

THE BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 19TH, 2026

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

CAPITAL SHORT TAKES

- **BUDGET SCHEDULE** PAGE 4 also on CAFDA.net
- **ELECTION SCHEDULE** PAGE 9 also on CAFDA.net
- On Friday September 11, 2026, the Fuller Road Fire Department announced that Past Chief Albert J. Miller has been selected as the recipient of the 2026 Albany County Volunteer Firefighters Association's Walter W. Eck Jr Firefighter of the Year award. Congratulations Chief Miller, well done.
- Congratulations to Averill Park-Sand Lake Fire District #2 for a generally benign audit report.
- The Nominal Compensation discussion continues the latest from State Districts.

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".* ***SEE PAGE 40 FOR FLYER AND REGISTRATION FORM, REGISTER ON-LINE NOW AVAILABLE AT CAFDA.NET.***
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

$25 MILLION IN CAPITAL FUNDING FOR 65 VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

- ***Ten Volunteer Fire Departments Receive Maximum Award of $1 Million***
- ***V-FIRE Grant Program Helps Improve Facilities, Response Capabilities and Responder Safety***
- ***Builds on Governor's Efforts To Strengthen and Stabilize New York's Volunteer Fire Service***

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced $25 million in capital funding for 65 volunteer fire departments and districts across New York State to improve facilities, response capabilities and emergency preparedness. Ten departments received the maximum award of $1 million. These investments build on the $25 million previously awarded to 88 volunteer fire departments in October 2024. With nearly half of New Yorkers relying on volunteer firefighters for fire protection and emergency response, this grant program helps offset the financial pressures of rising equipment and construction costs, ensuring local taxpayers do not bear the full cost of these essential safety upgrades.

Recognizing the important role of volunteer firefighters in communities across the state, Governor Hochul has prioritized strengthening and stabilizing New York's volunteer fire services through record investments in training, equipment and facility upgrades.

Administered by the State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program supports volunteer fire departments by upgrading and improving facilities and response capabilities through the following objectives:

- **Facility Improvements:** Funding the construction of new, or renovation of existing, fire stations, classrooms, meeting spaces, or training centers to ensure they are safe, structurally sound, meet current building codes, and promote safe firefighting practices.
- **Equipment Purchases:** Supporting firefighter health, safety, and wellness by providing up-to-date personal protective equipment (PPE), PPE washers and dryers, decontamination equipment and supplies, and effective exhaust removal systems.

Additionally, the V-FIRE grants support the consolidation of fire service resources through regionalization efforts, allowing departments to expand their capabilities beyond traditional jurisdictional boundaries to enhance local, county, and statewide mutual aid response.

Ten volunteer fire departments received the maximum award of $1,000,000 for major capital overhauls through this round of grant funding:

- Sennett Fire District, Cayuga County
- Volney Volunteer Fire Corporation, Oswego County
- Farmington Volunteer Fire Association, Inc., Ontario County
- Village of Tivoli, Dutchess County
- Village of Richfield Springs Fire Department, Otsego County
- West Edmeston Fire District, Otsego County
- Adams Center Fire District, Jefferson County
- Port Henry Fire District #3, Essex County
- Coventry Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., Chenango County
- Village of Angola Fire Department, Erie County

New York State County Fire Coordinators Association President Bill Streicher said, "New York's V-FIRE Grant Program is a critical investment in the men and women who dedicate their time to protecting communities across our state. Volunteer firefighters are the backbone of public safety, particularly in rural communities. Ensuring these dedicated departments have the equipment, facilities and resources they need is not only an investment in our fire departments — it is an investment in the safety and well-being of New Yorkers."

A breakdown of award recipients by region is below:

Capital Region (8 awards totaling $2,295,926)

- Beukendaal No 5 Fire District, Schenectady County, $934,698
- East Schodack Fire District #1, Rensselaer County, $383,000
- Lebanon Valley Protective Association, Inc., Columbia County, $96,554
- Speigletown Fire District, Rensselaer County, $318,957
- Stuyvesant Falls Fire District, Columbia County, $58,000
- Village of Cambridge Fire Department, Washington County, $314,848
- Village of Catskill Fire Department, Greene County, $90,669
- Village of Menands Fire Department, Albany County, $99,200

Central New York (8 awards totaling $3,825,749)

- Fair Haven Volunteer Fire Department, Cayuga County, $229,000
- King Ferry Fire District, Cayuga County, $824,000
- Oswego County, Oswego County, $400,000
- Sennett Fire District, Cayuga County, $1,000,000
- Smithfield Fire District, Madison County, $66,875
- Village of Cazenovia Fire Department, Madison County, $253,084
- Village of Weedsport, Cayuga County, $52,790
- Volney Volunteer Fire Corporation, Oswego County, $1,000,000

Finger Lakes (8 awards totaling $2,605,692)

- Branchport Keuka Park Fire District, Yates County, $475,000
- Farmington Volunteer Fire Association, Inc., Ontario County, $1,000,000
- Kendall Fire Department Inc., Orleans County, $114,000
- Village of Geneseo, Livingston County, $19,233
- Village of Manchester Volunteer Fire Department, Ontario County, $296,000
- Village of Red Creek Fire Department, Wayne County, $264,741
- Village of Waterloo, Seneca County, $391,331
- Wyoming County, Wyoming County, $45,387

Long Island (7 awards totaling $1,194,425)

- Alert Engine Hook Ladder and Hose Co. No. 1, Nassau County, $95,000
- City of Glen Cove, Nassau County, $287,324
- Halesite Fire District, Suffolk County, $145,000
- Huntington Manor Fire District, Suffolk County, $164,601
- Incorporated Village of Amityville Fire Department, Suffolk County, $125,000
- New Hyde Park Fire District, Nassau County, $188,000
- Village of Lynbrook Fire Department, Nassau County, $189,500

