino said the academy helps residents better understand the role firefighters play in the community.

"The fire department's a lot more than just going to calls and responding to 911 calls," Amormino said. "*Part of being a firefighter is education and being part of the community. This gives people a chance to come in and see what it's really like."*

The academy is limited in size because of its interactive nature. Participants will spend time using equipment, learning rescue techniques and experiencing simulated emergency situations. *Graduates will also have an opportunity to schedule a ride along at one of the city's five fire stations.*

According to Amormino, many residents are surprised to learn how much modern firefighters do beyond fighting fires.

"I think a lot of people just think firefighters go to fires and that's all we do," he said. "We respond to every 911 call. It could be a medical emergency, a car accident, a technical rescue, a hazardous materials situation or any number of service calls."

The Sterling Heights Fire Department responds to nearly 19,000 calls for service annually, he said.

To help residents understand those responsibilities, *the academy emphasizes hands-on learning rather than classroom lectures alone. Participants will have opportunities to handle equipment, practice rescue skills and experience conditions similar to what firefighters face.*

"It's a lot more fun when you can actually do some of the work," Amormino said. "People can put on the gear, see how much it weighs, cut apart vehicles, learn CPR and experience some of the things our firefighters do."

T*he program also serves as a way to introduce younger residents to careers in public safety*. Amormino said recruitment has become one of the biggest challenges facing fire departments nationwide.

"Recruitment is a huge challenge," he said. "A lot of people don't know what they want to do after high school, and there may be opportunities for us to introduce them to public service careers."

Amormino knows firsthand how impactful the academy can be. He participated in the Civilian Fire Academy as an 18-year-old before beginning his career in the fire service.

He said past participants have gone on to become firefighters, paramedics and health care professionals after discovering an interest in emergency services through the program.

Beyond career exploration, Amormino said the academy helps build trust between firefighters and the people they serve.

"When you start explaining what we do, the calls we go on and the responsibilities we have, it really builds trust with the profession," Amormino said.

The program is open to Sterling Heights residents who are at least 18 years old. Because some activities are physically demanding, participants should be prepared for active, hands-on training, though safety remains a top priority.

Applications are due by Sept. 1, and accepted applicants will be notified by Sept. 2.

Amormino hopes participants leave with a better understanding of the department and the firefighters who serve the city around the clock.

"We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," he said. "I hope people walk away understanding why we do what we do and how we serve the community."

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

- A Monroeville, Pennsylvania volunteer firefighter has been charged with vehicular homicide in the death of a motorist last year. Allegheny County police on Monday filed charges against Broderick Balanti, 30, who was en route to a call when his Chevy Malibu struck a vehicle driven by 88-year-old Leroy Hart in October 2025. Monroeville firefighters had been *dispatched to investigate an automatic fire alarm call* on Delaney Drive at 6:21 p.m. and the crash occurred five minutes later. The *fire alarm call was canceled* while firefighters were still en route, police said. Balanti had been charged with vehicular homicide, involuntary manslaughter, speeding and careless and reckless driving.

- RHINEBECK, N.Y. — Town Supervisor Elizabeth Spinzia called village Mayor Gary Bassett fiscally "incompetent" because, she said, financial details for two joint ventures were lacking. During a Town Board meeting on Monday, Oct. 5, Spinzia said there were insufficient details for both the environmental watchdog group Hudson 7 and the 2027 fire protection agreement for village services. "I think that village residents should be concerned with the lack of fiscal oversight by the Village Board of your fire department," she said. "We have two other fire departments covering us, Rhinecliff and Hillside, so we take up about 56% of the village's coverage. We're paying, instead of 56%, I think, 67% of their budget." The board unanimously approved a 2027 contract for $315,000, a 10.02% increase of $28,698. It is a significantly larger increase than the 2026 contract for $286,302. That represented a 3% increase of $8,339. "They made two … startling contradictory statements during the negotiations," Spinzia said, "one being that they audited us and found out we were underpaying and the second that they couldn't give us an actual (report) for expenses."

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SER1VICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

67

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:

- Five firefighters were hospitalized after two Morganville, New Jersey fire trucks were involved in a rear end collision. An engine ran into the rear of a ladder truck, the investigation into the collision continues.
- Three Mansfield, Texas firefighters, who were wearing seatbelts, are OK after their engine was hit by a car while blocking an incident. After a car crashed into the rig, the firefighters ran to help the driver, who was transported to a hospital in stable condition.

- Argenta-Oreana, Illinois Fire Chief Kurt L. Michener was involved in his own emergency while responding to a call, and he was not seriously injured.
- The Winchester (OH) Community Fire District says its rescue-pumper is “a total loss” after it caught fire inside the station, although quick response spared another vehicle and the structure. This seems to be happening all too frequently. Unfortunately it’s too early to determine the root cause. They are currently operating with a loaner engine from Wayne Township.
- No injuries were reported after a Chesterfield County fire truck was involved in a crash on Courthouse Road on Monday morning. Fire officials say a crew was leaving to go to a structure fire call from Fire Station 20. The fire truck had a green light while the other lanes of traffic had a red light. Officials said a dump truck headed south applied the brakes, but the truck’s real wheels locked up and jackknifed the trailer and truck. The truck’s trailer became dislodged and went across the median before hitting the fire truck. *Officials said the truck’s emergency brake was not connected to the dump truck. The truck’s Virginia State Inspection was also expired*. The driver was charged with reckless driving, failing to maintain proper control of his vehicle, and two counts of expired state inspection.

Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, in the News

- A Durham, North Carolina, firefighter was killed Thursday morning while battling a large building fire, according to WRAL. The fire was reported around 4 a.m. on Morley Drive near South Miami Boulevard. Video from the scene showed flames shooting through the roof. Part of the roof also appeared to have collapsed. Officials had not immediately released the identity of the firefighter who died or details about the circumstances of the death.
- An Eagle Rock, Virginia assistant fire chief has died of injuries suffered during a swift water rescue a decade ago. Assistant Chief Alan "Bubba" Wright was swept away by fast-moving water while assisting with rescue efforts after the area suffered extreme flooding in 2016. It's unclear how long Wright was under, but he was in cardiac arrest. Fellow firefighters-initiated CPR, and resuscitated him. He died this past weekend.
- The Londonderry, New Hampshire firefighter who caught fire during a call is now recovering at home. Lieutenant Mike England was responding to a house fire Friday night when a flashover occurred. England suffered a leg fracture and minor burns due to his newly issued PPE.
- A Smithfield, Virginia firefighter is facing alcohol-related charges following a fire engine crash last month. William Collins, 31, was responding to a possible structure fire Sept. 21 when the rig overturned. He was treated at a local hospital and released. After an investigation by Virginia State Police, Collins was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and failure to drive right of the center. Collins has been suspended by Smithfield Volunteer Fire Company.
- Two Charlotte, North Carolina firefighters were briefly trapped when the roof of a burning single family home collapsed ***about 10 minutes after crews arrived*** at a Woods Corner Court house fire. The two firefighters were temporarily unaccounted for before a mayday was called and both were confirmed safe.

