

THE BULLETIN

OCTOBER 17TH, 2026

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

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- **THE FIREFIGHTER/AMBULANCE WORKER TAX LEGISLATION A.6790 HAS GONE TO THE GOVERNOR, AND SHE HAS SIGNED IT INTO LAW RAISEING THE TAX EXEMPTION TO $800 ANNUALLY AND PARTICIPANTS MAY ALSO TAKE THE PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION.**
- ****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**
- **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.
- Next year's Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York will be held September 16th, 17th and 18th.
- **Vander Molen Sales would like to invite you to their Open House on Thursday October 22nd at 7PM. Food will be provided and several pieces of apparatus from local departments will be showcased. 1 Super 50 Way, Ballston Lake NY 12019**

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 8 9-10-11, Fiscal Oversight & Leadership Training (FOIT) by OSC, 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 9, 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), and Ontario County (November 7-8)
THE THREE-HOUR **FLASHOVER** program is coming to East Glenville Fire District and Orange County (November 21-22.
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.
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

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

From Albany

Volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers in New York WILL receive a significantly larger state income tax credit under legislation signed 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 and the same bill will allow first responders to take the income tax credit as well as the property tax credit previously passed. Beginning with tax year 2027, the annual credit will increase from $200 to $800 for individuals and from $400 to $1,600 for married couples. Eligible first responders can claim the increased credit when filing their taxes in 2028.

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.

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.**	**SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR!**
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**	**2/13/26 SIGNED CHAPTER 87**

			BATTERIES IN THE RECHARGEABLE BATTERY RECYCLING PROGRAM AND TO PROMOTE CONSUMER SAFETY, CONVENIENCE, AND AWARENESS	
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

From Washington

Nothing new to report this week.

From Federal DOL/OSHA

Nothing new to report this week.

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

FIRE DISTRICTS: AUDIT FOLLOW-UP REVIEWS

Fire Districts provide essential services our communities depend on. Comptroller DiNapoli released a report summarizing the results from a series of 20 fire district follow-up reviews primarily related to financial oversight. The report highlights opportunities for fire districts to strengthen oversight, safeguard public funds,

and build public trust by addressing the issues identified in these audits and fully implementing their recommendations.

Issued Date

October 16, 2026

[read complete report – pdf]

We also issued individual reports for the following municipalities: Caledonia Joint Fire District, Crown Point Fire District, Cuddebackville Fire District, Eaton No. 1 Fire District, Fine Fire District, Gates Fire District, Monsey Fire District, Montauk Fire District, Newark Valley Fire District, Plainville Fire District, Quaker Street Fire District, Ridge Fire District, South Butler Fire District, Theresa Fire District, Ticonderoga Joint Town/Village Fire District, Tioga Fire District, Town of Tompkins Fire District, Truxton Fire District, Upper Jay Fire District, Woodbourne Fire District

Summary

We selected 20 fire districts' (Districts) audit reports and conducted follow-up reviews between September 2025 and March 2026 to determine whether District officials implemented the audit recommendations. The 20 audit reports included a total of 163 applicable recommendations directed to the Districts' officials, including the Boards of Commissioners (Boards) and District Treasurers (Treasurers). *The 163 recommendations primarily focused on fiscal oversight responsibilities and included areas such as:*

- *The Treasurer's accounting records and financial reports,*
- *Claims audit,*
- *The annual financial report (AFR),*
- *Policies and procedures, and*
- *The annual audit of the Treasurer's records.*

Overall, the follow-up reviews determined that District officials did not fully implement 121 of the 163 recommendations. As a result, weaknesses will continue to exist that may limit transparency and accountability, increase the risk that District assets are not adequately safeguarded, and prevent the Boards and District officials from having complete, accurate and timely financial information needed to make informed decisions.

BLOOMINGTON FIRE DISTRICT, ULSTER CO. – TRANSPARENCY OF FISCAL ACTIVITIES

Audit Objective

Did the Bloomington Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) obtain an annual audit of the Treasurer's financial records, and did the Treasurer file the Annual Financial Report (AFR) with the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) as required?

Audit Period

January 1, 2025 – May 1, 2026

We extended our observation of annual AFR filings forward to July 27, 2026, and back to fiscal year 2018.

Understanding the Audit Area

To fulfill its fiscal oversight responsibilities, a board of fire commissioners (board) should obtain an annual audit of the treasurer's financial records and ensure the treasurer files the AFR with OSC on time as required by GML. Doing so will help identify and address errors or irregularities and provide fire district residents, taxpayers and other interested parties with transparent and reliable information about the fire district's fiscal condition and operations.

District officials budgeted a total of $479,772 for the general fund appropriations in fiscal year 2025 to provide essential fire protection services. The budget was funded by $482,755 in revenue collections.

Audit Summary

The Board did not obtain an audit of the Treasurer's financial records for fiscal year 2025. According to District officials, **the last Board-obtained audit of the Treasurer's records was for fiscal year 2017**. In addition, *the Treasurer did not prepare and file the 2025 AFR with OSC within 60 days after the fiscal year end as required by New York State (NYS) General Municipal Law (GML) Section 30*. ***Prior to this audit, the Treasurer last filed the AFR for fiscal year 2017.***

Because the Board did not fulfill its oversight responsibilities, and the Treasurer did not fulfill her statutory responsibilities in a timely manner, transparency of the District's fiscal activities was diminished. As a result,

District residents, taxpayers, OSC and other interested parties did not have access to the District's current fiscal condition.

The report includes three recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the Board's fiscal oversight of the District and the transparency of the District's fiscal activities. District officials generally agreed with our recommendations and their response is included in Appendix B.

Full Report Here:

https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/bloomington-fire-district-s9-26-24.pdf

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

The Chief is out this week.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET MEETINGS AND THE BUDGET HEARING

Reprinted from Fire District Affairs

In 2026 fire districts are required to hold their Annual Budget Hearing on a day during the third week of October. The purpose of that budget hearing is for the Board of Fire Commissioners to take public comments on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2027 and the estimate of fund balances which it has prepared with the assistance of the Fire District Treasurer.