Mid-Hudson (7 awards totaling $2,357,959)

- Buchanan Engine Company No 1 Inc., Westchester County, $425,000
- Kauneonga Lake Fire District, Sullivan County, $82,215
- Kerhonkson Fire District, Ulster County, $388,050
- Pearl River Fire District, Rockland County, $107,015
- Village of Suffern Fire Department, Rockland County, $256,679
- Village of Tivoli, Dutchess County, $1,000,000
- West Nyack Fire District, Rockland County, $99,000

Mohawk Valley (8 awards totaling $3,857,616)

- Caroga Lake Volunteer Fire Company Inc, Fulton County, $56,900
- Columbia Litchfield Fire District, Herkimer County, $126,730
- Middleburgh Fire Department, Schoharie County, $58,775
- Village of Cooperstown Fire Department, Otsego County, $488,211
- Village of Milford Fire Department, Otsego County, $377,000
- Village of Oriskany Fire Department, Oneida County, $750,000
- Village of Richfield Springs Fire Department, Otsego County, $1,000,000
- West Edmeston Fire District, Otsego County, $1,000,000

North Country (4 awards totaling $2,488,223)

- Adams Center Fire District, Jefferson County, $1,000,000
- Parishville Fire District, St. Lawrence County, $157,499
- Port Henry Fire District #3, Essex County, $1,000,000
- Town of Gouverneur/Gouverneur Fire Company Inc., St. Lawrence County, $330,724

Southern Tier (8 awards totaling $3,031,569)

- Andes Joint Fire District, Delaware County, $40,200
- Coventry Volunteer Fire Company, Inc., Chenango County, $1,000,000
- Delhi Joint Fire District, Delaware County, $298,800
- Erin Fire District #1, Chemung County, $390,205
- Painted Post Fire Department, Steuben County, $261,578
- Town of Colesville Fire District #1, Broome County, $593,000
- Vestal Fire District, Broome County, $418,895
- Village of Odessa Fire Department, Schuyler County, $28,891

Western New York (7 awards totaling $3,342,841)

- Forks Fire District No. 3, Erie County, $182,576
- Harris Hill Volunteer Fire Company, Erie County, $453,849
- Kiantone Independent Volunteer Fire Department Inc., Chautauqua County, $560,480
- River Road Fire District #3, Erie County, $750,000

- Town of Eden Fire District, Erie County, $373,911
- Village of Angola Fire Department, Erie County, $1,000,000
- Village of Lancaster, Erie County, $22,025

- ***Rumor has it that the Governor is unwilling to sign the legislation increasing the tax credit to $800, I guess we'll see; but realize the decision will not be made until after the election in November!!***
- 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 BUTTENSCHON (D)**	**5/6/26 PASSED SENATE 4/29/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**AN ACT TO AMEND THE EXECUTIVE LAW, IN RELATION TO PROVIDING MINIMUM BASIC TRAINING RELATED TO HANDLING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INVOLVING INDIVIDUALS WITH ANY PHYSICAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY TO ALL FIRE-FIGHTERS**	**PENDING SIGNATURE** REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TRAINING
S6233A MARTINEZ (D)	**A6790A MCMAHON**	**6/1/26 PASSED SENATE 5/14/26 PASSED ASSEMBLY**	**THIS BILL INCREASES THE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS' AND AMBULANCE WORKERS' PERSONAL INCOME TAX CREDIT**	**PENDING SIGNATURE**

			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.	

From Washington

📌 **Former and Current Fire Chiefs Testify on Counterterrorism Efforts Since 9/11.** On Wednesday, the House Committee on Homeland Security held a hearing to discuss the impacts of 9/11 on America's counterterrorism response. The two panels of witnesses included: Commissioner Nigro (Former Commissioner, FDNY); Chief Schwartz (Former Chief, Arlington County); Chief Currao (Chief of Fire Prevention, FDNY); and Chief Donnelly (Chief of Fire and EMS, Washington D.C. Fire and Emergency Services Department).

Commissioner Nigro opened the hearing with a recounting of his response to the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11, as well as the recovery efforts of the days that followed. Chief Schwartz followed the Commissioner to discuss the importance of collaboration among various agencies that day, the effectiveness of the incident command system, and regional mutual-aid.

The second panel began with Chief Donnelly discussing how the fire and emergency services have grown their ability to respond to terrorist attacks and other major incidents, but also noted where federal partnership can improve. Chief Donnelly noted that the fire and emergency services need stable and flexible grant support: "recent threats to major fire service grants and the National Fire Academy [has] introduced instability and undermines our ability to plan for the long term".

The questions from the Committee ranged from the emerging threats of drones, monetary cuts to grant programs that impact the fire and emergency services, proposed cuts to FEMA staffing levels, and how fusion centers can improve their effectiveness throughout the country.

📌 National Fire Academy Application Period is Open! The NFA is now accepting applications for resident classes scheduled from January through March of 2027. These classes will take place on the campus of the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

📌 NIOSH Publishes SCBA Training Safety Checklist. Last week, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health released an SCBA Training Prop Evolution Safety Checklist. The checklist provides best practices for SCBA confidence training, based on the Firefighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program's (FFFIPP) investigations of fatalities that have occurred during SCBA training.

➡️ View the Safety Checklist Here: https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/publications/numbered/2026-116.html

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

AVERILL PARK – SAND LAKE FIRE DISTRICT NO.2

Audit Objective

Did the Averill Park – Sand Lake Fire District No. 2 (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) properly audit claims?