*****The NYS Volunteer FF Cancer Program has changes coming***

The program was formerly managed by the Hartford Ins Co. is now going to be managed by Chubb Insurance, which is owned by its shareholders as a publicly traded company. *Note that coverage from competing insurance companies may be less expensive.*

Coverage limits will remain the same and all 3 components remain the same: lump-sum, LTD and death benefit. Firefighters will be divided into 4 classes; Class 1 Interior Firefighters, Class 2 retired interior firefighters, Class 3 exterior firefighters and Class 4 retired exterior firefighters.

Like everything else the price is going to increase with some exceptions. Chubb rates will be as follows:

Option 1: Enhanced Basic Coverage

Class 1 $190.00 per person/year

Class 2 $171.00 per person/year

Class 3 $190.00 per person/year

Class 4 $171.00 per person/year

Option 2: Enhanced Basic Coverage with Supplementary Enhanced Cancer Rider:

Class 1 $261.00 per person/year
Class 2 $236.00 per person/year
Class 3 $261.00 per person/year
Class 4 $236.00 per person/year

Or:

- -Basic Coverage increase of $42.93
- -Enhanced Coverage increase of $73.29

The Enhanced Basic Coverage with Supplementary Enhanced Cancer Rider is Chubb's all-inclusive plan that covers all cancers, as opposed to just the cancers that are named in the original law (GML 205-cc).

Those listed as retired will have lower premiums than current classifications. As a result, working with your agency administrator and your insurance agent/provider your members will need to be divided into the 4 classifications. The good news is that we will be looking forward to easier claims processing with pay outs within 24 hours.

For more information speak with your insurance agent.

Chubb will be establishing and host a New York website with policy information.

Plus, Changing Reporting Requirements from DHSES – OFPC: Dates due have changed!

Note that this rule change was published in the New York State Register on June 3rd, 2026.

- The reporting year will be January 1st through December 31st rather than December 1st through November 31st.
- A fire district, department or company must submit to the Office of Fire Prevention and Control by **MARCH 15 *and annually thereafter*** an attestation (**form-EOSB 210.5**) that the fire district, department or company will provide the enhanced cancer disability benefit by:
    - carrying an insurance policy issued by an insurance company authorized to engage in the business of insurance in this State sufficient to cover its eligible volunteer firefighters and provide a death benefit to their beneficiaries; or
    - proof that the authority having jurisdiction: (i) possesses taxing authority; and (ii) has agreed in writing to fund any and all claims of eligible volunteer firefighters and their beneficiaries through existing and future revenues (*self-insured, assumes the responsibility to pay claims*).
- Annual claims report (**form-ESOB.8C**). The fire district, department or company shall report to the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, no later than **MARCH 15 *and annually thereafter***, on the claims and benefits payments for the reporting year using forms prescribed by the Office of Fire Prevention and Control.
    - This report must be signed by the head of the department or company, sworn to under penalty of perjury as true, correct and complete ***and shall be notarized***.
- Annual roster of interior firefighters (**form-ESOB-210.8R**). The fire district, department or company shall report to the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, no later than **MARCH 15 *and annually thereafter***, a complete list of its ***interior firefighters*** for the reporting year.

COMPLETE DOCUMENT WITH CHANGES FROM DHSES/OFPC RULE MAKING OPEN THIS LINK:
https://cafda.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Changes-to-Cancer-Reporting-2026-22-N.Y.-St.-Reg.-22.pdf

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HE 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	61
10/2/26, Rochester, Monroe Co. Male age n/a	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	115
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	916

Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	**#1 PA 67**
	#2 NY 61
	#3 OH 49
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1397 = 34.0 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?**	

States Allow Solar Panels for Balconies. Safety Guidelines Haven't Caught Up

Alex Brown, Stateline.org

Over the past year and a half, a dozen states have embraced a new vision for solar power: small, cheap panels that can be hung from a balcony or porch, be plugged into a standard wall outlet and take a dent out of residents' utility bills.

These systems, known as balcony solar or plug-in solar, are attractive because they can be installed without permits, contractors or large investments. They can allow renters to tap into clean electricity.

Lawmakers say the systems can help at a time when residents' power bills are skyrocketing and utilities are struggling to keep pace with demand. They also can be paired with a battery, which can provide backup power during area outages.



Backers see a future in which solar panels deployed across millions of balconies, porches and yards could ease strain on the electrical grid and save residents hundreds of dollars each year on their power bills.

Twelve states — Republican and Democratic alike — have recently passed bills authorizing residents to install such systems. Nine have been signed into law, while three are awaiting signatures from a governor.

But for most Americans, even some in states that have passed laws, the systems still sit in a legal gray area. That's because the "plug and play" simplicity that creates balcony solar's appeal might not yet work safely with most household electrical systems, experts and utilities say. Work is underway to develop industry standards for such products, and advocates agree that such guidelines are necessary to draw manufacturers to the U.S. market.

Backers say that plug-in solar systems have a long track record of operating safely in Germany and other countries, and argue that it's imperative for the standards to allow for products that do not require a permit, home upgrades or a certified electrician to install.

Meanwhile, power utilities haven't strongly opposed the bills, though some have expressed concerns that unregistered systems could affect power flows or endanger line workers.

For all the legislative action to boost balcony solar, advocates say the market won't take off until safety groups give the all-clear for systems that don't require red tape or electrical upgrades.

SOLAR BILLS

The recent burst of balcony solar bills kicked off in Utah. Republican state Rep. Ray Ward read an article about the balcony solar boom in Germany, where the devices have surged in popularity and are widely available in stores such as IKEA.

In Germany, more than 1 million balcony solar systems have been installed across the country, providing more than 2 gigawatts of power — the equivalent of a large power plant.

"I thought, 'How come I cannot do that in Utah and in the U.S.?'" Ward said.

In Utah, as in many states, putting any amount of power onto the grid requires a contract with a utility, an impossible barrier for the average homeowner. Ward's bill removes that requirement for solar panels up to 1,200 watts, roughly the amount of power used by a hair dryer.

The bill passed unanimously through both houses of the Utah legislature last year, and Ward has balcony solar at his home. But the law also requires systems to meet National Electrical Code and Underwriters Laboratories certification standards, guidelines that are still in development.

"The safety standards don't exist, even though the products are plainly safe," Ward said. "There is a way to make it safe, as Germany has shown, and we've just got to get safety standards in place here."

Since Utah's bill became law, state lawmakers across the country have drafted similar bills.

Many of the bills also prevent landlords and homeowners associations from restricting balcony solar. And many also seek to establish safety guidelines for the technology.

"These things are just easy, simple, affordable, permitless ways to generate your own electricity — in whatever your living arrangement is — that enables everyone to contribute to reducing energy consumption in our country," said Virginia state Sen. Scott Surovell, a Democrat.

His bill drew bipartisan support and was signed into law in April.

In New York, a bill passed in May awaits action by Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul.

"These solar panels could help you save 10% of your electricity bill each month, which is significant considering how much costs are going up," said New York state Sen. Liz Krueger, a Democrat who sponsored the balcony solar bill. "In New York city, a huge percentage of us are renters, and up until now there's been no way for us to participate in green energy or energy lowering projects."

Krueger said Hochul may ask for some small technical changes, which lawmakers are prepared to adopt.

Colorado enacted a new law in May.