This year those documents [proposed budget for 2027 and estimate of fund balances] must be approved by the Board and made available on or before 21 days prior to the date of the Budget Hearing.

To work on the budget, the Board of Fire Commissioners will schedule one or more meetings or "workshops" to consider the fiscal needs of the fire district for the 2027 fiscal year. It is important to remember that whether your Board refers to the gathering as a "meeting" or a "workshop" the same rules on public notice and public attendance apply. There is a popular misconception in some local government circles that a workshop is treated differently regarding the Open Meeting Law public access requirements. It is not. It is a meeting called by another name and the same rules on public notice and public access apply.

In accordance with Public Officers Law §104 the public must be given public notice of budget meetings/ workshops by notice given to the media and by public posting in a location accessible to the public. The "notice to the media" requirement does not require the publication of a legal notice, but many fire districts do publish legal notices when time allows. If your district maintains a website, it follows that all meeting notices should also be placed on your website. If your district maintains exterior signboards your residents will expect meeting announcements on those signboards.

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET HEARING

In 2026 fire districts will be required to hold their Annual Budget Hearing on any day in the 3rd week of October. If your Board selects Tuesday, it will be held on October 20 th . The purpose of that budget hearing has been explained above.

After the Board of Fire Commissioners has approved the proposed fire district budget for 2027 and the estimate of fund balance document it must also notify the public of the fact that these documents have been approved, are available for inspection and that the budget hearing will be held on the aforesaid date. The notice of budget hearing must be published as a legal notice in the official district newspaper and publicly posted at least five (5) days before the date of the hearing.

Note that legal notices are not required to be published in a newspaper for a simple meeting notice. In that instance notification of the media and public posting suffices. However, the legal notice for a public hearing is required to be published in the official district newspaper and publicly posted.

It is important to remember that the notice of the budget hearing must be sent to the Town Clerk of each town in which the fire district is situated at least fifteen (15) days before the date of the budget hearing. The proposed budget for 2026 and the estimate of fund balances should also be sent to the Town Clerk(s). The Town Clerk is responsible for placing these documents on the town's website and the town's bulletin board.

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

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

- In an effort to prevent tragedies such as last year's Gabriel House fire in Fall River, the state has updated its code to address a weakness exposed by the deadly fire. The Massachusetts Board of Fire Prevention Regulations approved new fire safety requirements Thursday, according to a statement from Gov. Maura Healey. Under the updated fire code, sprinkler systems will be required to undergo annual checks to identify any recalled sprinkler heads, according to a press release from Healey's office. Recalled sprinklers contributed to problems during the Gabriel House fire. Property owners will be required to notify their local fire department if they have recalled equipment and to replace it. Local fire departments can require additional fire protection measures until the recalled equipment has been replaced.
  In addition to the new sprinkler requirements, the board made other changes to the fire code. These changes include, according to the press release:
  - a ban on welding, grinding and other hot work activities when winds exceed 15 mph,
  - requiring workers to renew their hot work safety training every three years,
  - consolidating permitting and certification requirements to make them easier to understand and follow,
  - bringing Massachusetts's fire code into closer alignment with national standards while maintaining state-specific fire safety protections.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

Volunteers Gifted VA Fire Department a $900,000 Truck; The Department Doesn't Want It

Dan Landrigan

Winchester's fire chief is refusing to place a new $900,000 fire truck purchased by Friendship Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company into service, saying it does not meet the department's operational needs, according to The Winchester Star.

At a City Council work session, Winchester Fire and Rescue Chief Drew Savage said the truck, which he characterized as a rescue, is unsuitable for navigating the city's narrow streets and does not meet the department's equipment and water-capacity needs.

Friendship board member Brian Jenkins defended the truck, saying it handles well and is comparable to other apparatus in service. He also questioned the department's communication with volunteers and said prior administrations had not required advance approval for purchases.

Council members expressed interest in finding a way to use the truck, describing it as a substantial gift to taxpayers. No resolution was reached, but council members indicated discussions could continue.

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SER1VICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

70

In 2025 we experienced 78 LODDs reported nationally.!

- **Data from US Fire Administration on LODD:** https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/

- **Information on FF injuries and deaths from the Secret List:** https://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/
- **Information of Fire Apparatus MVCs:** https://www.emergencyvehicleresponse.com/

Apparatus Accidents in the News:

- A 26-year-old Buckholts, Texas volunteer firefighter died Sunday afternoon when a fire department truck left the highway and rolled over while responding to a brush fire in Holland, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.
- A Concord, North Carolina Fire Department fire engine was struck by a passing vehicle while crews were operating at a motor vehicle accident on Interstate 85. The fire engine sustained substantial damage and will remain out of service until it's repaired or replaced. A reserve engine will be placed into service.

Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, in the News

- Not LODD but still a tragic accident taking the life of a dedicated volunteer. Brian Flanagan, chief of the Ridgeway Volunteer Fire Company, was working for a traffic company before dawn Tuesday near Exit 10 in Edison when investigators say he was struck by a GMC SUV driven by 40-year-old Anthony Bernardi of Edison. Investigators say Bernardi was driving while intoxicated and fled the scene, leaving Flanagan fatally injured along the roadway.

*****The NYS Volunteer FF Cancer Program has changes coming, posted to the CAFDA.net website for your benefit.***

https://cafda.net/changes-to-the-nys-vol-ff-cancer-benefit-program/

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	62
10/9/26, Niskayuna, Schenectady Co., Female 81	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	117
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	948
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA 72
	#2 NY 62
	#3 OH 54
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1441 = 34.3 weekly	
Both the states of Maryland and California as well as Wash. DC require sprinklers in 1&2 family dwellings. According to realtors and builders only old homes burn, so sprinklers are not needed in new homes: so my question to you is; when does a new home become an old home?	