Audit Period

January 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026

Understanding the Audit Area

An effective audit of claims is often the last line of defense for preventing unauthorized, improper or fraudulent claims from being paid. When a fire district has a strong claims auditing process, the control consciousness of its staff is enhanced because officers and employees are aware that a careful review of claims will occur before public funds are disbursed. Because it is the Board's responsibility to ensure tax dollars are spent properly, efficiently and in the best interest of taxpayers, the Board should conduct a thorough and deliberate audit of claims before directing the Treasurer to pay them.

The District paid 337 claims totaling $432,998 during the audit period.

Audit Summary

The Board, as a whole, did not properly audit claims because it did not conduct a thorough and deliberate audit of all claims paid during the audit period. We reviewed 62 claims totaling $280,832 and determined that none of the claims were audited and approved by the entire Board as required. *We determined that the 62 claims were properly supported and for valid and legal purposes.* However, the lack of a claims audit increased the risk that claims for improper purposes could be paid, or that irregularities could go undetected and uncorrected.

This report includes two recommendations that, if implemented, will improve the effectiveness of the District's claims audit process. District officials generally agreed with our recommendations and have initiated, or indicated they planned to initiate corrective action.

FULL AUDIT REPORT HERE:

https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/averill-park-sand-lake-fire-district-2026-55.pdf

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SNYDER FIRE DISTRICT – CLAIMS AUDITING

Audit Objective

Did the Snyder Fire District (District) Board of Fire Commissioners (Board) properly audit claims before payment? Audit Period

Audit Period

January 1, 2024 – December 24, 2025

Understanding the Audit Area

A board of fire commissioners (board) is responsible for ensuring that tax dollars are used in the best interests of taxpayers. To do so, the board should properly audit claims before payment to ensure that district funds are spent only for legitimate, authorized and necessary purposes and that all expenditures are adequately supported. An effective claims auditing process helps verify that goods and services were received; amounts billed are accurate; expenditures comply with applicable laws, policies and contracts; and payments are not duplicated or unauthorized.

The claims audit is often the last line of defense by helping safeguard public funds from unauthorized, improper or fraudulent claims. The claims audit establishes an important internal control that promotes accountability and transparency over public funds and helps safeguard district assets from errors, waste, fraud and misuse. It also helps establish the control consciousness of board members and membership and helps make them aware that a careful review of claims should occur before public funds are disbursed. Without an effective claims auditing process, inappropriate or unsupported expenditures may be paid and remain undetected, which increases the risk that the district could suffer a financial loss and weaken public confidence in the district's stewardship of taxpayer resources.

The District's 2025 budgeted appropriations totaled approximately $1.7 million. During the audit period, the District paid 751 claims totaling approximately $1.9 million.

Audit Summary

The Board did not properly audit all claims before payment. As a result, the District incurred unnecessary costs totaling approximately $9,700 and was exposed to an increased risk that improper, unsupported or unauthorized expenditures could be paid. We reviewed 137 claims totaling approximately $367,000 and determined that 115 claims totaling approximately $357,000 (84 percent of the claims reviewed, *and 97 percent of dollars examined) did not have sufficient documentation to support a proper audit and should not have been approved and paid for, for various reasons, including:*

- *No Board approval or authorization to pay.*
- *No competitive procurement.*
- *No evidence that the goods or services were received.*
- *No documentation to determine what was purchased.*
- *Noncompliance with the District's policies.*

Therefore, the District may have incurred unnecessary costs,[1] and residents may have paid more than necessary for the District's goods and services. Although the Board did not have the information needed to determine that charges were for proper District purposes when it approved the claims for payment, we determined that all 137 claims were for appropriate District purposes, excluding the excessive per diem payments.[2]

The report includes four recommendations that, if implemented, will strengthen the District's claims audit process and improve accountability over District expenditures. Although District officials generally agreed with our recommendations and indicated they planned to take corrective action, they disagreed with certain aspects of our findings.

READ THE FULL REPORT HERE:
https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/audits/2026/pdf/snyder-fire-district-2026-44.pdf

THE FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE

Training Policies and Procedures

Forest Reeder

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR VOLUNTEER STAFFED FIRE DEPARTMENTS

What are the rules of engagement for your department's structural fire response? Your department should have clear policies and procedures for this, and training should be conducted that prepares firefighters to follow these rules of engagement.

For instance, an example of rules of engagement may look like the following:

- Interior fire suppression operations will not commence until a minimum of 6 firefighters are on scene AND a 360-degree scene assessment is completed.
- Command shall be established by one of the first arriving firefighters.
- A backup line shall be pulled, charged, and staffed when crews are operating in an offensive strategy.
- Apply water to the fire as quickly as possible, in sufficient volume and from the safest position.
- A minimum of 1,000 gallons of water shall be on scene before initiating offensive operations when there are no fire hydrants.
- When there is less than 50% of water in the pumping engine water tank the interior crew shall evacuate to the exterior.
- When conducting primary search, one firefighter with a charged hose line shall stay at the door of the room being
  searched to protect the firefighter.
- Request mutual aid as soon as you know your staffing response will be limited and the problem is bigger than you have available staff.
- At least 2 firefighters should be positioned outside the hot zone in full PPE/SCBA and appropriate equipment to act as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT).
- As more staff arrive, implement the accountability system.