"With power prices going up, people are wanting to find a way to be able to participate and have some control over their own energy," said Colorado state Sen. Cathy Kipp, a Democrat who sponsored the measure. "As more states adopt it, it will drive down costs, which will further increase adoption."

Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey and Vermont have also enacted balcony solar laws since 2025. Bills in California and Massachusetts have passed and sit on the governor's desk.

The state measures have been supported by Bright Saver, a nonprofit advocacy group that envisions 60 million balcony solar panels deployed across the country by 2035. Cora Stryker, the group's co-founder, said several lawmakers told her they'd never seen a measure go from an idea to a law so quickly.

But the success of those new laws, she said, hinges on the development of safety standards that allow balcony solar systems to be simple "plug and play" devices.

"The widespread adoption we're talking about will only happen when we get out of this legal gray area and every American can feel confident that they can plug it in without contacting their utility," she said.

Bright Saver sells balcony solar systems at cost, offering 180-watt panels for $285 and 360-watt panels for $414. But it cannot sell to customers in some states that have passed solar legislation, because products don't yet exist that can meet their safety certifications.

Other companies sell kits online, but experts say it's hard for customers to know if those devices meet safety thresholds. While backers do not have estimates for nationwide adoption totals, they say the numbers will remain low until balcony solar systems are widely available at popular retailers.

SAFETY STANDARDS

Underwriters Laboratories, a global safety science company, recently issued certification standards that would require residents to modify circuits before plugging in devices — a hurdle that advocates fear could slow the adoption of balcony solar.

The main concern, experts say, is that power outlets in U.S. homes are not designed to carry power in two directions. ***Sending electricity back into the system could bypass circuit protection devices, overloading wires and creating fire or shock hazards.***

"Some of these (bills and laws) are a little ahead of their time," said Nadav Enbar, program manager at the nonprofit Electric Power Research Institute. "There isn't yet a product that can meet the letter of the law."

Some of the state laws call for products to achieve certification from Underwriters Laboratories. The company issued its certification program, known as an outline of investigation, in January.

While those guidelines are still working through a committee process — which could take a year or more — to be finalized as a permanent standard, the company says they still count as official certification for manufacturers seeking to comply with state laws.

The current certification requires residents to modify circuits in their home to safely receive electricity. Electrical experts said it's possible that manufacturers will eventually be able to develop balcony solar systems that address the circuit overload concerns with onboard technology.

"Could there in the future be another way to address these problems? Sure," said Joe Bablo, principal engineering manager with UL Solutions, one of the three organizations that makes up Underwriters Laboratories. "Will the standard adapt to that? Of course."

The certification also requires the use of a proprietary connector that ensures the blades will not continue carrying electricity after being unplugged from the wall.

The National Electric Code offers another possibility for a widely accepted standard that manufacturers could follow, but new revisions to the code will not be issued until 2029.

Some utilities have also raised concerns about large-scale adoption affecting local power flows, or solar systems feeding power into the grid during blackouts and putting line workers at risk. *Utility leaders have called for a program that requires balcony solar users to register or notify utilities when installing their devices.*

"We just need people to let us know what they're plugging in, so we can track anything that feeds back into the grid and can be a danger to line workers," said David Eisenhauer, spokesperson for the California power utility Southern California Edison.

The utility initially opposed the California bill, but adopted a neutral position after language was added to allow utilities to require registration of balcony solar units.

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

*****Don't Neglect Your 7% Players*****

Joe Maruca

YEARS AGO, I attended a Boston (MA) University Women's Basketball game with my kids. At the end of the game, I noticed that the winning margin was almost the same number of points that the "bench" had scored. The "stars" on both teams, the ones everyone knows, cheers for, and who overwhelmingly play the most time on the court, essentially fought each other to a tie. But if it were not for those who played the least, the game would have been lost.

This experience led me to have a management "moment" as I thought about leading a volunteer fire and EMS force. *I realized that we neglect the 7%, 8%, and 9% players in our organizations and over focus on the 90% players who are our superstars. And what we miss is that without the 7% players (as I've come to call them), the overall organization doesn't perform as well.*

A NOTEWORTHY COMPARISON

As important as our 90% players are, they tend to cast a shadow over the value of the 7% players and the team building for long-term success of a volunteer fire and EMS department. While our superstar volunteers show up for many emergency calls and it feels like they are there 90% of the time, when you dig into the individual response data (just as sports teams look at individual player data), *I discovered that without the 7% players we would get caught short-staffed more often and lose the battle or at least work harder than we needed to. We tend to overlook the level of skill, special talents, and commitment that the 7% players bring to our departments.*

Think about it: How often do we say or hear about the need to clear the "deadwood" from our volunteer rosters? Are we really talking about deadwood or are we clearing valuable 7% players from our rosters? We need to look deeper before we start cutting people. We need to identify and separate the 7% players who contribute to our success.

My department responds to about 750 emergency calls per year. This means that someone who responds to 7% of those calls goes on one call per week. Having seven volunteers, each responding to one call a week, means we get one extra firefighter or EMS responder each day. Yes, this is a mathematical simplification because in reality it never works out in such a linear way, *but generally, without your 7% players, you will be operating one person short more often than you think.*

Who are the valuable 7% players? I see a few defining factors. First, they aren't troublemakers with big egos. They're mission driven. They keep up with training and skills. I came to appreciate people who came to more training than emergency calls. *They don't take many calls because of real constraints on their time and*

availability. They are single parents, they commute hours to and from work, they have two jobs to pay their bills, they are caring for young kids or older parents, or some combination of these kinds of activities. When you look closely, you realize how amazing it is that they make 7% of the emergency calls. Making time to serve in your department requires a great deal of commitment and motivation on their part.

A RANGE OF VALUABLE SKILLS

Avoid overlooking the special talents some of your 7% players bring to your department. Is one of them a CPA who can help you at budget time or with financial presentations to your governing board? Does one of them have teaching skills that make them an excellent choice for doing school visits or community programs? Do any of them have jobs as professional truck drivers, engineers, nurses, or other civilian jobs with skills that many departments don't have? Preserving a responder role for these 7% players in a volunteer organization allows you to tap into these special talents.

THE VALUE OF LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERS

Avoid being too quick to retire older, long-term volunteers whose participation may be waning. They can bring experience and maturity to an incident that make for a better team and serve as a model for our newer members. *They can also make good instructors, safety officers, and communications officers and help staff the command post.*

It is important that 7% players are well-trained. If they can't attend many traditional drill nights, they must find alternate ways to train and maintain their skills. *It's up to us in leadership to create and maintain those alternate paths for them. It's more work for us, but it results in greater department success*. Those who won't train, whether they are 7% players or 90% players, are liabilities.

We will always cheer for and recognize the superstar volunteers. They will tend to get the promotions and fire-fighter of the year awards, and they'll appear invaluable to the department. ***As leaders, we need to make the effort to understand, appreciate, reward, and encourage our 7% players.*** *Their presence and contributions are more important to a department's success than we might realize.*

CHANGING ORGANIZATIONS

Sea Breeze Fire District dissolution plan heads to public hearing at fire station on Oct. 29

Hunter Wright, News 10NBC

The Sea Breeze Fire District Board has endorsed a plan to dissolve the district and transfer its services to the Point Pleasant Fire District.