Firefighters: New homes burning faster than old ones

Nick Balenger

Firefighters say new homes are burning close to 10 times faster than older homes, giving families only a few minutes to escape once a fire starts.

"We're seeing an uptick in our residential structure fires, how quickly they are burning," said Heath Jones, Toney volunteer fire chief.

Studies from the National Fire Protection Association show modern homes burn up to 8 times faster than older homes, according to information presented in the report. ***That has reduced the average window of escape from 17 minutes to 3 to 4 minutes, according to the report.***

"They don't make cars like they used to, they don't make houses like they used to," Jones said.

Experts say a mix of engineered lumber, open floor plans and synthetic furniture can reduce the time families have to escape.

"All of those are petroleum-based that just fuel the fire," Jones said.

Hannah Andre's Hazel Green home burned down while she was driving from Birmingham, where her father is in hospice care.

"This is another grieving process for me," Andre said. "We kind of saw it coming but no daughter can really expect to sit there and watch their dad dying in front of them."

Andre lived in the home with her two daughters. All of their clothes and home school supplies were lost in the fire.

"I hit the ground on the concrete and I started screaming," Andre said. "My entire life, my kids whole world was in the house."

The roof of Andre's home collapsed in just under 6 minutes.

"They told me that it took 6 minutes before the roof collapsed," Andre said. "There's no way this is real."

Firefighters have not determined what caused the fire. They say the home burned quickly, which they describe as a common trend among newer homes.

More than 21,000 new rooftops have been built in Madison County since 2020, according to the report, adding more ground for fire departments to cover as escape windows shrink.

The average response time for Huntsville Fire is 3 minutes, for fully staffed stations. Response times can at least double for volunteer departments, according to the report.

"I think that's just something that the fire service is just going to have to adapt," Jones said. "*Until we get to a point where we start staffing our stations, I don't see that improving.*"

Lightweight Construction, Heavyweight Implications: An Introduction to Engineered Wood Products

Salvatore Ancona

There are many variables which new fire officers must consider when they take the front seat for the first time: Listening to the radio, ensuring the crew knows their assignments, gloves, camera, etc. You want to get off the rig and prove there is a reason that you were chosen to lead firefighters. But much of what you prepare for as a fire officer begins before the rig even starts. Being proactive enough to self-educate on things that may not always be immediately problematic is one of the ways that new fire officers can ensure they are not only well informed, but that their decision making is rooted in sound information. One of the most important topics that new fire officers need to consider is building construction, particularly lightweight construction.

So, what is lightweight construction? Many say that it's lighter, cheaper, and weaker than conventional structural elements like dimensional, sawn, or milled lumber, that it fails in 5–10 minutes, and that it kills firefighters! Let's take a step back though. Lightweight construction is born of engineered building components, assemblies, and structural elements that use materials of less mass, with the use of connections to act as a composite structural element. This is achieved by arranging the materials in a way that substitutes mass for geometry. I know, it's a mouthful. Really, *it's just taking smaller building components, connecting them, and arranging them in a way that uses shapes to transmit loads. Lightweight construction has equal or greater strength than dimensional lumber, can be engineered to span longer distances without the use of columns and without deflection, and is specifically engineered to a specific building*. These structural elements aim to enhance the speed of construction, limit site fabrication, and save money by eliminating the need for reinforced concrete or steel elements for large open spaces.

Engineered wood products (2) encompass such things as

- Parallel-chord wood trusses
- Truss joist I-beam (TJI)
- Roof trusses
- Metal web truss
- Pin and bar truss
- Bowstring truss
- Laminated veneer lumber (LVL)

- Cross laminated timber (CLT)
- Particle board
- Plywood
- Oriented strand board (OSB)
- Glue laminated lumber (GLULAM)
- Parallel strand lumber (PSL)
- Laminated strand lumber (LSL)

Sometimes you may hear this term used synonymously with lightweight construction, but they are not always the same. Yes, every lightweight wood product is engineered, but not every engineered wood product is lightweight. A parallel-chord wood truss is a lightweight engineered wood product. A bowstring truss, however, is considered a heavy timber engineered wood product.

PARALLEL-CHORD WOOD TRUSS

Probably the most prolific lightweight structural element, the parallel-chord wood truss, has been around since the mid-1950s. This product has been used as the premiere structural element in both commercial and private applications that require long spanning floors. The top and bottom members of a wood truss are called chords. The top chord is in compression, and the bottom chord is under tension. The compressive connecting members are called struts. The tensile connecting members are called ties. Connections are called panel points.

As a group, the struts, ties, and panel points are called the web. One type of connection is called a metal plate connector, also known as a gusset plate. Other types of parallel-chord wood trusses include the metal web truss, in which the entire web is constructed with lightweight sheet metal. Another type is called open web pin-connected truss, or pin and bar truss, which has chords made of either solid-sawn or engineered wood, and tubular steel webs using pinned connections. The finger-jointed wood truss, which is coming into prominence more and more of late, is made of a top chord and bottom chord of 2×3 with the web members comprised of smaller dimensions. The finger joints are precut into the chords and web members. They are later seated tightly into the joints and secured via adhesive

Because parallel-chord wood truss systems are open web, they have a high surface-to-mass ratio. This means there is more area to burn, and ultimately the structural member can burn on both sides unimpeded. Fire travels through what is known as a truss loft, the open space created by the open web of all the trusses in a floor or roof system. Think of it as a cockloft that exists on all floors instead of just the top floor. When any part of a wood truss fails, the entire system can become compromised. For example, the bottom chord of a truss is like a piece of rope under tension. How many cuts can you make to that rope before it fails?