In 2010, the IAFC Safety, Health, and Survival (SHS) section developed the Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Survival and The Incident Commander's Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Safety to better prepare and guide firefighters and incident commanders for risk analysis and decision-making on the

fireground. The North American Fire Training Directors partnered with the SHS in 2014 to develop the Rules of Engagement for Fire Service Training to help prevent injuries and deaths during training events. Adapt these rules of engagement for your department's policies and procedures to help increase the safety of firefighters on the training ground and on the fireground.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR FIREFIGHTER SURVIVAL:

1. Size up your tactical area of operation.
2. Determine the occupant survival profile.
3. DO NOT risk your life for lives or property that cannot be saved.
4. Extend LIMITED risk to protect SAVABLE property.
5. Extend VIGILANT and MEASURED risk to protect and rescue SAVABLE lives.
6. Go in together, stay together, come out together.
7. Maintain continuous awareness of your air supply, situation, location, and fire conditions.
8. Constantly monitor fireground communications for critical radio reports.
9. You are required to report unsafe practices or conditions that can harm you. Stop, evaluate, and decide.
10. You are required to abandon your position and retreat before deteriorating conditions can harm you.
11. Declare a Mayday as soon as you THINK you are in danger.

THE INCIDENT COMMANDER'S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR FIREFIGHTER SAFETY:

1. Rapidly conduct, or obtain, a 360-degree situational size-up of the incident.
2. Determine the occupant survival profile.
3. Conduct an initial risk assessment and implement a SAFE ACTION PLAN.
4. If you do not have the resources to safely support and protect firefighters, seriously consider a defensive strategy.
5. DO NOT risk firefighter lives for lives or property that cannot be saved. Seriously consider a defensive strategy.
6. Extend LIMITED risk to protect SAVABLE property.
7. Extend VIGILANT and MEASURED risk to protect and rescue SAVABLE lives.
8. Act upon reported unsafe practices and conditions that can harm firefighters. Stop, evaluate, and decide.
9. Maintain frequent two-way communications, and keep interior crews informed of changing conditions.
10. Obtain frequent progress reports and revise the action plan.
11. Ensure accurate accountability of every firefighter's location and status.
12. If after completing the primary search little or no progress toward fire control has been achieved, seriously consider a defensive strategy.
13. Always have a rapid intervention team in place at all working fires.
14. Always have firefighter rehab services in place at all working fires.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR SAFE FIRE SERVICE TRAINING:

1. Have a clear purpose for the training exercise and use a TRAINING PLAN with defined outcomes and learning
   objectives. Review the plan with all participants BEFORE training begins.
2. Establish and maintain a clear chain of command during training. Designate a training incident commander/lead
   instructor. Don't let participants pull rank and compromise safety.
3. Never allow freelancing during training. Require the use of staging and accountability systems.
4. Use only QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS who possess both certification and experience in the subject they are
   teaching.
5. Adhere to all national, state, and local standards for conducting training.

6. Only conduct training under ACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS. Don't place participants in a realistic environment before they are ready for it. Never use live victims during high-risk training.
7. Use all possible SAFETY PRECAUTIONS during training, even if they exceed what is possible during an actual emergency event. Even though it's "just training," never overlook safety precautions.
8. Require all participants to be MEDICALLY CLEARED before they participate in strenuous training. Enforce appropriate rehabilitation and monitoring during and after training.
9. Make sure the training is appropriate for the skill level of all participants and that they know what is expected of
them.
10. Allow all participants to STOP – without penalty – if they don't understand their assignment or if they sense
something unsafe during training. Stop, talk, and decide on a safer approach. EVERYONE is a safety officer.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

SOPs and SOGs should include the training requirements expected of volunteers, and these should be communicated
clearly to the volunteer during the recruit and onboarding process. An example of what these requirements may look like is as follows:

- A volunteer shall become certified at the Firefighter I level within 18 months of joining.
- A volunteer that is not certified shall not participate as a member of the team for initial interior fire suppression
- operations.
- A volunteer shall attend a minimum of 24 hours of training annually on fire suppression tactics.
    - This includes a combination of in-class instruction and practical application
    - Training topics may include handling and care of tools, donning and doffing PPE/SCBA, water application
      techniques, ventilation, operating the pump, handling hazardous materials response.

Training plans should then be developed to enable volunteers to meet these training requirements. An example training plan may look like the following:

- Skill 1: SCBA operational check, donning, cylinder removal
  and refill, emergency operations
- Skill 2: Primary/secondary search
- Skill 3: Ground ladders and utility control
- Skill 4: Hose line advancement
- Skill 5: Water supply and pump connections
- Skill 6: Roof/basement cut and roof/basement ventilation
- Skill 7: Knot tying and tool/equipment hoisting, rope inspection and storage
- Skill 8: Salvage operations
- Skill 9: Using lighting equipment
- Skill 10: Riding fire apparatus and working at an emergency scene
- Skill 11: Driving apparatus and operating the pump.

SOPs/SOGs should also include a list of general rules to ensure the health and safety of all firefighters performing operational tasks. An example of these is as follows:

- A physical assessment shall be conducted annually to determine "fit for duty" as an interior firefighter.
- A member shall not drive any fire apparatus within 8 hours of drinking alcohol.
    - A member attending fires or drills under the undue influence of intoxicants shall be charged in writing and may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Conduct an annual assessment of emergency operations that includes a written report on lessons learned.
    - These identified lessons learned help to develop training for the coming year.

- Conduct annual evaluations of the level of service, how well they deployed when dispatched (whether they dispatched enough people with the right equipment), and response times.
    - Develop a plan to address identified deficiencies.
- Develop a community risk reduction plan to identify and prioritize risks and the potential need for fire and emergency medical services.
    - Determine the resources necessary to address those risks and reduce those risks to the extent possible.
- Members found in possession or use of drugs including illegal narcotics will be dismissed if found guilty after the
  presentation of written charges.
- An active member shall be required to attend at least [percent] of meetings and activities.
    - Persons whose work schedules interfere with attendance at regular meetings or trainings will notify the secretary in writing.