The board approved the proposed dissolution plan at a meeting on Sept. 22. A public hearing on the plan is scheduled for Oct. 29 at the Sea Breeze Fire Station.

If the plan is approved, the dissolution would take effect Oct. 31, with the Point Pleasant Fire District taking over fire and EMS responsibilities.

For a link to the dissolution plan, **click here.**

Eldridge, IA, Votes to Take Over Fire Department Despite Volunteers' Objections

Sarah Watson, Quad City Times

The Eldridge City Council voted Monday to establish a city fire department and hire a fire chief, going against the wishes of the Eldridge Volunteer Fire Company, which wanted to remain independent for a longer period of time.

The city council voted 5-0 on Monday to establish the department, with several council members citing the advice from their attorney and insurance representatives.

The decision ends months of negotiations among the city council, city staff, and fire department volunteers over how best to address volunteer burnout and rising calls for service.

Negotiations to become a city department soured over the winter, and the fire department volunteers instead voted unanimously to stay independent, citing a loss of trust that city officials could run the department.

The department proposed hiring its own paid, full-time chief to respond to daytime calls and operate like an independent contractor, billing the city for its expenses. But city officials wanted more oversight over the fire department's budget and standards.
In a joint meeting on Sept. 9, both the city and the fire department laid out proposals for moving forward.
The city's attorney, Allison Wright and the fire department's attorney, Dan Morgan, met several times in the next month to discuss the proposals, Wright said.
The volunteers' non-negotiables, Wright said, were a three-year minimum transition period; the volunteers would hire the chief; *the volunteers would have operational control*; and they would operate under the same budget the volunteers proposed to the city earlier this year.
Wright said a 28-E agreement was required for Eldridge to continue operating fire services with a nonprofit fire department, *but a 28-E agreement would provide more city oversight than volunteers wanted*, Wright said.
Iowa Code Chapter 28-E allows local governments to enter into agreements with other local governments or private entities to share services. The cities of Davenport, Bettendorf, Riverdale, and Panorama Park share expenses under a 28-E agreement for wastewater treatment at a single plant in Davenport, for example. The chapter requires an administrator or a joint board to oversee the services. On a joint board, public entities must be represented, according to state code.
"I cannot write a 28E agreement that is consistent with 28E that provides that the city has no accountability or oversight for the fire protection services agreement," Wright said.
Council member Scott LaPlante, in explaining his vote, said he had hoped after the Sept. 9 meeting that the city and fire department would be able to compromise, but that his hope was extinguished when the fire department outlined its "red lines" that were non-negotiable.
"The city council is making a choice to move forward," LaPlante said.
Another Council member, Ryan Iossi, likewise said he'd hoped to reach a compromise, but it didn't work out.
Iossi said *it's the city attorney's and the insurance carriers' opinion that the city should avoid entering into an agreement that doesn't comply with state law.*
"At the end of the day, if we're being advised that what is on the table as the final red-line proposal is not a safe move and is recommended not to do it, I take that with heavy consideration," Iossi said. "And it's going to be painful either way. Are we going to have a painful short term? Or are we going to have a painful long term?"
Mayor Scott Campbell thanked the volunteer firefighters and asked them to give the city a chance.
"I'm really asking them to dig down deep and think hard about joining us and just giving us a chance," Campbell said. "Hopefully, there's not going to be a lot of change. Yes, you will report to a new chief. But other than that, everything is going to be pretty much status quo. You're going to report to the same station. you're going to use the same equipment. *You're going to still get your paid-for-call.* And most importantly, you're still going to get to serve your friends and neighbors and community like you have done so well for so many years."
Previously, firefighters said they would quit by Dec. 31 if the city rejected the fire department's proposal and established its own city department.

Over half of CT's fire departments are volunteer. A shortage is sparking a fire protection audit

John Henry Smith

Connecticut has long relied on volunteer firefighters, particularly in smaller and more rural communities. But the state's volunteer fire service is shrinking rapidly, prompting officials to consider new ways of recruiting firefighters and providing fire protection.
A 2025 examination by the state comptroller found that Connecticut had lost nearly two-thirds of its volunteer firefighters since 2017. State Fire Administrator Jeffrey Morrissette said of all the firefighters or all the fire departments in Connecticut, a little over 60% are the volunteer departments currently.
"We had a whole host of reasons why people are leaving and why people are staying," Morrissette said.
Morrissette himself is scheduled to leave his position Oct. 1 after nearly 42 years with the Connecticut fire service.

WHY VOLUNTEERS ARE LEAVING

Morrissette said the state recently surveyed firefighters who entered the profession over the past decade to better understand why some remained while others left their departments. The survey received responses from about 10% of more than 6,000 firefighters contacted.

Among the reasons cited were people moving away, poor leadership within departments, health problems, a lack of training opportunities and changing family circumstances.

Finances played a big role as well.

"It's very common to have the need for a two-income family, as an example. So it doesn't leave a lot of time to volunteer," he said.

DAYTIME STAFFING IS A CONCERN

The decline in volunteers is already creating challenges in some communities, particularly during weekday hours when many volunteers are at work.

Morrissette said the state needs more data to fully understand the extent of the problem, but there are anecdotal concerns about daytime fire protection in rural areas.

Some communities are responding by hiring paid firefighters during the day, while relying more heavily on volunteers during evenings and weekends.

Automatic mutual aid has also become increasingly common. When a structure fire is confirmed, neighboring departments can be automatically dispatched to provide additional firefighters and equipment.

"So, you know, again, communities are seeing some of the impacts, and they are making changes to their response patterns and how they work with their local communities," Morrissette said.

A MORE REGIONAL APPROACH

Morrissette said regionalization could become increasingly important as departments struggle with staffing and rising equipment costs.

Connecticut has about 300 fire departments serving 169 municipalities and two tribal nations. Some communities have multiple independent fire companies, creating another potential opportunity for consolidation or collaboration.

Morrissette said a new pumper truck can cost between $700,000 and $1.2 million, while some ladder trucks now approach $2 million.

And, Morrissette said, ***having more equipment is not necessarily useful if there are not enough firefighters to operate it.[WHICH SEEMS TO BE COMPLETELY LOST ON MANY DEPARTMENTS.]***

"It really does no good if you have a structure fire and you have, say, eight fire apparatus responding, but there's only eight firefighters, one per apparatus," he said.

DOES CONNECTICUT NEED A NEW MODEL?

Morrissette said some communities may eventually decide that consolidating departments or adding more paid firefighters makes sense. *But he said he expects greater collaboration and regionalization to be part of the state's response rather than simply replacing volunteers with paid firefighters.*

The state is beginning work under a new law that will require local communities to submit fire protection plans starting in July 2027. The plans are intended to give residents a clearer picture of the level of fire protection available in their communities.

Morrissette said the state is also examining whether Connecticut could provide more administrative and operational support to local departments, potentially drawing on models such as California's CAL FIRE system.

"Communities need to look at their response data, their response capability, if they are meeting standards," he said. "And that's some of the work that we as the state will be kicking off."

TRYING TO RECRUIT YOUNGER FIREFIGHTERS

Morrissette said the state is looking for new ways to introduce young people to the fire service, including partnerships between fire departments and schools.