Trusses have no redundancy, which is why they are so problematic when under attack by fire. They use geometry, as previously noted, in the form of triangular shapes and oblique angles to capture loads. This is great in theory because these oblique directions distribute loads very well, but *think about it: If you remove one part of a triangle, what happens to the remainder of the shape? It collapses.*

TRUSS JOIST I-BEAM (TJI)

Truss joists, or wood I-joists, are members of the engineered family, as we all know. They are composite materials, which means they use different components to achieve strength and resists forces and loads. Let's break it down to individual parts. I-Joists have a top flange and a bottom flange with plywood or OSB web members. They are combined by inserting the web member into a precut channel using a thermoset adhesive. The web member is inserted into the channel about ½ inch. Within the web there are prepunched knockout holes for utilities. All these factors contribute to the strength and failure of the material. The top flange resists compressive forces, the bottom flange resists tensile forces, and the web distributes the load evenly throughout. The deeper the web gets directly correlates to the amount of weight or loads the member can support. The flanges can be of dimensional lumber or engineered to specific sizes using pressed and laminated wood materials.

When under attack by fire, the unprotected I-joist performs poorly. Once fire reaches the I-joist, the plywood or OSB burns at a high rate, and fire extends through openings within the web, impacting both sides of the joist. Remember, we cannot assume that contractors did not compromise the web by cutting in openings that exceed the manufacturers' recommendation—this has been observed dozens of times by this author. As soon as the web starts to burn, the I-joist loses strength. There is no redundancy, no margin of safety. The OSB web

is also subject to chipping and moisture, which can influence load-carrying capability long before a fire even starts. When gypsum boards are added to the underside of I-joists for ceiling assemblies, rooms can withstand up to 40 minutes of fire resistance.

The I-joist fails quicker than any other wood light weight material used in floor and roof assemblies. The National Engineered Lightweight Construction Research Project reveals that *the wood I-joist fails within five minutes of direct fire attack*. When one joist fails, loads are superimposed onto other I-joists, which can cause the rapid failure of an entire floor system. Collapse is often without warning. Firefighters should look for sagging and spongy floor systems, although this is not always seen. One way to assess the integrity of the I-joist system is to look at the location where the wall meets the floor. The floor system can be seen inches beneath the edge molding still tacked to the wall. *The top flange can remain attached to the underside of the floor after the I-joist has completely burned away, giving an appearance that the floor is still intact, but the sudden loading of a crawling firefighter will rapidly cause collapse.*

CONNECTIONS

A metal plate connector or "gusset plate" hails originally from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1958. Originally dubbed "grip plate for truss," these connectors are made of galvanized steel sheet plates that are hydraulically pressed on one side, forming small spikes or teeth on the other side. The teeth of the metal plate connector are about 1/4 to 3/8 inches. The plates are then secured, first by hand to truss members, and then by a hydraulic press. There is an allowance for a 1/8-inch max space between web and chord members.

THE BOWSTRING TRUSS

The bowstring truss was initially introduced as a bridge design, invented by Squire Whipple in the early 1800s. The truss gets its name from its obvious shape and layout, where there is a curved upper chord and flat bottom chord. In construction, the design was later used as roof trusses for large factories, warehouses, bowling alleys, or really any location requiring large, open spans that could withstand significant snow loading. The truss uses a curved-arch top chord and a linear or flat bottom chord. There are number of different web configurations and names for the bowstring truss, however the three most common are the lattice bowstring truss (also known as a Belfast truss), which is the earliest known design of bowstring trusses used within structures. Other types include the Summerbell and Tim/TECO bowstring trusses (same manufacturer).

Bowstring trusses are not lightweight, however they are engineered wood products that use multiple components to achieve load-carrying ability. When one of these components fails, the entire system is compromised. The connections, loading, and misuse of the truss loft have been just a few reasons why these systems have fatally crashed down onto unsuspecting firefighters with no apparent signs or symptoms. Again, due to the design of these systems, they allow for direct fire impingement on all sides. Fire also attacks the connections at the panel points of these systems, which are often made of steel.

Again, there have been many variations of the bowstring truss, and there are many who point out those different nomenclatures in the firefighting community. The point is that these arched systems require substantial support to remain upright, and when attacked by fire and lateral bracing and/or an unmaintained arched truss systems have become rotted out at the connections, the outcome has historically been tragic. Let's focus less on what we call it when we pull up to a job, and just recognize that these roof systems are inherently unstable during fire conditions.

FAILURE

By far, the greatest modality of failure of lightweight elements is the reduction in mass, which is characterized by a higher surface-to-mass ratio. Simply stated, there is more available material to be attacked by fire. Secondly, the open concept of many of the lightweight components permits unimpeded fire travel. Think of a truss loft, the open space created by the design of many trusses, and how this promulgates lateral fire spread at enormous rates. Miami-Dade (FL) Fire Captain Bill Gustin described this design as "horizontal balloon frame." This is significantly enlightening when you consider why so many of these systems fail when attacked by fire. When it comes to lab testing, many know that I am very skeptical of these tests. As firefighters, we must consider the facts. Engineered wood products, specifically lightweight elements, are manufactured and shipped in controlled environments. The facilities conducting the tests are sent the very best product, which has not been subjected to improper storage on the jobsite, moisture, ultraviolet exposure, improper

installation, and long-term expansion and contracting from thermal environments within a home. These factors significantly weaken the systems over the years, such that when a fire occurs, they are already susceptible to early failure.

With dimensional lumber of mass and closed joist bays we see local failure, and a redundancy of the remaining floor system. *Firefighters attempting to operate above a fire where truss systems are present are taking a significant risk. The excessive weight caused of members in full gear can undoubtedly compromise wood trusses that are burning.* A lot of the warning signs or sounds usually mentioned are not always present, and wood trusses fail without warning.

Engineered wood products are susceptible to environmental damage such as mold, fungal attack, or pests. Water damage, concentrated loading, renovation, and repair are all common over the lifespan of these elements. We frequently look at lightweight or engineered system collapses as occurring because of fire damage alone, whereas the prescription could be there long before the fire, which ends up merely being the precipitating factor of global failure.

