

THE BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 12TH, 2026

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

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- Twenty-five years ago, our lives were forever changed. On Sept. 11, 2001, our nation endured unimaginable tragedy, heartbreak and destruction. Yet, during one of our nation's darkest times, we also witnessed profound unity, bravery, extraordinary courage and an outpouring of love for each other and for our country. We will never forget. May God bless the families who continue to carry these losses, and may God bless the United States of America.
- At our General Membership meeting on September 10th the attendees voted to support Dave Denniston of Cortland County for AFDSNY President, and Bob Monkelbaan of Southline Fire District Erie County for 2nd Vice President for 2027. Elections to be held at the AFDSNY Annual Meeting-Conference-Vendor Show in Saratoga Springs, on October 7th through the 10th. See afdsny.org/2026_annual_meeting_page.php for more details. We urge you to attend!
- **BUDGET SCHEDULE** PAGE 4 also on CAFDA.net
- **ELECTION SCHEDULE** PAGE 9 also on CAFDA.net
- See Commentary from The Association of Fire District's of Rockland County. The conversation continues and no FASNY does not speak for the entire fire service. We should know it as the NYS Fire Service Alliance. See the last page of this Bulletin.
- The NVFC and Ricochet are pleased to partner for the Ricochet PPE Award Program to equip departments in need with gear tailored to the real-world demands of the calls they run. The September application period is open from September 1 through noon ET on September 30. Eligible fire departments can apply for Ricochet Wildland Gear (jacket and pant) to enhance responder safety and operational effectiveness. This is the second of three application periods.
- Fire Prevention Week is coming up on October 4-10 with the theme "Charge Into Safety™. Safe Charging Is a Superpower."
- AFG FY **2025** award notifications are anticipated to begin by approximately August 31, 2026, and be issued no later than September 30, 2026. If your department receives an award, acting quickly can help move your project from award notification to equipment delivery sooner. It also helps you stay ahead of potential procurement bottlenecks, other administrative delays, and unpredictable government disruptions.

TRAINING OPPORTUNTIES:

From CAFDA

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 calendar for the CAFDA Conference '27, Lake George NY, April 9-10-11, dinner/vendor show Friday April 10th Fort William Henry Carriage House. Sponsored Mixer the evening of Thursday April 9th at the Holiday Inn Resort, food, games, beverages. The response has grown each year and we are in the process of identifying the subjects for 2027.***
4. ***Mark your calendars now, CAFDA Fall Seminar, Saturday November 7th, at Guilderland Fire Department, 2303 Western Ave. (US Route 20), Guilderland, NY. The Education Committee has identified the subjects including the ever popular "Experts Panel".***
3. ***CAFDA Commissioner Training 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				
Thursday, October 1, 2026	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	Officers/Director Nominations
Saturday, November 7, 2026	8:00 AM	**Annual Fall Workshop**	**Guilderland FD**	**2303 Western Ave.**
Thursday, November 12, 2026	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	Officer/Director Elections
DECEMBER 2026	**NO MEETING**			
FY 2027				
Saturday, January 2, 2027	9:00 AM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	Organizational/Morning Meeting/Breakfast Buffet
Saturday, January 6	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Averill Park Rensselaer County	Snow Date 2/7
Thursday February 11	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg.**	Clifton Park	
Saturday February 20	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Thomas Corners Glenville Fire Dist #7 Schenectady County	Snow Date 2/21
Thursday March 4	7:00 PM	**General Membership Mtg**	Clifton Park	
Saturday March 6	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Clifton Park FD Saratoga County	Snow Date 3/6
Saturday March 20	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Niagara Engine Co #1, Schoharie Schoharie County	Snow Date 3/22
Saturday March 27	8:00 AM	**Commissioner Training**	Berkshire Fire District Fulton County	Snow Date 3/28

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

From Other Organizations

NYSAFC is Bringing Hands-On Training to Your Area!

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

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

View the Calendar and Register...

2026 Seminar Series with Chief Mike Lombardo Resumes in September

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

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

FREE FIREFIGHTER WELLNESS SEMINAR SERIES FROM NYSAFC AND PERMA

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

With Director/Chief Frank Leeb

(First Responder Center for Excellence/FDNY)

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

2026 Locations and Dates:

On-site and pre-registration available.

Seminar begins at 7:00 p.m.

Registration area opens at 6:30 p.m.

Clinton County – September 23

Fulton County – December 14

Oneida County – December 9

Suffolk County – October 7

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==

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

From Albany

- The New York State Legislature passed the volunteer firefighter tax credit, which would increase the annual credit from $200 to $800, and provides meaningful relief to the 80,000 volunteer firefighters who serve communities across New York, helping offset the rising costs of service, including fuel, training, and equipment. This is an important step forward in advancing FASNY's 14-Point Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Plan and strengthening the future of New York's volunteer fire service, but we still need your support! The bill is currently awaiting delivery to Governor Hochul's desk; we are hopeful she will recognize its importance, and we're asking for your help. Contact Governor Hochul's office today, through FASNY's VoterVoice, and urge her to sign this essential bill! **Let the Governor Hear You through VoterVoice** at this link.

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

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

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

	BUTTENSCHON (D)		HANDLING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVOLVING INDIVIDUALS WITH ANY PHYSICAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY TO ALL FIRE-FIGHTERS	REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING
S6233A MARTINEZ (D)	A6790A MCMAHON	6/1/26 PASSED SENATE 5/14/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY	THIS BILL INCREASES THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' AND AMBULANCE WORKERS' PERSONAL INCOME TAX CREDIT FROM $200 TO $800 FOR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS AND FROM $400 TO $1600 FOR ELIGIBLE MARRIED JOINT FILERS. ALSO ALLOWS FIRST RESPONDERS TO TAKE THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT ALSO.	PENDING SIGNATURE

From Washington

Nothing new this week.