The state has also begun using virtual reality simulators that allow young people to experience what it is like to enter a burning building and operate a fire hose.

The state is also encouraging more fire-service pathway programs in schools. Morrissette cited a program in Windsor that recently attracted more than 90 people interested in learning about careers in fire and emergency services.

"We always say firefighters are the best recruitment tool," Morrissette said. "Recruit their family, friends, colleagues into either the career or the volunteer fire service."

FIRE APPARATUS

The Most Innovative Fire Apparatus Are Built With Intention

Robert Policht

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Some of the best fire and rescue apparatus features aren't flashy, but they make the job safer and more intuitive for firefighters.*
- Often, the trailer on tractor-drawn aerial fire vehicles is the most customizable part of the rig. Departments should take advantage of that flexibility to build an apparatus that truly fits their needs.
- Void areas in fire apparatus, such as around wheel wells and under seats inside of the cab, can be used to store essential equipment.

Fire and rescue apparatus form the backbone of our operational capability. The way that we plan and develop them has a direct effect on how effectively we serve the community. It demands clarity, realism and the kind of ingenuity that firefighters always have relied on. Too often, departments skip this foundational step, because they feel pressured by timelines or budgets.

Departments also might skip planning and development because of the availability of "off the line" or "in-progress" builds. These rigs come with many elements already selected or built. Although such vehicles can suit some agencies' needs, one must remember that the concept leaves limited room for customization. ***If you don't define your jurisdictional needs first, you risk accepting a rig that is almost, but not quite, right, and "not quite" becomes a daily frustration for the next 20 years or more.***

Once you establish your core requirements, you can shape the apparatus around them. This is where planning becomes both technical and creative.

STRATEGICALLY RELEVANT

After building the fundamental concept for your jurisdiction, you can expand your thinking to include mutual-aid partners and surrounding communities.

Does your ladder truck complement neighboring departments' aerial capabilities? Does your rescue rig fill gaps in regional tool caches? Does your pumper support water supply operations beyond your town? These considerations help to ensure that your apparatus isn't just functional; it's strategically relevant.

When a department purchases a rig that already is in progress, by the time that it sees the spec sheet, half of the decisions are locked in. This makes it more difficult to adapt the rig to unique needs or to incorporate creative solutions.

Departments often struggle here because personnel changes. In career departments, members retire or transfer. In volunteer departments, the door constantly revolves with new members and new ideas. If something on the rig isn't ideal, people adapt, complain or work around it.

Development requires intentionality. You must capture good ideas, evaluate them and incorporate the ones that make sense. Firefighters always have been masters of improvisation, and the apparatus should reflect that.

SMALL CONCEPTS, BIG BENEFITS

Some of the best features that are on apparatus aren't flashy. They're simple and smart. and they are built to solve everyday problems.

Morristown, NJ, Fire Department (MFD) Ladder 1, which is a Pierce tractor-drawn aerial (TDA), offers several examples of small decisions that make a big difference.

An air outlet that's tucked inside of a tractor compartment allows firefighters to fill equipment without exposing the connection to weather or damage.

Wheel chocks are mounted on the rear tractor fender instead of hung under the body. The latter approach makes the chocks susceptible to being smashed on curbs, rocks and snowbanks.

The department also addressed one of the most overlooked issues on tillers: the drain. By piping it through the center of the fifth wheel, water is directed away from operators.

Another strong example comes from the new FDNY Seagrave tillers. The rigs' onboard air line quick-connect is mounted on the exterior of the tractor but recessed into the body, so it remains protected from bumps and everyday wear. It's a different approach from the MFD's interior-mounted outlet, but it solves the same problem: keeping the air connection accessible yet shielded.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Vented compartments are another smart feature. Saws, fuel cans and other equipment that traditionally live in compartments that are prone to fumes or heat buildup benefit from dedicated ventilation. It's a small detail that improves safety and reduces wear on the equipment.

When developing the trailer on a tiller or TDA, departments must think carefully about what to mount and where to mount it. Some trailers have full compartments along both sides of the rig. Others mount ground ladders externally on both sides, such as what's found on a pumper. Some choose to cut down compartments to increase visibility for the member who operates the tiller.

In certain designs, the cut-down section becomes a perfect place to mount a small vent-enter-search ladder.

All of these decisions depend on operational priorities, staffing and environment. Often, the trailer is the most customizable part of a TDA.

Departments should take advantage of that flexibility to build something that truly fits their needs.

ACCESS MAXIMIZED

Mounting larger equipment, such as struts, requires even more forethought. *Struts, hooks, poles and similar tools don't belong tossed into a compartment. They need a dedicated space that allows quick access and safe removal.*

Iselin, NJ, Fire Department's Rescue 11-3 is a great example of clever thinking about tool storage. The department specified a compartment for stabilization equipment that has vertical pull-out trays. This allows crews to work off either side of the apparatus. The concept is efficient and organized and built with purpose. Stabilization equipment can be bulky. Nevertheless, when needed, it should be quickly accessible. Designing a compartment that's specifically for it is one of the smartest decisions that a rescue company can make.

SMALL IMPROVEMENTS ADD UP

Departments continue to find creative ways to use engineered voids and dead space. Most manufacturers offer recessed exterior mounts for hooks and water cans, to keep those items accessible without cluttering the cab. Some apparatus makers cut compartments around wheel wells for extinguishers or SCBA cylinders, to maximize storage without compromising structure, with Seagrave's TDAs being an example.

Some apparatus use voids that are located under the seats inside of the vehicle's cab.

Both methods work, and both demonstrate how departments can use otherwise wasted space to store essential equipment. Sometimes, it's as simple as an opening that has a strap or a small compartment that has cradles and a door.

On pumpers, something as simple as attaching cross-linked polyethylene (PEX) piping to a manual master intake valve drain keeps water off of the pump operator.

ANTICIPATING FUTURE NEEDS

All of the examples that are noted above highlight a core truth: *Ingenuity doesn't require major redesigns. It requires awareness, creativity and a willingness to challenge "the way that we always have done it."*

Further, *apparatus planning isn't a one-time event. It's a continual cycle of reevaluating what you have versus what you will need*. Build times stretch years, and the rig that you order today will enter service in a different operational environment. Buildings change. Jurisdictions evolve. Staffing models shift. Technology advances. Planning for the future means building apparatus for what you need and where your department is going.

The best apparatus are built with intention. They reflect the realities of the jurisdiction, the experience of the firefighters who will operate them and the foresight to anticipate future needs. Whether it's a recessed air outlet, a dedicated stabilization bay or a clever use of wheel-well voids, the small decisions matter. They make rigs safer, more efficient and more durable. They ensure that the apparatus remains an asset for the next generation of firefighters.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

- Nothing outstanding this week.

NEIGHBOR'S HELPING NEIGHBORS, thank you for your support

Hoags Corners VFD

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

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

Next Breakfast Date, Sunday October 18th, hope you can join us.

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

Next Breakfast will be held Sunday December 6 from 8 to 11:30am

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Speigletown Fire Department Breakfast 2nd Sunday of each month

Sunday November 8th from 7:30 to 11:30, $10 adults, $5 children, under 5 free

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Town of Mohawk Fire Department

Our 2027 Pancake & French Toast Breakfasts are officially on the calendar:
January 10
February 14
March 14
Pancakes, French toast, sliced ham, eggs, and plenty of good company.