When a bowstring truss system is attacked by fire, the connections are where we see the early failure. Steel bolts and plates fail or become ineffective, releasing the structural members. Because these truss systems are so widely spaced, when a bowstring truss releases, a large, open span supporting the roof is dismantled, releasing wood joists above and causing a significant local collapse of that area. Bowstring trusses use cross ties and bracing, since they are very unstable laterally when not connected to a system. When the bracing and ties fail, it can cause a large truss to topple over laterally. *The occupants also tend to use the truss loft within a truss as storage space, often loading up the bottom chord with excessive weight, which contributes to unpredictable collapses, such as that seen in the Hackensack fire.*

A firefighter's education never stops. Keeping up with information about lightweight construction is necessary to contemplate extreme risk and better allow fire officers to make informed decisions. Just being aware of the existence of lightweight elements allows us to limit excessive personnel, effectively manage our suppression and ventilation efforts, and monitor conditions with a heightened sense of awareness. *Many of the tragedies surrounding lightweight construction could have potentially been avoided, but the threat was not known at the time. We are now in a more informed position, and this education has undoubtedly saved firefighters' lives.* ***Know the building, as Frank Brannigan said—the building is your enemy****.*

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Recruitment and Retention of Generation Z in Small Fire Departments

Sam Anglin

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Supportive leadership, teamwork, and a strong organizational culture are primary motivators for Gen Z firefighters to join and stay with a fire department.
- Work-life balance, including alternative shift schedules like 24/72, is more important to Gen Z than overtime or higher pay, impacting retention strategies.
- Prioritizing wellness initiatives and structured career development can significantly improve recruitment and long-term retention in small fire departments.

Fire departments across the nation are having trouble recruiting and retaining qualified firefighters. Many small career departments face an even greater challenge because they are competing with departments that may offer higher pay and greater promotional opportunities. Fire departments have historically relied on pensions, job security, and compensation, which are now becoming less effective in recruitment and retention. My Executive Fire Officer Applied Research Project examined how small departments can more successfully recruit and retain Gen Z firefighters. Using a convergent mixed-method design, data was collected from nine comparable Metro Atlanta fire departments through a survey of 29 Gen Z firefighters and a semi-structured interview with 11 of those firefighters. The research was aimed at identifying *what motivates this newer generation to enter the fire service, what influences them to remain with their organization, and what changes should be made for departments to continue being competitive.*

WHERE DO THE KEY BARRIERS LIE?

The research found that the greatest barriers are not necessarily recruitment issues; they are organizational issues. *Many fire departments are still operating under organizational models and workplace expectations that worked for past generations, but not for the newer generation*. While these approaches were successful in the past, Gen Z is expecting a different experience.

EMERGING BARRIERS:

- *Traditional recruitment methods are failing to communicate what Gen Z values most.*
- *Work schedules and mandatory overtime are contributing to early burnout of this newer generation.*
- *Departments often focus on compensation but overlook the department's culture and leadership challenges.*
- *Inconsistent leadership and accountability issues reduce trust and increase turnover.*
- *Departments may lack a clear career path, mentorship, and structured development*.

KEY FINDINGS

Participants identified supportive leadership, teamwork, the feeling of belonging, and organizational culture as primary reasons to join and remain with an organization. Competitive pay is important, *but firefighters describe the department's culture as the main factor that determines long-term commitment.*

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Ninety percent of the survey participants reported that work-life balance was more important to them than overtime opportunities. Nearly half of the participants had already experienced burnout from the fire service, despite only having three to five years in the fire service. The interview participants frequently described fatigue that resulted from high call volumes, mandatory overtime, and little to no recovery time. Most said they are interested in exploring alternative shift schedules, particularly the 24/72 shift schedule, due to the increased recovery time. This also gives them an opportunity to spend more time with family and friends, ultimately increasing their quality of life.

Departments that prioritize employees' overall wellness may see a significant improvement in recruitment and retention.

EMPLOYEES MAY BE THE BEST RECRUITERS

Word of mouth was identified as the primary recruitment method, with social media being ranked second. Participants said that recruitment materials should clearly reflect the department's pay, benefits, retirement package, promotional opportunities, shift schedules, and anything that promotes the department's culture. If this is not clearly communicated, they may not apply.

Current employees who are satisfied with their department's organizational culture will share their experience with their social networks, which has become a strong recruitment tool for fire departments.

LEADERSHIP AND RETENTION

Gen Z values leaders who openly communicate, explain the reason why decisions are made, empower officers, and are approachable. Inconsistent leadership, poor accountability, and lack of transparency rank among the most significant reasons firefighters consider leaving their department. Research suggests that firefighters are often retained by leaders rather than department policies.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Participants consistently expressed the importance of having clearly defined career ladders, realistic training opportunities, mentorship, and ongoing professional development.

Gen Z wants to understand not only how to perform the job, but also how to prepare for the future.

Departments that visibly invest in their employees' growth strengthen organizational commitment and improve long-term retention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fire service leaders should consider several practical actions based on these findings.

- *Build recruitment strategies using the overall work experience of current employees and encourage positive word-of-mouth recruiting.*

- Clearly communicate compensation, benefits, shift schedules, promotional opportunities, and organizational culture during the recruitment process. This includes social media flyers and advertisements.
- Evaluate staffing models and shift schedules, particularly the 24/72 shift schedule, to improve work-life balance and reduce burnout.
- Expand wellness initiatives to address physical fitness, mental health, and fatigue management.
- *Invest in leadership development focused on communication, transparency, accountability, and mentorship.*
- Create structured career development programs with a clearly defined career ladder.
- *Develop formal mentoring programs that connect experienced firefighters with new members.*
- Continue embracing professional social media platforms to showcase department culture, training, and community service.

CONCLUSION

Gen Z is not redefining the mission of the fire service; they are redefining what is expected from fire service organizations. This research demonstrates that successful recruitment and retention require more than competitive pay. Fire departments that intentionally cultivate supportive cultures, invest in leadership development, prioritize employee wellness, and create meaningful career opportunities will be better positioned to attract and retain the next generation of firefighters.