From Federal DOL/OSHA

- **Keith Sonderling is the current Acting US Secretary of Labor, since Lori-Chaves-DeRemer resigned in April.**

FIRE DISTRICT FINANCIAL NEWS

*****FIRE DISTRICT BUDGET PROCESS SCHEDULE 2026 available on the CAFDA.NET website. CAFDA.net***

Local Government and School Accountability Contact Information:

Phone: (518) 474-4037; Email: localgov@osc.ny.gov
Address: Office of the State Comptroller, Division of Local Government and School Accountability
110 State Street, 12th Floor; Albany, NY 12236

NYS-OSC Fire Service Audits

No new audits this week.

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

***A Lesson for Fire Chiefs for Trusting Your People*

Bennie Gaddy

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *When fire chiefs trust their officers, departments run smoothly, morale is high and everyone grows as leaders.*
- *To build trust among officers, fire department chiefs must give clear expectations, including the why, the what and the when, behind directives.*
- *Fire department chiefs develop future leaders among their officers when they delegate, allowing officers to take responsibility for a problem and to solve it how they see fit.*

Trust on the fireground. Trust in the training room. Trust between yourself and your officers. Firefighters love to talk about trust. Trust is important. Without trust, firefighters wouldn't walk into burning buildings, conquer fiery roads and work around hundreds of pounds of high-pressure explosives while focusing on the task at hand. Trust your partner to have your back and yourself to have theirs.
Trust between firefighters, particularly those who work on the line, tends to get most of the spotlight. What about trust between an organization's leadership?

TRUST YOUR OFFICERS TO DO THEIR JOB

When fire chiefs trust their officers, departments run smoothly, morale is high and everyone grows as leaders. *When fire chiefs don't trust their officers, development stagnates, frustrations are common and things tend to fall apart.*

HOW DO YOU LEARN TO TRUST?

Trust starts with competence and character. *As a chief, you must trust that the officer to whom you're assigning a task has the skill set and knowledge to get it done*. You must trust that person will use good judgment when making decisions. You must trust that individual will meet your expectations.

If you find that you don't trust your officers, it's because one or more of these things are lacking. The easy way out is to micromanage your officers until you retire. The better solution is to teach them what they're missing.

BE CLEAR ABOUT EXPECTATIONS

A common reason that trust isn't given is a lack of clear expectations, such as officers being told to do something without a firm deadline or an exact picture of what leadership expects. *As a result, chiefs check in daily, change the scope of plans midway through or change the game, so to speak—not because the officer can't do it, but because the expectations never were communicated.*

I learned this lesson the hard way as an officer. On several occasions, clear expectations weren't established by our chief regarding standard operating procedures and departmental policies. Those expectations would vary day to day and, sometimes, hour to hour. An easy example of this was uniform expectations: One day, it was acceptable for firefighters to wear department T-shirts while they did truck checks and morning duties; the next day, the chief was livid because crews weren't in Class B uniforms while they checked the apparatus; soon after that, it was changed again. *This type of leadership created confusion and frustration up and down the chain of command.* As a battalion chief, I struggled to hold my crews to a standard, because our standard as a department changed daily.

I wasn't the only one who felt this way. Trust issues flowed down to the captains and the firefighters. *When expectations constantly shift, officers feel unsupported and apprehensive when they make decisions.* They never know whether leadership will stand behind their choices or abruptly change direction.

Good leaders are clear about what they want. They communicate the why, the what and the when. Leaving room for creativity is fine, but *you should have a meeting after delegating a task to ensure that you and your officers are on the same page.* When you are detailed in these conversations, you'll spend less time wondering what your crew members are working on.

DELEGATE

Delegation isn't passing work off to your officers because you don't want to do it. ***Delegation allows others to lead, so your organization can grow.***

If you tend to take back assignments or weigh in on every decision that your officers make, you aren't delegating.

I learned what true delegation was from one of my officers. I delegated the task of furthering his education by having him enroll in classes that would help him to improve his communication skills and overall knowledge of our profession. He didn't take this news very well. He struggled through the courses and, honestly, seemed angry that I pushed him to expand his abilities. He was very comfortable with the operations side of firefighting and had become stagnant when it came to his professional growth.

However, as time went on, I saw a change. By allowing him the opportunity to grow through education and leadership opportunities, he became a much better officer. His communication skills got noticeably better. He became more confident in his ability to lead his crew and more efficient at handling situations that came his way. To this day, he encourages the members of his shift to not only take every training opportunity that they can but to continue their education to better themselves professionally.

That change didn't happen because the officer was afraid that I'd take his position away if he didn't take the opportunity to grow. His transformation occurred because he was trusted and allowed to grow as an officer. *Leaders develop future leaders by trusting them with responsibility and challenging them to grow uncomfortab*le.

Trust your officers to finish a task that you give them. Allow them to take responsibility for a problem and solve it how they see fit. *Provide officers with as much or as little direction as you believe that they need but let them do their job.*

CHECK IN

Just because you trust your officers to do their job doesn't mean that you should have no idea what they're doing.

As a fire chief, you're responsible for your department's performance. You always should know what's always going on. You just don't have to micromanage how it gets done.

I saw the value of this when I worked on a preplan and inspection project. One of my officers was delegated the task of ensuring that all preplans were updated and ready to go before we were inspected. During one of our check-in conversations, I inquired about the progress of the project. The officer explained to me that he got caught up working on something else and fell behind on updating some preplans. Had I not checked in with him that day, we very well could have lost points during inspection. Not only does that affect how a department fares, but it also puts the public at risk. That check-in wasn't me micromanaging the officer or taking the project away. I was holding him accountable while trusting that he would complete the task. Once we identified the problem, he took care of it and got the preplans updated, and we were ready for inspection. Give your officers deadlines for updates or schedule weekly check-ins to discuss the progress of certain projects. Create milestones that they can meet. Provide your officers with the freedom to do their work and let them know that you trust them to do so.