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

The Apparatus Architect: Fleet Alternatives to Buying New

Tom Shand & Mike Wilbur

Any fire department that recently received bids for a new apparatus recognized that the marketplace has changed, resulting in extended delivery times and a dramatic increase in cost. Macroeconomic conditions along with geopolitical issues created a series of conditions by which the fire apparatus industry is experiencing unprecedented production backlogs, exponential increases in costs for raw materials and electronic components, and labor shortages.

Budgets for capital projects often are determined six months or more ahead of the beginning of a fiscal year, with the anticipation of bidding new vehicles shortly thereafter. In many cases, fleet managers are struggling to acquire needed vehicles because of the increased cost and delayed deliveries (18–24 months). Therefore, apparatus that were slated to be removed from the fleet or to be placed into reserve status now are being relied on to provide frontline service for extended periods. All of these circumstances result in increased operating expenses for and frustrations in stabilizing the vehicle fleet.

Although some departments have sufficient financial resources to afford new apparatus today, others that aren't funded by the municipal tax base and that rely on fundraisers and donations are at a significant disadvantage. The cost of a new apparatus is beyond the means of many communities.

Several alternatives to purchasing a new apparatus should be considered when evaluating your department's vehicle fleet, including acquiring a used piece of apparatus and rebuilding one or more current rigs to extend their life cycle.

USED APPARATUS MARKETPLACE

Some departments never have been able to afford a new apparatus, and given today's cost of the latest engine and ladder apparatus, even well-funded organizations that purchased new in the past might find that path beyond their reach. Thus, acquiring a used apparatus that's newer and in better condition than the one that's planned to be replaced might be worthy of consideration.

The used fire apparatus market has been relatively stable price-wise over the years, with a slight increase during the period of 2007–2010 because of a combination of the economy, Environmental Protection Agency regulations on diesel engine emissions and changes to *NFPA 1901: Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus*. Furthermore, prior to the pandemic, the availability of used fire apparatus and the subsequent sales of these vehicles didn't experience year-to-year fluctuations.

Unfortunately, the extended delivery times for new apparatus has affected the availability of high-quality used rigs (a decrease of as much as 40 percent) and the cost of these vehicles (at an all-time high).

Several websites provide resources where potential buyers can input criteria for a vehicle (commercial or custom chassis) that they seek, including build year, manufacturer, model, pump rating, water tank size and budget, to provide real-time information on vehicle availability that matches the criteria.

REBUILDING EXISTING RIGS

The history of apparatus rebuilding can be traced back to the late 1970s, when many departments' fleets suffered from premature rust and corrosion of the steel body and water tank components. During this period, hundreds of rigs were rebuilt with new aluminum or stainless steel bodywork along with upgrades to the pump, piping and warning lights. As new NFPA 1901 standards were introduced, canopy cab rigs were provided with four-door cab enclosures; eventually, steel cabs were replaced with aluminum four-door cabs to enhance crew protection.

During the latter part of the 1980s, inflationary pressures caused new apparatus prices to spike; several apparatus manufacturers required a down payment at contract or progress payments, as unstable material costs affected the industry. At the same point, NFPA 1901 changes for enclosed cabs and aerial ladder enhancements required the apparatus industry to redesign many of its products to comply with the new requirements. Fire departments were quick to assess their fleet to determine which units would make sense to rebuild to extend their life cycle.

Today, *NFPA 1912: Standard for Fire Apparatus Refurbishing* provides excellent guidance. This includes a detailed questionnaire to determine the extent of work that should be conducted on the apparatus, including to meet the requirements of NFPA 1901.

Before setting out to determine the extent of the project, five matters should be scrutinized.

- At what point will the department be in a position to replace the rebuilt rig with a new unit or a newer used apparatus? The answer to this question helps to determine how many years of additional frontline or reserve service are needed to get the apparatus to the finish line. Some departments that can't afford a new unit tend to spend whatever funds that they have in their coffers on refurbishment, only to find that they unknowingly increased the annual cost of ownership because of extensive upgrades, despite only needing to get another 3–4 years of service life.
- Compare the characteristics of the rebuild candidate rig to newer units that are in your department's fleet to determine which components and equipment must be upgraded to meet the rebuilt vehicle's primary mission. Units that have been problematic because of drivetrain issues, that have marginal axle ratings and/or that are overweight generally aren't good candidates for rebuilding unless the budget for the project addresses these issues.
- Although not set in stone, apparatus models for which replacement parts are scarce or that were made by a manufacturer that no longer is in business can cause delays in the rebuild process once the unit is torn down to identify components that require replacement.
- *Depending on the desired life-cycle extension, the total cost of the project shouldn't exceed more than 40 percent of the cost of a new apparatus. That said, there might be times when this number can be exceeded, particularly when the rebuilt vehicle must provide more than 8–10 years of additional frontline service. Depending on the average age of other units that are in the fleet, rigs that are newer than 15 years old tend to be more reliable than units that are 15 years and older, including in consideration of repair and replacement parts being difficult or impossible to acquire.*

FLEET OPTIONS

Departments have had to adapt to economic pressures and budget constraints to maintain an acceptable level of fire protection for the community that they serve. The current fire apparatus market presents some challenges that chief officers and fleet managers must address.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

I'm supposed to respect my elders, but now it's getting harder and harder for me to find one.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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If your Fire District is a member, you are a member!!

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The Weekly Capital Bulletin is reaching well over 700+ subscribed fire district members and now other members of the fire service on a regular basis.

This is a service of CAFDA through the effort of Tom Rinaldi who can be reached at tom@rinaldi1.com for comments and content contributions are always welcome.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Additional concerns raised by coalition members include:

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

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

· Reports of internal communications that, according to proponents, discuss efforts to oppose or delay nominal compensation initiatives.
· Public comments and social media interactions that seemingly discouraged open discussion among volunteer firefighters with differing viewpoints.
Despite these concerns, coalition members emphasize that their goal is not to create division within the fire service. "This issue is bigger than any single organization," coalition representatives stated. "Every volunteer firefighter in New York deserves to have their concerns heard and their service valued. We remain committed to working with any organization that is willing to engage in constructive dialogue about solutions."
The coalition also believes it is important to address a recent article published in the July/August edition of The Volunteer Firefighter magazine. Unfortunately, the article presents a significantly different picture than what coalition members have experienced firsthand throughout this process. Several statements and characterizations in the article are inaccurate, incomplete, untrue or fail to reflect the reality of the discussions, negotiations, and actions that have occurred.
As a result, readers should be aware that the article does not fully represent the facts surrounding the issue of nominal compensation and the efforts undertaken by coalition members to advance this important legislation on behalf of New York's volunteer firefighters.
FASNY's mission, as stated on their website is, "To serve the volunteer fire and EMS services, and the public they serve, through education, advocacy, recruitment and retention, recognition and community service." Their organizational vision is, "To be the respected voice for legislation, regulation and standards while serving as the preeminent resource for recruitment, education and retention for the fire and EMS personnel." FASNY was established in 1872 and has provided an important voice for the volunteer fire and EMS service in New York state. However, they have no responsibility to provide fire and EMS service delivery. That is the responsibility of local government entities (towns, villages, fire districts) throughout the state. Respectfully, FASNY can be more accurately compared to a "union" for the volunteer fire and EMS service with a responsibility to advocate for benefits to support our brave first responders.
Unfortunately, they believe that because of the amount of financial assets they have, they are THE VOICE for the fire and EMS service at large. Although they do have a strong presence in the halls of Albany and political influence, they are not THE VOICE of the entire fire service. They are just "A" voice. Although they were at the table and agreed to support the nominal compensation initiative, it became evident that a small minority of FASNY representatives decided to undermine the effort being undertaken by the "stakeholders." They lobbied against the legislation and were able to stall its progression. Their main argument was that funding provided by the state is necessary so that all fire departments would have the ability to provide nominal compensation. The stakeholders are not against the need for funding; however, it was felt that it was most important to get the legislation passed so we could begin to assist our volunteer firefighters and fire departments and then go to the Governor and the Legislature during the budget process to obtain funding. By then, we had hoped to share success stories to use as evidence in the fight for funding. FASNY's shortsightedness, asking for funding with only days left in the session, caused the bill to die in committee.
New York state is a home rule state. Fire and EMS service delivery is a local responsibility, including its funding. Nominal compensation may not be necessary in all communities based on a local risk assessment, but for those fire departments that have a need or desire to provide that incentive, the legislation simply gives that authority on a voluntary basis. This is a win-win for both the community and for the members of those fire departments.
The coalition is encouraging volunteer firefighters, fire officers, fire district commissioners, and elected officials to review the nominal compensation concept and participate in discussions about the future of volunteer emergency services in New York state.

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

The Truth About the Status of Nominal Compensation Legislation for Volunteer Firefighters in New York: *FASNY Response to the August 18, 2026 NYSAFC Statement*

The Firefighters Association of the State of New York (FASNY) is compelled to respond to the recent statement issued by the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs (NYSAFC), in conjunction with the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York (AFDSNY), and the County Fire Coordinators' Association of the State of New York regarding nominal compensation legislation. While NYSAFC is entitled to its own opinions, it is not entitled to invent its own facts to support such opinions. Among its many falsehoods, the NYSAFC statement mischaracterizes both FASNY's role in the legislative process and the benefits contained within the bill now advancing in both houses of the New York State Legislature.

We encourage you to review the article in the July-August 2026 issue of *The Volunteer Firefighter magazine.* Apparently, it is this article which prompted the public statement from NYSAFC and its so-called "coalition" cohorts. The article about the proposed legislation published in *The Volunteer Firefighter* was accurate when published and remains true today. It contains a straight-forward and detailed description of the benefits that volunteer firefighters in this State will realize when the legislation is passed. How that article became the basis for NYSAFC's vitriol and feigned outrage remains a mystery.

While the article in *The Volunteer Firefighter* gave credit to the aforementioned fire service organizations for our collective work on this initiative, the acknowledgement and accolades for collaboration went unappreciated. Some members of "the coalition" apparently took exception and chose to express their maligned thoughts publicly, rather than expressing them directly to FASNY leadership. The NYSAFC statement is both disappointing and disingenuous. Their claim for the need to present a "united front" for the fire service contained in the same statement that launches false and slanderous allegations against FASNY is a breathtaking example of their hypocrisy. Apparently, in their minds the unifying concepts of communication, collaboration, and cooperation are on a one-way street that runs only in the direction they are headed.

The most unfortunate part of the NYSAFC statement is that it fumbled away an opportunity to share the most important message to the reader, which is that the nominal compensation legislation that was endorsed by FASNY is now farther along in the legislative process than we have ever been with nominal compensation legislation, with identical bills sponsored in both the State Senate and State Assembly.

The Original Bill Promoted By The "Coalition" Was Never Going to Pass as Written

At a meeting on April 16, 2026 with legislative sponsors and every fire service organization—including FASNY — at the table, we were all told by legislative leadership that the original Assembly bill (A.10630) as introduced and as promoted by the coalition, was never going to pass as written. That bill required the authorizing local government "to fund the program" entirely on its own, with no opportunity for state assistance of any kind. It offered no payment option other than an arbitrary cash per-call or on-call stipend for interior firefighters, it did not include a state income tax exemption for the volunteers who received it, and it omitted any measure of oversight to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. In addition, the original bill was only introduced in the Assembly and there was no companion bill being sponsored in the Senate.

The Big Lie

The NYSAFC statement attributes the original bill's inevitable failure as being a result of FASNY "asking for funding with only days left in the session". That claim ignores the truth, which is that representatives from all statewide fire service organizations were told on April 16, 2026 that the original bill would not pass as written. The shortcomings contained within the original bill itself caused it to be withdrawn. The fact that the original bill would have left smaller and financially constrained departments unable to compete with affluent ones — one of the gross inequities FASNY identified from the outset – was only one of a host of problems with the original bill.

The Current Bill Advancing Is a Stronger, Better Bill

Unlike the prior version, the current bill is sponsored in both houses of the Legislature — as Senate Bill S.10597 (Senator Monica Martinez) and its Assembly companion, A.10630-A (Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages), the chairs, respectively, of each house's Local Government Committee. Assemblywoman Solages sponsored the original bill, and then modified her bill in May 2026 to substitute it with the much-improved version of A.10630-A that is pending. The current Senate and Assembly bills are substantively identical, reflecting genuine, coordinated support behind the

legislation now moving forward. We appreciate the diligence and thoughtfulness that Senator Martinez and Assemblywoman Solages have demonstrated throughout their work on this bill.

It should not be lost upon the reader that the bill described and lamented in the NYSAFC statement does not exist. Rather, it was withdrawn and replaced in full by its sponsor to the current, improved version.

The current bill gives departments a wider range of compensation options that the original bill did not have. It expressly defines a "nominal fee" to include "a stipend, fee, gift card or gift certificate, gratuity, or other qualifying item of monetary value," so departments of every size can structure a program that fits their budget and their members' needs.

The current bill exempts these nominal fees "from payroll and income taxation under New York State law", in that it excludes the benefit from being included in a volunteer's income for New York State tax purposes. This was not in the original bill referenced by NYSAFC.

The current bill creates the State funding mechanism the original bill lacked entirely: the Volunteer Fire Service Nominal Compensation Assistance Fund, initially authorized at $15 million and prioritized for departments with demonstrated need and lower revenues under $400,000 annually. Where the original bill would have made every department pay for its own program out of local funds alone, the current bill ensures that a volunteer's ability to receive nominal compensation does not depend on the wealth of the community he or she serves.

Advocating for a Workable Program Is Progress, Not Opposition

FASNY has consistently supported the implementation of an effective, comprehensive, and thoughtful program for nominal compensation as a tool for both recruitment and retention. FASNY opposed endorsing a proposal that lacked responsible oversight and reporting responsibilities, failed to authorize a broad range of benefits including gift cards and other types of compensation, lacked income tax protections, and would have let departments in affluent communities outbid their neighboring working-class departments for the same volunteers, with no state-funding mechanism to level that playing field.