For small fire departments, this represents an opportunity rather than a disadvantage. *Small fire departments may not always be able to compete with monetary benefits, but they can compete by creating workplaces where firefighters feel respected, supported, and empowered to build long-term careers.*

As the fire service continues to evolve, the departments that adapt to the expectations of newer generations will be the organizations best prepared to sustain their workforce and continue providing a great service to their communities.

CHANGING ORGANIZATIONS

- Plans to consider regionalizing four local fire companies in Pennsylvania have gotten a no vote from one of the four municipalities involved. “We have made the decision to strengthen the Upper Gwynedd Fire Department, rather than pursue regionalization,” said township commissioner Denise Hull. During the commissioners’ Oct. 6 work session, board President Rebecca Moodie announced that the agenda would be modified to address the fire topic first due to emergency responders in the audience. Hull kicked off the discussion by thanking those firefighters present, then recapping the talks over the past three years, including the joint study conducted at the township’s request by the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services. The study had recommended a look at regionalizing several area companies to see where they could find savings and share services. Lower and Upper Gwynedd townships and Ambler and North Wales boroughs formally joined the study, and at that time the four said they hoped the study “will guide us in creating a more efficient and sustainable framework for fire services delivery.” “The study confirmed challenges that fire departments throughout our region and across the country are facing: fewer available volunteers, especially during weekday hours; increasing call volumes, rising costs, and the need to plan now for a reliable and sustainable response system,” Hull said at the work session. *Tactics tried so far have included having volunteer firefighters live in a home owned by the department adjacent to the station to minimize response time, a policy change to allow township staff who are firefighters to leave their jobs to respond, and a stipend program funded by the board that’s meant to recruit and retain those firefighters.* As a result, Hull announced that the board intends to include funding for paid firefighters in their upcoming 2027 budget, currently under discussion. “As this year’s budget process, the township will move forward with budgeting for a fire chief and paid fire staff to provide daytime coverage. This is an important and deliberate step toward a hybrid staffing model that combines the dedication and community connection of our volunteers with more consistent personnel availability during the hours when volunteer coverage is most difficult,” Hull said, saying the board was “choosing to be proactive.”

- As the Town of Fort Ann considers its proposal to consolidate the two fire districts, we believe it is important to look beyond department names, organizational boundaries, and a history that has separated us. *The Town is asking both departments to work together to build one organization operating two firehouses,* with the goal of providing the strongest possible fire protection for our community, today and into the future. Both departments were built on the same foundation. Volunteers have given time away from their families, trained, responded to emergencies, and served their neighbors because they believe in protecting this community. That commitment deserves respect, regardless of which firehouse someone calls home. We also have to recognize that our community has experienced a recurring cycle of ups and downs within each department. At different times, one organization has been in a stronger position than the other. *Recruitment, retention, training demands, equipment costs, and volunteer availability continue to challenge fire departments everywhere, and Fort Ann is no exception.* We have to ask ourselves whether continuing to operate as two separate organizations is the best way to address those challenges, or whether one organization operating two firehouses could provide a more stable foundation for the future. This has never been about shutting down a firehouse or erasing either department's history. Both organizations independently own their buildings, trucks, and equipment, and consolidation will require a willingness to look beyond ownership and organizational pride. Our founding members built these organizations to protect the community, not to create permanent boundaries around the resources they worked so hard to establish. If we allow the unwillingness to part with titles, apparatus, or equipment to stand in the way of providing the best possible fire protection to any portion of our community, then we have lost sight of the very purpose for which these organizations were founded. The question should not be what one department stands to lose, but what our entire community stands to gain. We have demonstrated an ability to respond throughout the town, including the western portion of our community through automatic aid responses. Our documented response history, training, membership, equipment, and operational experience provide a foundation for these discussions. *Maintaining the West Fort Ann personnel and station as part of a unified organization could preserve that local presence while allowing both stations to operate under one coordinated system and ultimately enhance fire protection*. There are also potential benefits for taxpayers and property owners. Fort Ann currently holds an ISO Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating of 4/4Y. Class 4 applies to qualifying properties within five road miles of a recognized responding station and within 1,000 feet of a creditable water supply. Class 4Y applies within the same five-road-mile distance when a qualifying water supply is more than 1,000 feet away. Based on the guidance provided to our department from Verisk, operating the West Fort Ann station as part of a unified organization for one year will establish the response history needed for verification and a subsequent ISO evaluation. The station must be operational as a station 2, with documented responses. Because of the current locations of the two stations, some properties in the eastern, western, northern, and southern portions of town remain outside the applicable five-road-mile distance. Consolidation cannot change geography, and we cannot say that every property in town will receive the same classification. However, having an additional recognized station under our PPC rating would extend the reach of our rating and benefit a larger portion of the community, with the possibility of insurance savings for qualifying property owners. But none of these potential benefits will matter if the people involved are not willing to make consolidation work. *Both departments must be willing to communicate, work through differences, train together, and move forward with a shared purpose*. We cannot approach this as one department winning and another losing. Both organizations must have a voice in building a successful unified department, and both must be willing to put the long-term needs of the community ahead of organizational boundaries and individual interests. The Fort Ann Volunteer Fire Company is committed to working with the Town and West Fort Ann to determine what is necessary to make this proposal successful. We are prepared to have the difficult conversations, address legitimate concerns, and work toward a structure that provides reliable, sustainable fire protection for the entire town. Ultimately, the Town has the final say in determining the outcome of this proposal. Our responsibility as a fire company is to work together, provide our input, and help develop the strongest most financially responsible plan for our community. ***At the end of the day, when someone calls 911, they do not care which organization a firefighter belongs to. They care that someone answers the call and arrives prepared to protect their family, home, and neighbors.*** We do not have to abandon our history to build a better future. We have to

be willing to bring the best of that history forward and use it to create something stronger. Anyone with questions is welcome to contact the Fort Ann Volunteer Fire Company directly, and we will answer what we can. We ask for respect, patience, and understanding throughout this process for everyone involved. We are all someone's, mother, father, brother or sister and more importantly, members of the same community, and regardless of our opinions or affiliations, we should remember that we are neighbors working toward what we believe is best for Fort Ann. The future of our fire protection system is bigger than any one department. It is a responsibility to our community and to the generations who will depend on us in the future. One town. Two stations. One shared mission.