RELEASE THE NEED TO BE PERFECT

I know that firefighters, officers and fire chiefs love to do things perfectly. We like to triple and quadruple check everything. In the fire service, this is understandable, but sometimes, you must trust that your officers can make decisions.

If you require that every task that you assign be completed to your exact specifications, your officers never will learn how to lead. They constantly will look for guidance when they encounter a problem.

Leaders trust their officers to make decisions. Leaders delegate problem-solving. When your officers make a mistake, teach them about it. Don't spend extra time making something "perfect" at the expense of trust.

START BUILDING TRUST TODAY

Once you start to trust your officers, you will notice a change—not just in them but throughout your department. Your officers will trust each other, your teams will work better, and you won't have to do everything yourself.

Trust your officers to communicate with their teams. Be transparent with your decisions and share information with your officers. When your officers succeed, celebrate their victories. Do these things and you will earn the trust of your officers and staff.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T TRUST YOUR OFFICERS?

I have been both on the giving and receiving end of a trustless relationship with a superior. It's no fun. Officers stagnate, and their development grinds to a halt. *They wait to be told what to do, because they don't want to take the initiative and do something that their chief doesn't like.*

As a fire chief, your officers reflect on you. Build leaders by trusting your officers to do their job.

Trust is something that fire chiefs must learn how to do if they don't already know how to trust. Trusting your people doesn't mean that you don't care about the job or that you're failing as a leader. *Trusting your people allows you to be a better leader by empowering your officers to do their job.*

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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

CAFDA.net

Wantagh Fire Department Lawsuit Settlement Details Released

Joe Wilkinson

The former Wantagh Fire Department employee was paid $500,000 to settle her claims against ex-chief Kenneth Kelly and ex-captain Josef Seier, Newsday reported.

Kelly and Seier did not admit any wrongdoing or personally contribute to the settlement, which was covered by the department's insurance company, according to Newsday. The terms were initially sealed, then provided to Newsday after the outlet filed in court to release them.

The victim said she was targeted by Kelly and Seier during and after Seier's birthday party at the firehouse in January 2022. She said they deliberately got her drunk, then sexually assaulted her in a bathroom, according to her lawsuit. To read the Newsday's full update on the settlement, **click here**.

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

POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

None reported this week.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES

Every week is a challenge in the fire service! This week's challenges involved with dealing with the 25th Anniversary of 9/11. We are challenged every year at the anniversary, many of us more than others.

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SER1VICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

FIREFIGHTER FATALITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

61

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/

PESH/OSHA INJURY REPORTING REMINDER

Fire districts and fire departments are required to follow PESH rules on reporting workplace injuries. Under these rules fire districts and fire departments as employers must report any of the following [as noted at https://dol.ny.gov/public-employee-safety-health]

FIREFIGHTER CANCER INSURANCE REMINDER

In a statute enacted in 2017 which became effective in 2019, fire districts and fire departments/ fire companies outside fire districts were mandated to provide an enhanced cancer disability insurance program to cover eligible volunteer firefighters. N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law § 205-cc. *The statute established a **legal obligation** to maintain the insurance coverage and to the extent that the fire district or fire department/fire company **does not provide the coverage it could be considered to be self-insuring the benefits.***

Apparatus Accidents in the News:

- Fountain, North Carolina Rural Firefighter Steve Coffman was injured when his squad truck was hit on I-587. Fountain Rural Firefighter Steve Coffman was sitting on the back of a rescue vehicle when it was struck on I-587 in Pitt County. He was knocked off the rig and suffered from a fractured wrist. Moderate damage was done to the squad truck.
- Firefighter moves Auburn, MA, pumper away from pumps when rig catches fire due to a fuel line failure.

Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, in the News

- A Wellston, Oklahoma firefighter, who suffered a medical emergency while battling a brush fire in Lincoln County, has died.
- Raymond, New Hampshire firefighter Eric Phillips, 44, suffered a medical emergency while responding to a call.
- Battalion Chief Sean Kevin, 53, died Sept. 8 after returning home after his shift, according to a statement from the Chicago Fire Department.
- 6 students at the New York State Fire Academy in Montour Falls were sent to the hospital this week due to signs of dehydration and illness. A state spokesperson tells 7NEWS the symptoms included cramping, headache/migraine, upper respiratory illness, dizziness and congestion. The cases happened over several days this week, and the spokesperson says, all six students went to the hospital for further evaluation. 5 students were released after getting treatment, one was admitted to the hospital, and has since been released, says the state.

THE BUILDING AND FIRE CODE ISSUES – WEEKLY REPORT ON FIRE FATALITIES

- **Home Fire Fatalities in the News**: https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/civilian-fatalities/

Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings in NYS	**57**
9/9/26 Yonkers, Westchester Co. Male 28	
Fire Deaths in any type of Dwelling in NYS	**109**
Fire Deaths in 1&2 Family Dwellings Nationally	**825**
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	**#1 PA 61**
	#2 NY 57
	#3 OH 46
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1278 = 34.5 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?**	

- Another set of apartments under construction in South Bend, Indiana reduced to charred frame after massive fire. Appears to be a regularly occurring problem.

Safety Concerns Loom in Chicago as Push Is on for Single-Stair Complexes

Brian Rogal

A group of advocates is pushing for a change in Chicago's building code that they say will kick off development and create badly needed housing.