THE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

LOSAP POINT SYSTEM BASICS

Reprinted from Fire District Affairs.

THE LOSAP POINT SYSTEM COMPLY WITH SPECIFIC STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:
A fire district's LOSAP Point System must strictly follow New York's statutory rules; ensuring volunteers earn service credit fairly and consistently, because "attainment of fifty (50) points in the plan year from any of the authorized categories earns a year of LOSAP service credit," and misapplying these rules has repeatedly drawn scrutiny from the State Comptroller.

IN DEPTH LOOK:

The Association will continue its series of LOSAP presentations at our Annual Meeting in October. We thought it might be helpful to review the rules that govern development and amendment of the LOSAP Point System to assist attendees as they continue to manage their programs and prepare to attend the conference.

The Point System is an important aspect of a LOSAP because it sets the rules by which participants earn years of service credit. In a LOSAP, years of service credit are earned by participating in certain activities set by the sponsoring fire district. More must be done beyond remaining on the roster as an active volunteer firefighter. The Point System is a written document approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners which places participants on notice of the activities they must perform to achieve 50 points and earn a year of service credit.

The Board must set up the Point System and then grade the performance of volunteer firefighter participants to determine which participants earn a year of service credit and which do not. Clearly, there is a record keeping aspect of managing a LOSAP Point System. Attendance records must be maintained so that achievement is documented and those denied a year of service credit have records to review if they wish to appeal a denial-of-service credit.

Some fire districts have been criticized by the Office of the State Comptroller ["OSC"] when it has performed an audit of their LOSAP Point System. The OSC criticisms have related to whether the district's LOSAP Point System complies with statutory requirements [General Municipal Law §217] and whether the Point System has been properly applied to participant performance.
The lesson to be learned from these audits is to make certain your Point System complies with the statute and make certain that you are properly applying it to each participant's performance during the particular year.
At this point we thought that it would be helpful to provide Boards with the basic structure for the LOSAP Point System so that they could compare it to their current Point System and consider amendments. It is important to remember that LOSAP participants will be able to successfully appeal a denial of credit if it can be argued that the local LOSAP Point System is not a proper Point System under the statute and/or a valid Point System is being applied in an unfair or improper manner. The latter issue would relate to proper interpretation and application of the rule.

It is important to remember that the OSC perspective is fairness for the volunteer firefighter participant rather than developing creative interpretations that provide taxpayers that are paying for the program with a fair return for their tax dollars.
So here are some basic rules by which to review your current LOSAP Point System:

COMMENCEMENT OF PARTICIPATION:
"An active volunteer firefighter must be eligible to participate in any service award program … if the active volunteer firefighter has reached the age of eighteen and has completed at least one year of firefighting service." You can permit earlier participation in the written rules of your plan, but you cannot set a longer waiting period for new members.

VESTING:
Your plan must provide for one hundred (100%) percent vesting of accrued benefits after five (5) years of participation.
The statute also provides that participants are one hundred (100%) percent vested upon reaching the entitlement age. The Board must permit an active member who joined at an advanced age to be vested at the entitlement age even if he or she did not attain five years of service credit.
Death of a participant is also a vesting event.

THE FIFTY (50) POINT RULE:
Under the statute a year of LOSAP service credit must be credited to a participant, "for each calendar year after establishment of the program in which an active volunteer firefighter accumulates at least fifty points".
The Office of the State Comptroller interprets this to mean that attainment of fifty (50) points in the plan year from any of the authorized categories earns a year of LOSAP service credit.
The Board cannot require attainment of points in any specific category as a condition precedent to earning the year.
The Office of the State Comptroller has taken the position that a break in service (leave or suspension) does not result in a forfeiture of the service year if the participant achieves fifty points in the service year.

THE CATEGORIES:

The statute provides a list of activity categories in which the Board can grant points.
The Board can only select from the categories stated.
The Board is not required to use/ make available all the categories.
If the Board provides for a category, it must apply the rules in the statute that pertain to that category.
If the statutory rules for the category state a formula for earning credit, the Board must use that formula.
If the statutory rules for the category state the Board may grant "up to" or a "maximum" number of points for the category, the Board may set up its LOSAP Point System providing for the maximum number of points or a lesser number.
If the statutory rules for the category state a fixed number of points to apply to the category, the Board must set up its LOSAP Point System providing for that fixed number of points. The Board is not given discretion to alter the number of points when it is fixed by statute.

PERMITTED CATEGORIES:
Training courses

- Drills
- Sleep-in or stand-by
- Elected or appointed position
- Attendance at meetings
- Participation in department responses
- Fire calls
- Ambulance calls
- Miscellaneous activities
- VFBL injury disability leave points

- Military leave points
- Teaching Fire Prevention Classes

TRAINING COURSES CATEGORY:
Point Rule: Twenty-five (25) points maximum.
Point Collection Formula: "(A) Courses under twenty hours duration - one point per hour, with a maximum of five points. (B) Courses of twenty to forty-five hours duration - one point per hour for each hour over initial twenty hours, with a maximum of ten points. (C) Courses over forty-five hours to one hundred hours duration - fifteen points per course. (D) Courses over one hundred hours duration - twenty-five points per course."

DRILLS CATEGORY:
Point Rule: Twenty (20) points maximum.
Point Collection Formula: One point per drill (minimum two- hour drill).

SLEEP-IN OR STAND-BY CATEGORY:
Point Rule: Twenty (20) points maximum. Point Collection Formula: (A) Sleep-in - one point each full night. (B) Stand-by - one point each. A stand-by is defined as line of duty activity of the volunteer fire company, lasting for four hours, not falling under one of the other categories.