FIRE APPARATUS

Fire Department Apparatus Purchasing Options to Minimize Delivery Time

Tom Shand, Michael Wilbur

Key Takeaways

- Stock model rigs and program apparatus that are in the process of being constructed can serve to shorten the delivery time when a department must replace a damaged fire vehicle or must add to its fleet to better protect the community.
- Stock model apparatus afford some cost savings, because the vehicles were engineered previously with major components that were ordered with known costs.
- Contributing to program apparatus' generally more-rapid delivery than other vehicles is the fact that there isn't a preconstruction conference.

As the fire apparatus industry continues to work through the backlog of orders for new units, departments face extended production lead times and, thus, must adjust their life cycle expectations. Stock model rigs and program apparatus that are in the process of being constructed can serve to shorten the delivery time when a department must replace a damaged fire vehicle or must add to its fleet to better protect the community.

PREP FOR GOING THE NON-CUSTOM ROUTE

Consider this scenario: *Your apparatus committee is charged with conducting a needs assessment* and developing specification requirements to replace the oldest of four pumpers that are in your department's fleet. Engine 41 is a 2005 custom chassis, 1,500-gpm pumper that runs approximately 500 calls per year and should have been replaced during the previous year. Because of budget constraints, the purchase was delayed. After consultation with several manufacturers, the committee finds that the build time for a fully custom apparatus will range between 34–36 months.

After an analysis on the condition of Engine 41, it's determined that the fire pump wouldn't pass a service test and must be rebuilt. There's extensive corrosion on the chassis frame rails and components. The tires have aged out and require replacement. The cost of all of these repairs might exceed the residual value of the apparatus for resale.

During the next apparatus committee meeting, the group, including the company captain, the company engineer, the department mechanic and the chief officer who oversees the fleet, *determines that other alternatives should be pursued in place of developing specifications and going to bid for a replacement apparatus, which, because of local purchasing guidelines, would take 4–6 months before a contract could be authorized.*

The committee seeks information from several manufacturers and is pleased to learn that numerous options could be exercised that would result in a shorter delivery time with a guaranteed, fixed price. With this knowledge in hand, the committee develops a concise list that outlines the minimum requirements for the new pumper. These include dimensions, engine and drivetrain components, cab seating, fire pump and water tank capacities, and the preferred body and hosebed configuration. With this outline as well as the requirements for vehicle inspection and testing, acceptance, payment and desired warranty terms, the committee will reach out to vendors to determine what pumpers are available to meet the department's needs.

SOME STOCK OPTIONS

Over the years, it has been common for larger apparatus dealerships as well as manufacturers to have stock model apparatus on order that provide quicker deliveries to replace damaged units or for when department operations require additional apparatus to serve the community. Generally, these rigs were designed and ordered based on the more-popular vehicle configurations that were delivered previously and on what would fit local demographic requirements. Today, a common arrangement might be a cab that has seating for six personnel, a 1,500-gpm pump, a 1,000-gallon water tank, and an aluminum body that has roll-up shutter doors and enclosed ground ladders. In urban areas, a design might provide for a low hosebed, multiple rear-body discharges, front intake and an option for hinged body doors. *(It's interesting to note that in some areas that are served with predominately hydrants and strong fire flows, there's a movement toward larger water tanks when compared with units that are slated for replacement.)*

Because of the extended build times for full custom apparatus, the dealership-ordered stock or ready-for-delivery pumper often can meet the needs of the department. Furthermore, depending on when the contract between the department and dealership is signed, there might be an opportunity to add some options that were engineered and approved previously for the chassis model that's being produced without additional production time extensions.

These stock model apparatus afford some cost savings, because the vehicles were engineered previously with major components that were ordered with known costs, when compared with extended production time vehicles for which material costs are uncertain.

NO PRECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCE

Several apparatus builders of all sizes offer program apparatus that are designed and engineered at the factory level for sale through their dealerships. These units are designed based on the most frequent configurations that are built to meet a price point as well as to minimize production time. These vehicles are developed as a base model and with limited options that were preengineered. This allows a department to choose the configuration that most closely meets its needs while determining the final cost for the unit.

Contributing to program apparatus' generally more-rapid delivery than other vehicles is the fact that there isn't a pre-construction conference. The initial contract configuration is exactly what's built, with no change orders.

The availability of these program units depends on market conditions and time of year. If a department is interested in such a rig, it must have its team and financial personnel in position to react promptly to secure a particular apparatus.

Another procurement option is to appraise available manufacturer offerings where different models of pumpers are available with an array of options. This permits a committee to design a unit to meet its needs while staying most closely within the limitations of the design-your-own unit. The options might include different body lengths, lowered crosslays and rear hosebed, enhanced intake and discharge arrangements, and various mountings for ground ladders, including hydraulic ladder racks.

Departments that consider built-to-order or limited-option-content vehicles should develop a detailed listing of the most important design features and components that must be incorporated into the new vehicle to match the department's needs and vehicle mission, most critically the cab, body, fire pump and piping arrangements. Warning light configuration, paint color and vehicle trim, among other factors, should be considered but shouldn't be a determining factor when making a purchasing decision.