They want to pass an ordinance allowing developers to construct a single staircase for residential buildings of up to five stories, instead of the required two staircases.

That would make the construction of small apartment or condo buildings less expensive, helping developers fill Chicago's empty lots with units that are also affordable, said Ald. Matt Martin, 47th, who introduced the ordinance in 2025.

"Our goal is to build more affordable housing," Martin said. "We don't see a lot of three- to four-story buildings going up, and we're also losing a lot of family-sized units."

The proposal has drawn criticism from Chicago firefighters, who say new single-staircase buildings wouldn't meet the city's safety standards. They prefer two exit stairways, making it easier for residents to escape a fire. The current building code typically allows a single staircase for residential buildings with three stories or less. Fire escapes don't count as exit stairways under the building code.

The controversy is unlikely to end soon. Housing advocates say rising rents and the slow pace of housing construction make it necessary to find new ways to build. They expect the City Council will vote on the issue in the coming months, perhaps after the February mayoral election.

But many firefighters seem equally determined to preserve Chicago's two-staircase rule.

"A second staircase is not an architectural luxury — it is a life safety feature," Erik Steinmetz, a firefighter and president of Chicago Fire Fighters Union Local 2, said at a special June 4 hearing of the City Council's Committee on Zoning, Landmarks and Building Standards. "It is a second chance when the first path fails."

Advocates say safety is also their top concern. They point out that Martin's ordinance requires new single-stair buildings to have sprinkler systems and advanced fire-resistant doors, features absent in many existing properties, and that the front doors must be 20 feet or less from a stairwell.

Many other U.S. cities, including Seattle, New York City, Baltimore, Denver and Austin ditched the double-staircase requirement without compromising safety, said Steven Vance, co-lead of the nonprofit Abundant Housing Illinois, which joined with Strong Towns Chicago, and Congress for the New Urbanism, among other groups, to push the ordinance.

"We have more than a half century of experience in other cities," he said. "A new building is so much safer than an existing building, so we should do as much as we can to build more, and single-staircase is a way to build more. **[I WOULD CHALLENGE THAT STATEMENT, WE ARE USING LIGHTER MATERIALS THAT BURN FASTER AND FAIL QUICKER MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR OCCUPANTS TO ESCAPE.]**

THE BACKBONE OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Residential buildings with four or fewer units are the backbone of many Chicago neighborhoods.

But several thousand were demolished or converted since 2013, according to a 2021 study by the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University. Nearly half were replaced by single-family homes, and many sites were left vacant.

Those empty spaces could host many new residences, but it's difficult to fit new multifamily buildings into Chicago's narrow and deep lots, typically 25 feet by 125 feet, Vance said.

Statewide there is a shortage of about 142,000 housing units and developers must build 227,000 by 2030 to keep pace with demand, about double the recent annual production rates, according to a 2025 joint analysis by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute and the Project for Middle Class Renewal at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

That shortage pushes up rents on many existing units, Martin said.

"Residential rents (in Chicago) are up 51% over the last 10 years," he said, while wages grew 37%.

He said the single-staircase initiative and Mayor Brandon Johnson's "Cut the Tape" agenda are both ways to clear out regulations that make it hard to build. State legislators and Gov. JB Pritzker are also proposing to allow the construction of single-staircase multifamily buildings, alongside several housing policy proposals, but the reforms haven't made it out of the General Assembly.

"We've got a lot of work to do, and to create more affordable housing we need to do a bunch of things simultaneously," Martin said, *but the Fire Department's opinion carries a lot of weight with the City Council, so passing a single-stair ordinance will take patience*.

The Congress for the New Urbanism will hold a design competition this year to showcase the technique's potential. Contestants need to identify a specific Chicago lot, design a building of up to five stories for the site, and explain how their single-staircase plan would serve its neighborhood better than a conventional project.

A jury of Chicago architects, developers and urban planners will select winners by late September.

"This is an excellent way to spend the summer and to find the political support we'll need," Vance said.

Martin said the June 4 hearing was another opportunity to win over opponents.

"Single-stair buildings are one commonsense strategy, especially considering what other cities and states have done," Martin said. "Chicago is increasingly out of steps with its peers."

A SOLUTION FOR TIGHT LOTS

The apartments Chicago housing advocates envision probably look a lot like Seattle's Juniper Flats. Developed in 2023, the 12-unit complex occupies a narrow lot in Ballard, a forested neighborhood with many single-family homes. It has four units per floor, all connected by a single staircase.

"These smaller buildings really nestle into the neighborhood, and sometimes they don't even look like apartment buildings because of the small, human scale," said Justin Lemma, partner with Build LLC,

the Seattle firm that completed Juniper Flats. “They are really popular, fill up quickly and add some flavor to our city.”

Seattle authorized single-stair residential buildings in 1977. The city’s Department of Construction and Inspections ***does not track the number of units created or their fire safety record***, a spokesperson said.

Lemma said his firm finished about six of these projects in the past seven years, and the 1977 law made them feasible.

“These are tight lots, so things don’t happen easily,” he said, and second staircases take up space, ***cutting into profits*** *[I THINK WE JUST FOUND THE MAIN REASON!]* by shrinking or eliminating units. “If we needed two staircases, the projects wouldn’t work.”

David Lapidus, a partner in the Chicago-based multifamily real estate development firm Evoke Capital LLC, said low- to moderate-income neighborhoods feel the most pain when construction costs soar.

He calculated that for a five-story, 10-unit apartment building in Chicago, adding a second concrete-and-steel stairwell tacks $250,000 onto a $3 million development. *The loss of rentable space would also subtract tens of thousands of dollars from the building’s* ***annual income***.