ELECTED OR APPOINTED POSITION CATEGORY:
Point Rule: Twenty-five (25) points maximum.

Point Collection Formula: "(A) Completion of one year term in an elected or appointed position. If the term of office for a firefighter who has been elected or appointed to a position in a fire company or fire department commences during the month of May, the participant shall receive credit for the full year notwithstanding the fact that the participant has not completed one year in the elected or appointed position at the end of the calendar year in which he or she was elected or appointed.(B) An active volunteer firefighter elected to serve as a delegate to a firefighters' convention shall also be eligible to receive one point per meeting." Statutory Definition: "Elected or appointed position" means line officers, department or company officers and president, vice president, treasurer and secretary of a fire company or department. N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law § 215 (McKinney)
ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS CATEGORY:
Point Rule: Twenty (20) points maximum.
Point Collection Formula: "Attendance at any official meetings of the volunteer fire company - one point per meeting."
The category does not permit points for attending committee meetings or meetings of squads

PARTICIPATION IN DEPARTMENT RESPONSES
Category: Point Rule: Twenty-five (25) points for responding on the minimum number of calls in each of the sub-categories:
Point Collection Formula for Fire Calls based on annual number of calls:

Total Calls	Required Attendance Percentage
0 to 500 calls	10%
500 to 1000 calls	7.5%
1000 to 1500 calls	5%
1500 or more calls	2.5%

Point Collection Formula for Emergency Rescue and First Aid Calls based on annual number of calls:

Total Calls	Required Attendance Percentage
0 to 500 calls	10%
500 to 1000 calls	7.5%
1000 to 1500 calls	5%
1500 or more calls	2.5%

Special Note: *The point collection rule is mandatory. The Board does not have the discretion to give more or less than twenty- five (25) points for each subcategory if it includes the category*.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES CATEGORY: POINT RULE:

Fifteen (15) points maximum. Point Collection Formula: "Participation in inspections and other activities covered by the volunteer firefighters' benefit law and not otherwise listed - one point per activity."

VFBL DISABILITY CATEGORY: POINT RULE: Five (5) points for each full month of such disability. Point Collection Formula: "In the event that any active volunteer firefighter is either totally and temporarily disabled, or partially and permanently disabled, as certified by the workers' compensation board or other competent authority approved by the sponsor of the service award program, and the disability occurs during the course of service as a volunteer, while actively engaged in providing line of duty services, as defined in subdivision one of section five of the volunteer firefighters' benefit law, the firefighter shall receive five points for each full month of such disability."

Special Note: ***The point collection rule is mandatory. The Board does not have the discretion to give more or less than five (5) points per month and is not permitted to give credit for parts of months.*** This category is mandatory. The Board's LOSAP must provide for this credit. To be entitled to the points the participant must be temporarily and totally disabled or permanently and partially disabled. Please also note this rule applies to temporarily and totally disabled or permanently and partially disabled participants. There are benefits available for totally and permanently disabled personnel, but they are not covered in the Point System statute.

TEACHING ``````` Leave Category: Point Rule: Fifty (50) points for each full year, prorated for service of less than a year. Point Collection Formula: "

(i) A participant whose volunteer fire service is interrupted by full-time extended obligatory military service or by a single voluntary enlistment not to exceed four years in the armed forces of the United States shall be considered on military leave. During such period of military leave, the participant shall receive active volunteer service credit of fifty points for each full year, prorated for service of less than a year."

Special Note: The Military Leave point collection rule is mandatory. The Board does not have the discretion to give more or less than the stated points. The Board is permitted to prorate for fractions of years. Military leave credit under the LOSAP is capped at four (4) years.

AMENDING THE SERVICE AWARD POINT SYSTEM

The Board of Fire Commissioners is not authorized to make changes to the LOSAP Point System unless it follows the statutory procedure. Some amendments require voter approval. The procedure for amending the LOSAP Point System is found in General Municipal Law § 216

(e) Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph once a service award program has been established, it may be abolished or amended in the same manner as it was created in accordance with the provisions of this article by following the procedures set forth in subdivision one or two of this section. The point system adopted by the governing board of the sponsor of a service award program pursuant to subdivision

(c) of section two hundred seventeen of this article may be amended by the affirmative vote of at least sixty percent of such governing board, without referendum, provided, that, consistent with the provisions of subdivision

(c) of section two hundred seventeen, the only effect of the amendment is to decrease the number of points granted for the performance of an activity, increase the amount of an activity required to earn the points granted for the performance of the activity, or both.

Any amendment to a service award program shall only take effect as of the first day of January next succeeding completion of the proceedings required for adoption of the amendment and shall only apply prospectively. General Municipal Law § 216 T

Thus, the applicable rule for amending a LOSAP Point System is that: ***Board resolution, no voter approval to***;

1. decrease the number of points granted for the performance of an activity,
2. increase the amount of activity required to earn the points granted for the performance of the activity,
3. or both.

BOARD RESOLUTION AND VOTER APPROVAL REQUIRED AT ANNUAL OR SPECIAL ELECTION TO;

1. increase the number of points granted for the performance of an activity,

2. decrease the amount of an activity required to earn the points granted for the performance of the activity,
3. or both.
4. add a new activity [category]

Point System amendments are effective prospectively on the following January 1st after completion of the amendment process.

Point system amendments are not applied retroactively. There are special provisions when a sponsor amends a Point System Participation in Department Responses Category to address special emergency response rules it has adopted:

(q) *The program sponsor may make adjustments to the participation in department responses point system category provided for in paragraph (vi) of subdivision (c) of this section in the event that such program sponsor adopts written emergency response protocols setting different emergency response requirements for the fire department, fire companies, squads and units thereof such that certain participants are not permitted to respond and are restricted from responding to all nonemergency rescue and first aid squad calls and/or all emergency rescue and first aid squad calls.*

Such restrictions on response may relate to determinations made by the district physician or department's physician as to the duties that may be assigned to certain personnel.