Each of the improvements now in the bill — sponsorship in both houses of the Legislature, the broader range of payment options, the State income tax exemption for recipients, and the State funding piece — are provisions the original bill did not contain and are exactly the safeguards that FASNY – and to our understanding, the other fire service organizations – identified as important to make this legislation work for every fire department in New York, not just those in the wealthy communities that can afford it. There is still more work to be done on the current version of the bill to further refine it and enhance it for New York's volunteer fire service.

FASNY remains committed to working with the Legislature and with every bona fide regional and statewide fire service organization to see this bill enacted as part of a broader recruitment and retention strategy. That strategy also includes an increase to the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and ambulance personnel, real property tax relief for volunteers, greater workplace protections for volunteers, and incentives designed to attract future generations of volunteer firefighters. That work is best done at the table, not through public tantrums and missives posted on blogs that deliberately misstate FASNY's longstanding positions and advocacy on key issues affecting the volunteer fire service.

While coalitions that seek to align various groups to promote their own self-interests and agenda will come and go, FASNY is and will remain as the only state-wide fire service organization whose mission is to serve the men and women that do the job that every other fire service organization depends on for its success and existence, you, the volunteer firefighters of the State of New York.

Rebuttal to FASNY's State Assistance Fund - Leave Funding Decisions to Local Authorities

While supporters of the revised nominal compensation legislation point to the addition of a $15 million state assistance fund as a major improvement, that provision should be removed. Decisions regarding volunteer firefighter compensation are best made and funded at the local level by the Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs), which are the municipalities, fire districts, and fire protection districts directly responsible for providing fire service.

Volunteer fire departments operate under vastly different circumstances across New York State. A one-size-fits-all state funding program assumes that every community has the same needs, financial capacity, and staffing challenges. In reality, local officials are in the best position to determine whether nominal compensation is necessary, how much should be provided, and how it should be funded.

The inclusion of state funding creates an unnecessary burden on taxpayers statewide.

Residents in communities that choose not to offer compensation, or whose volunteer systems are functioning effectively without it, should not be required to subsidize compensation programs elsewhere. Local taxpayers already fund their fire protection systems through property taxes and district budgets. If a community determines that compensation is needed to recruit and retain volunteers, that community should decide whether it is willing to bear the associated costs.

Additionally, state aid programs often create long-term financial dependence. A $15 million fund may be available today, but there is no guarantee that future legislatures will continue the funding. Departments that structure recruitment and retention strategies around state subsidies could find themselves facing budget shortfalls if those funds are reduced or eliminated in the future. Local funding provides greater accountability and sustainability because decision-makers are directly responsible to the taxpayers who pay the bill.

Removing the state assistance fund would also preserve local control. Communities that support nominal compensation would remain free to implement it through their local budgets, while communities that oppose it could continue operating under the traditional volunteer model. This approach respects home rule principles and avoids having Albany influence local fire service compensation policies through state funding incentives.

If nominal compensation is a worthwhile recruitment and retention tool, local governments should have the authority to adopt and fund it according to their own needs and priorities. The legislation can still provide the legal framework that permits compensation, but it should not require taxpayers across New York to finance a program that is ultimately a local operational decision.

To AFDNYS Board Members,

If FASNYs intention is truly to set the record straight, then it is important that the full story be shared so that individuals can review all of the facts and draw their own conclusions.

On the morning of September 4, 2026, NYSAFC President Bill Owen hosted a meeting at the association's office outside Albany. In attendance were the sitting presidents of FASNY, AFDSNY, NYSAFC, and NYSCFC. The meeting was requested by FASNY President Don Farrell to discuss concerns surrounding the response issued by the other state fire service organizations regarding FASNY's article on Nominal Compensation.

The organizations represented at the meeting collectively expressed that they believed the FASNY article contained inaccuracies and did not fully or fairly represent the events leading up to that point. President Farrell stated that he felt the subsequent response from the other organizations was intended to damage his opportunity to serve as President of FASNY. He also emphasized that disagreements between organizations should not be aired publicly on social media and instead should be addressed professionally and constructively. Those in attendance appeared to share that sentiment.

A common theme throughout the discussion was the recognition that the New York State Fire Service is best served when its organizations work together rather than in opposition to one another. President Farrell stated that he did not wish to dwell on past disagreements and that the meeting represented an opportunity for a fresh start. He emphasized that, as President, his goal was to move beyond prior conflicts and focus on advancing the interests of the fire service.

The group engaged in a productive discussion regarding Nominal Compensation, OSHA 1910.156, the legislative process, and opportunities for greater collaboration among the state's fire service organizations. As a result, meetings were scheduled for October, November, and December to continue those conversations.

Participants also discussed the importance of direct communication, including addressing concerns and asking questions before disagreements escalate into public disputes.

During the meeting, there was also candid discussion about prior efforts to improve collaboration. Several attendees noted that on at least three previous occasions, they had left meetings believing meaningful progress had been made, only to be surprised by subsequent actions that appeared inconsistent with those discussions. Assurances were given that future interactions would be different and that all parties were committed to moving forward in good faith.

The meeting concluded on a positive note. Handshakes were exchanged, pleasantries were shared, and those in attendance left Albany optimistic that a new chapter of cooperation had begun.

Unfortunately, that optimism was short-lived. Less than four hours after the meeting concluded, leaders from the participating organizations began receiving numerous calls, messages, and emails from members expressing concern over a FASNY email and Facebook post that they believed sought to discredit the other New York State fire service organizations. Initially, many assumed the communication had been sent in error or without full context. It soon became apparent that this was not the case.

We are deeply disappointed that events have reached this point and that an opportunity for meaningful collaboration was so quickly undermined. The challenges facing the New York State Fire Service are significant, and they are best addressed through cooperation, mutual respect, and honest communication. Continued public conflict between organizations serves no constructive purpose and ultimately harms the very firefighters and communities we all exist to support.

AFDSNY Continues Efforts to Advance Nominal Compensation Legislation

The Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York (AFDSNY) is disappointed by the outcome of the 2026 legislative session regarding nominal compensation for volunteer firefighters. Despite the dedicated efforts of AFDSNY, the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, the County Fire Coordinators Association of New York State, and many supporters across the state, the legislation was not enacted this year.

While this result is disappointing, it does not diminish our commitment to addressing the recruitment and retention challenges facing volunteer fire departments. AFDSNY will continue working with our legislative partners and stakeholder organizations to advance this important issue during the 2027 legislative session.

AFDSNY firmly believes that the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), is best positioned to determine whether nominal compensation is an appropriate and necessary tool to help ensure adequate staffing levels for the communities they are charged with protecting. The legislation we have supported would simply provide locally elected officials and fire commissioners with the authority to make that determination.

Fire districts, along with villages and cities that rely on volunteer firefighters, are the governmental entities responsible for providing fire protection services. These local officials are accountable to the taxpayers and voters they serve and should have the flexibility to evaluate all available options and funding to meet community needs. This proposal does not mandate nominal compensation, nor does it require any municipality to implement such a program. Rather, it provides local governments with the ability to make that decision based on their own circumstances and in consultation with their volunteer members.

The decision whether to implement nominal compensation should remain a local choice. AFDSNY and its partners will continue advocating for legislation in 2027 that empowers fire districts, cities, and villages to make that determination at the local level and ensure they have the tools needed to provide effective and sustainable fire protection services.