Landlords in high-income neighborhoods such as Lakeview might be able to soften the blow by charging higher rents, but that wouldn’t be an option across much of the South and West sides, he said.

“In a huge number of lots across the city, that’s the difference between a building working or not working,” Lapidus said. Allowing more single-staircase structures “could mean a few thousand more units for the city. It would be very helpful citywide, but particularly in financially challenged areas.”

Alex Montero, co-lead at Strong Towns Chicago, said the groups backing the measure, along with City Council allies such as Martin, have received direct feedback from the Fire Department and made compromises, including cutting their initial request for six-story buildings down to five.

“We believe the current proposal on the table is reasonable,” Montero said, although his group is willing to make additional tweaks. “We want some version of this reform to pass. Something that brings Chicago more in line with other states and peer cities.”

Lapidus said the fire-protection features in Martin’s ordinance could mean single-staircase buildings are safer for their residents than older properties.

“There are buildings in Chicago right now that are grandfathered in, which have single staircases and no sprinkler systems,” he said. “That’s where I find a lot of the Fire Department’s arguments usually fall apart.”

Firefighters and Buildings Department officials stood together in opposition during the June 4 zoning committee meeting.

Steinmetz, of the firefighters union, reminded committee members that a total of 25 people died in the 1993 Paxton Hotel fire and the 2003 Cook County Administration Building fire, partly because of a lack of usable fire exits. Residents of small buildings also need multiple stairwells in an emergency, he said.

“When we discuss six-story buildings, some of you assume that if residents become trapped, firefighters can simply rescue them from windows using aerial ladders,” he said. But trees or cars can block ladders, and “even when a ladder reaches a window, occupants are likely to be removed one at a time,” he said. “Aerial rescues are an emergency measure only.”

Chicago Department of Buildings Commissioner Marlene Hopkins urged City Council members to use caution before changing the rules. She said the city’s building code takes into account past fire disasters, and the goal is to ensure residents have several ways to escape a fire.

“When one exit has been compromised by fire, smoke, structural failure or emergency operations, occupants and first responders must have an alternative path available,” she said. “A single-stair building removes that redundancy.”

Mark Chubb, a Seattle-based fire safety consultant and former fire chief, told zoning committee members that national studies show small buildings with good sprinkler systems, where residents are just steps from the exit, are extremely safe.

“Nearly all residential fire deaths occur in the dwelling units where the fire starts, not in adjacent dwelling units, not corridors and not stairways,” he said. “A choice of two exits will not reduce or eliminate these fire deaths.”

Katherine Darnstadt, the founder of Latent, a Chicago-based design firm, said she’s glad officials take safety so seriously, but hopes they can be persuaded to modernize the rules.

"Having more options for housing design is always better," she said. "And with the single-stair option, even if on the surface it feels less safe, all the additional measures like sprinklers will have a real, positive impact, boost safety and offer an opportunity to bring more density to your typical Chicago lot."
Some aldermen have come out in support, including co-sponsors Bennett Lawson, 44th, Anthony Quezada, 35th, and Ruth Cruz, 30th. Others are skeptical.
"I understand that whatever we can do to reduce total project costs to deliver more affordable units is a good thing," said Ald. Brendan Reilly, 42nd. "*However, there are certain, to me, sacred cows we shouldn't be messing with, and first and foremost is safety."*
Ald. Martin's office said it plans to continue talking with other City Council members, firefighters and city officials.
"We've had productive follow-up meetings with (the Department of Buildings) and the mayor's office, and once we've had an opportunity to do the same with the Fire Department, we'll incorporate their input into a revised ordinance," said Ryan McCray, director of infrastructure and policy for the 47th Ward.
"It's critical that we get this right, and if we need a few additional months, that's fine," Martin said. "We should not compromise on safety. Let's earn people's support and get them comfortable with common sense legislation."

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

*****The Legacy Engine: Structural Reform for Volunteer Fire Department Sustainability***

Tom McKellips

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Across volunteer and combination fire departments, a quiet pattern is emerging: Fewer people are doing more work, and the system looks stable right up until it fails.*
- *In many volunteer fire departments, response volume and operational load are carried by a small core group: the "active few." The system still functions but only because the same people absorb more demand. From the outside, a department appears stable. From the inside, it's fragile.*
- Sustainable volunteer fire departments take a different approach than what convention dictates. They measure participation concentration, not just headcount; track attrition patterns year over year; identify overload before morale collapses; design onboarding to reduce *active few* dependency; build leadership succession intentionally; align expectations with realistic capacity; and design systems that don't require heroism to survive.

Citizens call 9-1-1, and they expect help in minutes. In most of the United States, that help still comes from volunteers. However, across rural and combination departments, a quiet pattern is emerging: Fewer people are doing more work, and the system looks stable right up until it fails.
We keep talking about recruitment. "We need better marketing." "We need social media." "We need to 'ask more people.'"
Recruitment matters, but recruitment alone doesn't explain why departments that have respectable membership rosters still struggle to staff apparatus, maintain training momentum or fill officer positions.
The deeper issue is sustainability.