In the event that the program sponsor adopts different response requirements for different groups, participants in those groups shall be required to respond to the minimum number of emergency calls assigned to their group by applying the percentage provided for in paragraph (vi) of subdivision (c) of this section. Notwithstanding the provisions of section two hundred sixteen of this article, a point system amendment to address written emergency response protocols may be adopted by the affirmative vote of at least sixty percent of such governing board, without referendum.

Such amendment shall only take effect as of the first day of January next succeeding the completion of the proceedings required for adoption of the amendment and shall only apply prospectively unless the new written emergency response protocol is adopted in order to address a state disaster emergency, as such term is defined in section twenty of the executive law, and applicable to the county or counties in which the fire department operates, in which case such amendment may be applied in the year adopted. N.Y. Gen. Mun. Law § 217 (McKinney)

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

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

POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

New Cooling Unit Aids Health and Longevity of First Responders in Pinellas County, FL

Pinellas County implemented a Major Incident Support Unit with its own super cooler to help first responders cool down when responding to calls.
According to News Channel 8, it's like a walk-in freezer. It takes about 15 minutes for the cooling room to reach the temperature range between 40 and 50 degrees.
"They think, 'Oh OK it's a cold room,' but they get inside and they don't realize how good it actually feels and how quickly it actually works," said Deputy Chief Mark Zipeto with Dunedin Fire Rescue.

Since firefighters' core temperatures can often reach 104 degrees or higher, Zipeto says that the cooling room makes a difference in their health and longevity.
"Cardiovascular and respiratory are huge with heat," Zipeto said. "The higher you raise your core temperature repeatedly over and over again, the more detrimental it is to your cardiovascular system."
Other features of the unit include two bathrooms, a shower and a kitchenette. The cooling room is the first of its kind for the county and will travel with them on lengthy calls.
"We know it's good for us, but we want to get back to what we were supposed to do so if we can do anything that speeds that up and keeps us safe at the same time that's a huge benefit to everyone," Dunedin Fire Rescue firefighter-paramedic Zachary Harner said.
The unit has already gotten use, being utilized when a gas leak put first responders in the heat for about five hours.

FIRE SERVICE CHALLENGES.

Clinton pizza shop files lawsuit against city, county after 2024 fire

FOX Carolina News Staff

LAURENS COUNTY, S.C. (FOX Carolina) - The owners of an iconic Clinton pizza shop destroyed in a 2024 fire have filed a lawsuit against the City of Clinton and Laurens County.
According to the lawsuit, the House of Pizza restaurant, along with several adjacent downtown businesses, was lost in a major blaze on Aug. 27, 2024.
FOX Carolina previously reported that five firefighters suffered minor injuries while battling the fire, and officials reported issues obtaining adequate water flow at the scene.
According to court documents, the restaurant argues that 911 was first called around 4:55 p.m., followed by multiple additional emergency calls. However, the lawsuit states that the electrical lines serving the building were not de-energized—or shut off—until 5:18 p.m.
During that 23-minute window, firefighters were present on scene but unable to safely apply water or begin their fire attack due to active power lines, allowing the flames to spread from the rear deck throughout the building.

BREAKDOWN OF THE LAWSUIT CLAIMS

1. Negligence Regarding the Electrical System (Against the City of Clinton)

The lawsuit claims the city, as the utility provider, owed a duty to maintain a reliable way to quickly disconnect power in an emergency.
House of Pizza alleges that the city lacked an emergency shutoff switch and allowed the only employee who knew how to operate the shutoff to leave work early, leaving no qualified personnel available to promptly turn off the power.

2. Negligence Regarding Emergency Communications (Against Laurens County)

The lawsuit notes that the city's electric department blamed 911 dispatch for the delay.
The pizza shop claims dispatch failed to promptly transmit the request to shut off power and failed to follow proper protocols for notifying the electric department of a structure fire.

3. Negligence Regarding Water Infrastructure (Against the City of Clinton)

The lawsuit alleges the city failed in its duty to properly inspect, maintain, repair, and operate its fire hydrants and water lines. As a result, firefighters lacked adequate water supply and pressure during suppression efforts, requiring additional water tankers to be called to the scene, according to the lawsuit.

WHAT THE RESTAURANT IS SEEKING

The restaurant is requesting a jury trial and seeking monetary damages for the loss of the business, inventory, equipment, and lost income, with the exact amount to be determined at trial, the lawsuit states.
FOX Carolina reached out to the city of Clinton and Laurens County for comment on the lawsuit. Both said that as of Tuesday, they have not been formally served with any legal documents.

SATISTICS FOR THE FIRE SER1VICE

FIREFIGHTER HEALTH AND SAFETY – PROTECTING OUR OWN

- **Data from US Fire Administration on LODD:** https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/
- **Information on FF injuries and deaths from the Secret List:** https://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/
- **Information of Fire Apparatus MVCs:** https://www.emergencyvehicleresponse.com/

Apparatus Accidents in the News:

- A traffic accident in South L.A. involving a Los Angeles Fire Department TDA, sent seven people to the hospital. Three civilian vehicles and one Fire Department vehicle were involved in the crash.
- A Boca Raton, Florida Fire Rescue truck parked at the scene of a crash was rear-ended on Interstate 95 on Wednesday morning, resulting in four people, including firefighters, being taken to a hospital, none of the people injured have life-threatening injuries.