GOING FORWARD

Long lead times and increasing costs beyond budgeted financial resources have caused some departments to reexamine their procurement practices. The long-term effect of acquiring stock model and program apparatus must be evaluated as these rigs enter service to monitor their effect on maintenance intervals, in-service time and warranty-related issues.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

- Fort Worth firefighters battled for almost 18 hours after six electric SUVs were destroyed and two others damaged in a fire at a Cadillac dealership. Firefighters responded about 5 p.m. to a vehicle fire at the Frank Kent Cadillac dealership in the 3500 block of West Loop 820, the fire department said in a social media post. When firefighters arrived, the fire was spreading quickly among the SUVs. They realized all

the vehicles were electric, which the department said are harder to put out than standard gas or diesel vehicles. Six electric SUVs were destroyed and at least two others were damaged, officials said. The incident was resolved about 10:30 a.m. Saturday and lasted 17 hours, 33 minutes. No injuries were reported and the cause of the fire is under investigation.

- Two people were taken to the hospital after an electric vehicle battery caught fire at a car dealership in Wallingford, Connecticut officials said. Emergency response crews found heavy smoke and an EV battery pack that had short-circuited and burst into flames in the garage of a dealership on the 800 block of South Colony Road. One person was hospitalized with burn injuries, and another was taken to the hospital for smoke inhalation, Dingler said.
- A Twin Lakes, Wisconsin condominium was deemed uninhabitable Sunday following a fire that responding personnel suspect was caused by a lithium-ion battery. Firefighters found a fire involving items on a dining room table. Crews brought the fire under control with the use of fire extinguishers. Preliminary information indicates the fire might have originated from lithium-ion batteries for a remote-controlled airplane that were charging on the table, according to a news release from Twin Lakes Fire/Rescue. No injuries were reported.
- A lithium-ion battery from a hoverboard scooter began burning overnight and sparked an explosion that triggered a massive industrial scrapyard fire off U.S. Highway 90 in Jefferson County, Texas destroying about $750,000 worth of high-value scrap metal, according to information Jefferson County Emergency Services District 3 Fire Chief Phillip Kibodeaux provided to KFDM News. The fire was reported at about 5 a.m. at Scrapworks Industrial LLC, 12070 Highway 90 West, just past ExxonMobil and the Beaumont Municipal Airport. Chief Kibodeaux says the company had separated a lithium-ion battery from a hoverboard scooter, and the battery began burning at about 2:30 a.m. The batteries create intense heat, and the chief says the battery fire caused something to blow up and started a fire in another scrap pile.

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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 November 15th, 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

Wingspread VIII: A Roadmap for the Fire Service's Future

Peter Matthews

Key Takeaways

- Discussion points at Wingspread VIII included fire department staffing shortages, financial pressures and emerging technologies, but member health and safety was an element of every one of those conversations.
- Fire departments must invest in a comprehensive wellness program that begins before a person joins the agency and continues after individuals respond to their last call.
- When fire departments partner with law enforcement and other agencies, they open doors that can result in building relationships that strengthen people, organizations and the services that are provided.

As June and July came and went this year, I looked forward to a trip in August that was on my calendar for nearly five years. It was the chance to meet in Racine, WI, for a few long but inspiring days with chiefs, innovators, federal officials and heads of organizations, all of whom are dedicated to examining the future of the fire service, just as I first did at Wingspread VII in August 2021.

The 2021 event was eye opening. It brought together a think tank that explored the effects of COVID-19 on the U.S. fire service, from preparedness for the pandemic to becoming all-hazard agencies, increased EMS duties, changes in training and the historic decline in the people interested in joining, or staying, in the fire service.

At Wingspread VIII, I was reminded that the fire service has never been short on challenges, but the demands on today's leaders and firefighters have created an increasingly complex environment. Staffing shortages continue to tax departments, not only volunteer agencies but, increasingly, career organizations, too. In addition, financial pressures and emerging technologies were a discussion point in every breakout. However, the health and safety of personnel continued to be top of mind.

The adage that I learned in photography—"Your work is only as good your last photo"—now rings true in public safety, because fire departments are having to "prove their value." Saving a cardiac arrest victim or a resident from a house fire or containing a bedroom fire before it destroys a couple's most expensive investment isn't enough for some. Sadly, members can run at 200 mph one day and 120 mph the next, yet they're asked to "show" their value to people who have yet to call 9-1-1.

Fire departments continue to take over failing EMS services, to step up when local health and human services are shuttered amid budget cuts, and to support national disasters even while they try to fund their next local response. They require additional staffing, training and resources, and that means that they can't continue to accept every new responsibility without understanding its consequences, particularly on the members.

The rollout of myriad technologies that exploded like wildfire during the pandemic continues and expands each year. Yes, tremendous value is found in many platforms and services, but they raise a whole new set of questions, including in regard to reliability and data ownership, concerns over affordability and the need for interoperability.

Perhaps no issue is more important than the health and safety of firefighters, and ongoing research presents more evidence that communities must invest more resources and funding into those who respond each day. The job (whether career or volunteer) takes a real toll on members. Across the spectrum, departments must invest in comprehensive wellness programs that begin before members enter the fire service and that continue after their last response.

Part of an organization's health is placing the right people on the roster. Over the past few years, departments saw record challenges with recruitment and retention of the right people. The workforce culture is changing, and the lack of long-term commitments poses difficulties that rarely were encountered in the past.

One of the solutions that fire chiefs can explore is developing partnerships within their community. During Wingspread VIII, for the first time, partners in law enforcement shared their predicaments, which opened doors for collaboration and for building relationships that strengthen people, organizations and the services that are provided.

Five years after the end of the pandemic, many of the issues that were examined then haven't disappeared; they have evolved into challenges that are reshaping how fire departments operate and recruit. The final

report on Wingspread VIII will be published in the coming months. It will serve as the roadmap for the fire service in the future.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

There's a strange voice in my head saying, vacuum the floor, clean the house, wash the windows. Good thing my mom taught me never listen to strangers.

CLASSIFIED

CAFDA IS SEEKING A TREASURER FOR OUR FIRE SERVICE NOT-FOR-PROFIT ASSOCIATION.

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

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

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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.