THE PROBLEM ISN'T HEADCOUNT

Most departments measure operational health by total membership. If the roster lists 28 members, leadership assumes that the department is healthy. However, sustainability isn't about total numbers. It's about participation distribution.
In many departments, response volume and operational load are carried by a small core group: the "active few." These are the responders who make most of the calls, show up to most of the drills, handle informal mentorship, take on administrative burden and step into leadership gaps. A*s participation narrows, workload concentrates. The system still functions but only because the same people absorb more demand. From the outside, it appears stable. From the inside, it's fragile.*

EMOTIONAL STRAIN NO ONE TALKS ABOUT

Over years of observing volunteer departments and speaking with firefighters and officers, several themes surface consistently: duty, camaraderie, leadership climate, time pressure, politics, family tension.
Volunteers aren't lazy. They aren't indifferent. Most join because they care deeply about their community. However, many experience a quiet internal conflict: *They feel obligated to stay, but they increasingly are drained by workload, cultural friction or unclear direction.* ***So, they don't quit dramatically. They withdraw slowly. They respond less. Then one day, they're gone. The remaining active few absorb the difference, again.***

LEADERSHIP MATTERS, BUT IT ISN'T THE WHOLE ANSWER

Strong leadership improves morale. Volunteers stay where they feel valued. They stay where communication is open. They stay where they experience belonging and camaraderie, where their contributions are recognized, and where they are trusted with meaningful responsibility and opportunities to grow. The management research of Abraham Maslow, who's the author of "Eupsychian Management: A Journal" (Dorsey Press, 1967), emphasized these same conditions. Leadership behaviors influence retention, but even excellent leadership can't override structural overload. If call volume rises, then expectations increase, compliance requirements expand and participation narrows, and good leadership only delays the breaking point. The issue isn't just culture. It's load concentration.

TIME ISN'T AN EXCUSE; IT'S A WARNING SIGN

Time often is cited as the reason that volunteers step back. It's easy to dismiss that as an excuse. However, time pressure frequently is a system variable. If five members handle most responses, training, meetings, fundraisers and administrative work, their time constraint reflects structural imbalance, not weak commitment.
When the same few people are required to do more each year just to maintain the appearance of stability, burnout becomes predictable, and predictable problems can be measured.

SUSTAINABILITY SHIFT

Traditional fire service thinking asks, "How do we get more volunteers?" A sustainability mindset asks, "How long can our current participation pattern support our current workload?"
That question forces a different kind of leadership. It pushes leaders to consider:

- *What happens if two high-volume responders leave?*
- *What happens if call volume increases 10 percent next year?*
- *What happens if new compliance requirements add training hours?*
- *What happens if one officer steps down?*

If the answer to any of those questions is "The same five people will figure it out," your department isn't short on volunteers; it's short on sustainability.

THREE STRUCTURAL BLIND SPOTS

From a systems perspective, most struggling departments share three blind spots:

Active few dependency. The department appears stable, but a small percentage of members carry a disproportionate share of workload. The loss of even one high-participation member creates ripple effects.

Cultural debt. Traditions, internal politics and outdated expectations accumulate quietly. Volunteers absorb friction because of loyalty, until the friction outweighs the mission. Service might begin as purpose beyond the self, but the system should never allow service beyond self to become destruction of self.

Reactive recruitment. *Recruitment efforts focus on filling empty spots rather than redistributing workload or redesigning participation models. New recruits enter a strained system and quickly mirror the same burnout patterns.*

None of these are motivational failures. They are structural conditions.

WHAT SUSTAINABLE DEPARTMENTS DO DIFFERENTLY

Sustainable departments take a different approach. They:

- Measure participation concentration, not just headcount.
- Track attrition patterns year over year.

- Identify overload before morale collapses.
- Design onboarding to reduce active few dependency.
- Build leadership succession intentionally.
- Align expectations with realistic capacity.
- Stop asking volunteers to be heroic.
- Design systems that don't require heroism to survive.

A so-called People First organizational development framework protects the volunteer's time, value, trust and opportunity to grow while still meeting the department's responsibility to the community.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NEXT MONTH

If you're a chief or officer, here are four practical starting points.

- *Map participation*. Identify your top responders. What percentage of total calls are they handling? If the same names dominate reports, acknowledge the risk.
- *Stress-test your roster*. If two high-participation members leave tomorrow, what would change operationally? Write it down. If the answer makes you uncomfortable, that discomfort is useful.
- *Reduce unnecessary load*. Examine administrative, meeting and training structures. What can be simplified? What can be delegated? *What expectations are cultural habits rather than operational necessities?*
- *Redesign onboarding*. Instead of inserting new members into existing overload, create roles that genuinely distribute the work. Sustainability must be designed around both the mission and the people who are asked to carry it.

QUIET COLLAPSE

Volunteer departments rarely fail overnight. They erode. The warning signs are subtle. The names on every report are the same. Training compliance is achieved by the same small group. There's an increasing reliance on mutual aid. There's a growing silence in meetings. Leadership fatigue is masked by professionalism.The collapse is quiet, because ***the most committed members hold it together, until they can't.***

REAL LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY

Sustainability isn't about motivational speeches. It's about systems stewardship. It's about recognizing that attrition often is structural, not personal. It's about understanding that recruitment without load redesign accelerates burnout. It's about measuring what most departments never measure.

Volunteer service is one of the strongest civic traditions in this country, but tradition alone doesn't guarantee survival. If we want volunteer departments to endure, we must move beyond headcount and heroism. We must design for sustainability. That starts with asking better questions before the collapse makes the decision for you.

5 SIGNS YOUR DEPARTMENT IS STRUCTURALLY OVERLOADED

1. Same Names Appear on Every Run Report

If a small percentage of members are responding to the majority of calls, your department is operating on concentration, not capacity.

2. Training Compliance Depends on the "Active Few"

If mandatory certifications and drills consistently are completed by the same core group, the system is narrowing, even if total membership looks stable.

3. Leadership Roles Are "Filled" by Default

When officer positions are accepted out of obligation rather than readiness, succession is reactive, not sustainable.

4. Recruitment Adds Members but Doesn't Reduce Workload

If new volunteers enter the department but the operational burden on senior members doesn't decrease, your structure hasn't changed, only the roster has.

5. You're One Departure Away from Mutual-Aid Dependency

If losing two high-participation responders would affect response capability significantly, your margin of safety is thin.

Structural overload rarely announces itself loudly. It hides behind dedication and professionalism. The question isn't whether your volunteer's care; it's whether your system protects them from carrying too much for too long.

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

CHANGING ORGANIZATIONS

Town of Dryden in discussions of a unified fire district

Town of Dryden officials are in the process of potentially creating a unified fire district.

The proposal, which the town is calling the Dryden Fire District, would consolidate business operations of the fire departments that are presently under contract with the town.

The fire district that is under consideration would include the W.B. Strong Fire Company of Freeville, the Varna Volunteer Fire Company and the Neptune Hose Co. No. 1 of Dryden.

Town officials and the three fire companies are now in the midst of discussions, following conversations at Dryden town board meetings.

Town Supervisor Jason Leifer noted in the past that the villages of Etna and Freeville, both of which are within the town of Dryden, would have to approve the creation of the district under New York state law.

If approved, a fire commissioners election would be held starting in 2027.

Leifer said on May 21 that each fire department is a nonprofit with a separate budget, and the proposed district would merge them into one budget line.

A January deadline is in place, as efforts from town officials and the three departments to work out logistics begin.

Town Deputy Supervisor Dan Lamb recommended at the June 11 meeting that work should be completed before the deadline.

"The initial structuring of the fire district is where it's going to take some intense work, and people who understand what assets are among the departments, how they should be allocated, what the current needs are and what the long-term needs are in terms of building capacity or apparatus," Lamb added. "The public will never see a difference in terms of first responders. These departments are high performing, so they're going to be out the door just like they always have been."

Dryden Fire Board Chair Tom Pirko, who has spoken on behalf of the three fire companies, mentioned that so far, local firefighters' reactions to the proposed unified fire district have been mixed.

"I think there's a lot of nerves because nobody really knows what it's going to look like," Pirko noted, adding that the firefighters do have a "strong idea" of how the district could come out. "It's very unlikely, but it could go very badly. Again, very unlikely, but it could."

At the May 21 town board meeting, Pirko expressed his confidence in each of the three departments and how they operate.

"This isn't an operational issue with the three departments," Pirko added. "They're very well-run departments that work together very well with very good leadership."

Update to this ongoing endeavor

Representatives for the future Dryden Fire District met with the Dryden Town Board Thursday to discuss a solid plan of action for the working group and potential commissioners.

The discussion revolved around an initiative to combine Dryden's three fire departments, Neptune Hose Co. #1 of Dryden, the Varna Volunteer Fire Company and W.B. Strong Fire Company of Freeville, into a single fire

district for the Dryden area. The idea began to take shape at a town board meeting in May, when representatives from the Corning Fire District gave a presentation on forming a fire district. The May meeting was well-attended by local firefighters.

A main topic for lawyers working with the future district, Steve Shahan and Mike Perehinec, was whether they could develop a budget within the timeline originally proposed for the working group responsible for consolidating budgets and resources. "I think there was a joint decision from the working committee that we are not going to be able to pull this off to form a fire district 2026 in time for them to form a budget," Shahan told the board.

Later, a member of the working group and Chair of the Neptune Hose Co. #1 of Dryden Board Tom Pirko clarified the district would form in January of 2027 and would manage the three departments' typical budgets separately for one year while they take time to consolidate into a single operating budget.

Pirko said the original timeline gave the working group only two weeks to combine the fire departments' budgets. "There was no realistic way to get it done in the time frame that everybody thought it was going to work — and if we tried, we had a really big risk of kind of setting ourselves up for failure," said Pirko.

Standing in the way of district formation are a series of votes and procedures, for which the process would begin Sept. 10, according to Shahan.

A vote that night would set a public hearing for Oct. 1, and then votes by the boards of Dryden, Varna and Freeville. If the three municipalities all vote to form the district, residents could stall progress, if they so wished, by filing a "properly formatted petition," said Shahan, at which point a referendum would be required.

If all goes smoothly, the district could be formed as early as November, but January 2027 was the goal for the town. Five commissioners will be named before then, and then in Dec. 2027, the district would hold an election for the commissioner roles.

The commissioner elections would set up the slate for future, staggered elections. The top-voted commissioner would have a full five-year term, followed by truncated terms for each trailing commissioner based on their vote ranking.

The fifth-place commissioner would serve only one year.

"I think the important part for everyone to understand is, at this point, the district work group, and who are likely to be the district commissioners, are all members or supporters of the fire departments," said Pirko of the change for local first responders. "We all have the best interest of keeping those three departments running as much the way that they currently are as possible so that we continue to have the best emergency response for our community as possible."

FIRE APPARATUS

*****The Most Innovative Fire Apparatus Are Built With Intention***

Robert Policht

KEY TAKEAWAYS

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

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

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

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

STRATEGICALLY RELEVANT

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

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

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

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

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

SMALL CONCEPTS, BIG BENEFITS

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

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

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

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

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

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

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

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

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

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

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

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

ACCESS MAXIMIZED

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

Iselin, NJ, Fire Department's Rescue 11-3 is a great example of clever thinking about tool storage. The department specified a compartment for stabilization equipment that has vertical pull-out trays. This allows

crews to work off either side of the apparatus. The concept is efficient and organized and built with purpose. Stabilization equipment can be bulky. Nevertheless, when needed, it should be quickly accessible. Designing a compartment that's specifically for it is one of the smartest decisions that a rescue company can make.

SMALL IMPROVEMENTS ADD UP

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

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

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

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

ANTICIPATING FUTURE NEEDS

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

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

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

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

Why Arizona's growing 3,600° solar blazes require entirely new firefighting tactics

Arizona is currently home to about 100 solar farms, with several of those massive facilities operating right here in Yuma. While clean energy continues to expand across the region, fire safety experts warn that though solar-related fires are rare, they present intense, highly volatile hazards that can take days to control when they do ignite.

Just across the Arizona-California state line, firefighters battled a massive blaze Wednesday at the Mount Signal One Solar Plant. Local crews say fighting these unique electrical and chemical fires requires entirely different tactics compared to traditional structure blazes.

"Fires when they involve hazardous materials basically force us to slow down our stride," said Cedric Cesena of the Imperial County Fire Department. "We have to ensure we are talking and looking with the technical experts who have the technical references that we can use."

Many solar installations utilize lithium-ion batteries to store vast amounts of electricity. While highly efficient, that concentrated energy can become unstable. According to firefighters, these thermal runaway events can reach temperatures up to 3,600 degrees Fahrenheit.

Lithium-ion battery failures have been blamed for a growing list of emergencies nationally, including golf cart, garage, car, airplane, and commercial building fires. *When these chemical liquids are involved in a blaze, conventional firefighting methods do not work.*

In June, a 76-year-old woman was killed in a Glendale, Arizona, house fire. The Glendale Fire Department confirmed the backyard blaze was caused by an electrical malfunction. A source with knowledge of the investigation said the fatal fire was tied to a homeowner assembling a do-it-yourself (DIY) solar panel installation, which included a lithium battery system.

- Four Tesla cars were scorched at a Marin County, California dealership on Labor Day, officials said. The fire started at one Tesla, with flames from the hood area, and then spread to the other Teslas, he said. Crews were able to extinguish the blaze in approximately 15 minutes, and it did not spread to the main battery of any of the cars.

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

New York Women in Fire Day



Hoags Corners VFD

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

Gansevoort Fire Department Breakfast

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

Clifton Park Fire Department Breakfast

Next Breakfast will be held Sunday October 4th from 8 to 11:30am

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Speigletown Fire Department Breakfast 2nd Sunday of each month

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

---

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

Join us on Saturday, September 26th, for The Firefighter's Home Open House.
When: Saturday, September 26th from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

GENERAL INTEREST TO ALL

***Why the Fire Service Runs on 'Nobodies'*

Preston Lyons

We need more "nobodies" in the fire service.

Let me explain.

The more I travel and meet, train, and interview firefighters across the country, the more I hear a familiar phrase: "I am just a nobody from nowhere."

They say this in a negative tone, as if being from a smaller department, not having many accolades, or being from a certain part of the county disqualifies them from telling their story or discussing the impact they have had on others. It is often followed up with reasons why they should not teach, write, lead, or step forward.

That mindset couldn't be more inaccurate, because one thing that the fire service does not lack is its importance and responsibilities to the community. What it does often lack, at times, is ownership, and that's where the nobody comes in.

The fire service is full of everybodies, somebodies, and anybodies, and it reminds me of a story by Charles Osgood that you may have heard:

"There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody couldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have."

This message is often shared with sports teams, organizations, and companies to underscore responsibility and accountability. In that context, "Nobody" represents failure through inaction, excuses, and assumptions.

A valuable lesson indeed. But I want to take a different route.

I want to redefine the meaning of nobody in the story.

Instead of relating the word "nobody" as an absence of action, read the story again and imagine the word "nobody" as a person or a title. When reinterpreted, you notice that one person is doing all of the work while the others are failing to take action. The person who is a nobody in the fire service is the one who steps up when everyone else is looking for someone else to do it.

Being a Nobody Is Humility and Ownership at the Most Basic Level

So here is the dark secret about the "nobodies" in the fire service—while others are discrediting them, they are what keep the whole operation running.

In a culture that increasingly rewards paper tigers who seek certificates, accolades, awards, titles, and authority, there are the nobodies who consistently show up and quietly do the work. They are not chasing attention or praise, and they are not waiting to be asked. They are doing the work because it needs to be done. They also know how to do right by others and the department.

The "nobody" is the firefighter who shows up early to ensure the person they relieve doesn't get sucked into a late call so they can get home to their families on time. They do a gloved-mask-up drill while checking their

pack because it makes them a millisecond faster on that grab. They train when it's inconvenient because waiting for perfect conditions isn't the world we operate in. The nobody studies the craft even when no homework is assigned; the nobody cleans up the messes they did not create; and they check in on others when everyone else is scrolling and posting on social media.

And because nobody announces their accomplishments, they often go unnoticed, or worse, someone else takes the credit.

That's the cost of being a nobody, but their value is greater than that of a new apparatus or station.

The fire service doesn't need more people waiting for orders or a promotion to act. It needs more people willing to take ownership without guarantees. Firefighters who understand that leadership isn't anything other than the behaviors and actions you make day in and day out. Leadership is not rank, it's not recognition, and it's definitely not about how many people like you. Sometimes this is forgotten.

Firehouses and departments don't run well because of everybody. They don't improve because of somebody. They don't move forward with just anybody. Departments are successful because a nobody from nowhere showed up and did the work.

Thank you to nobodies out there, you are the unsung heroes in our fire service. You may think that you are invisible, but we see you, and you are indispensable. You are the backbone of our companies, firehouses, and organizations.

If you think you are just a nobody, that's good. Own it and say it with honor. Because when nobody steps up, we all win.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

Old is when you are cautioned to slow down by your doctor, instead of by the police.

CLASSIFIED

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

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

Duties of the Treasurer:

I. Shall collect all dues, be the custodian of all funds of the Association, and shall keep all Association funds in such bank accounts as may be designated by the Board of Directors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please advise your secretaries that all correspondence should be mailed to:
All correspondence & Capital Area Fire Districts Association Mailing Address should be directed to:
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Wish to become a member of CAFDA, go to CAFDA.net/membership to apply.

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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.