Firefighter Deaths, Injuries, in the News

- A Mayday was called at a house fire early Thursday in D.C.. The firefighter, who fell through the roof and landed in the attic, managed to self-extricate. Two firefighters sustained minor injuries at the two-alarm fire blamed on incense that ignited items on a porch.
- Firefighter Joe Flake responded with the Wellston, Oklahoma Fire Department to a grass fire with a structure involved. While using an ax on the outside wall of the structure to ventilate, Firefighter Flake suffered a medical emergency. Aid was rendered immediately and Firefighter Flake was transported to a hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

Volunteer Fire Department Investment in Comprehensive Physical Exams for Members Must Be a Priority

Eric Felker

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Fire service leaders are obligated to be aware of the potential for firefighter cardiovascular events, cancer, mental health disorders, respiratory disease and infectious disease and of the need for regular comprehensive physical and mental health examinations for their members.
- *NFPA 1582: Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments defines the components of a comprehensive physical for firefighters to include medical history and physical exam; cardiopulmonary assessment; diagnostics (EKG, chest X-ray and pulmonary function); laboratory tests; and hearing and vision testing.*
- Although the cost of a comprehensive physical and wellness program can range from $500–$800 per member per year, grant opportunities can help departments to start a program. These opportunities might be accessible through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant and state or regional grants.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, as of 2024, approximately 50 percent of firefighter line-of-duty deaths resulted from on-duty cardiovascular events. So, I ask, why is it that the NFPA found that a minority of U.S. fire departments have implemented a comprehensive physical and wellness program?

In addition to cardiovascular events, several types of cancer, mental health disorders, respiratory disease and infectious disease are of great concern. Firefighters have a 9 percent higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14 percent higher risk of dying from cancer than the general population, according to Firefighter Cancer Support Network. *Additionally, firefighters are twice as likely than the average American to be diagnosed with testicular cancer. In terms of mesothelioma, multiple myeloma, skin cancer, brain cancer, prostate cancer and colon cancer, the greater risk amounts are 2.0 times, 1.53, 1.39, 1.31, 1.28 and 1.2, respectively*. Fortunately, there is better research and firefighter/fire department support to attempt to reduce these risks.

Fire service leaders must be aware of these trends and the need for comprehensive physical and mental health exams on a regular basis.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM

My passion for urging fire chiefs and administrators to implement a comprehensive physical program for their department is personal. My father, Lt. Donald J. Felker (Collingdale Fire Company #1), died in the line of duty while on an EMS call on April 16, 1978. We later found that my father had a thoracic aortic aneurysm, which he wasn't aware of and that, unfortunately, ruptured after carrying a patient to the ambulance. He died before his fellow EMTs could start CPR.

I joined the volunteer fire service as a teenager and went on to become a volunteer and career firefighter/EMT and a chief officer. I also am a certified physician assistant and have worked in emergency medicine for the past 30 years. While I served as the fire chief for West Grove Fire Company (Chester County, PA) in 2013, our department made a commitment to pay for comprehensive physical exams for every active volunteer and career member.

The program required significant financial investment and administrative adjustments to allocate funds for this resource.

What is a comprehensive physical and wellness program? *NFPA 1582: Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical program for Fire Departments* defines comprehensive physical to include a medical history and physical exam; cardiopulmonary assessment (including a treadmill stress test); diagnostics (EKG, chest X-ray, pulmonary function tests); laboratory tests; and hearing and vision testing. Except for a chest X-ray (every five years), NFPA suggests that these should be completed on an annual basis. Mental health screenings also should be implemented for each firefighter.

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING A PROGRAM

Common barriers to implementing a comprehensive physical and wellness program are cost, liability and resistance to changing department culture.

Cost can range from $500–$800 per member per year depending on the program and the company that provides the service. That said, grant opportunities can help departments. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) provides funding for such programs. In Pennsylvania, the Volunteer Firefighters Relief Associations allow funds to be used for health and wellness for volunteer firefighters, and the Office of the State Fire Commissioner has grant opportunities to fund new or current programs. Fire service leaders must investigate grant opportunities in their state or region.

Further, leaders must address the addition of a comprehensive physical program with members. It's imperative that leaders have buy-in from members. Leaders must instill confidence that the primary goal for implementing such a program is to promote members' health and wellness. This likely will require changes to the collective bargaining agreement.

IMPLEMENTING A PROGRAM

Starting a program requires department leadership to institute a new or revised standard operating procedure. This is the easiest step.

There are many options for departments to consider when they develop a physical exam and wellness program. Some departments partner with local physicians or health systems to create a program. In this case, departments can access resources from the NFPA to help to guide their local healthcare providers in initiating a new program.

The First Responder Center for Excellence provides a comprehensive list of resources that can be accessed to assist fire department leaders.

Many corporate and occupational health organizations offer comprehensive physical exams.

My department has used several of these national organizations since it implemented its program 13 years ago. The department added ultrasonography to its annual program to include ultrasound imaging of the neck (carotid and thyroid), chest (echocardiogram and aortic root), abdomen, pelvis (for females) and testes (for males).

Initially, implementing and coordinating the program on an annual basis is time consuming, but after a couple of cycles, the administration of the regular annual program is more straightforward.

Regardless of which healthcare provider or organization a department selects, a member who's within the department must organize and administer the program. In our department, our health and safety officer works collaboratively with the department office manager to manage the coordination and scheduling.

BENEFITS OF A PROGRAM

Fire departments and municipalities spend countless hours and resources on capital expenditure plans. Department leaders have planned new ambulances, new pumpers, new ladder trucks and new fire stations. However, the fire service's most valuable asset (whether volunteer or career) is the people who staff stations and apparatus. Investing in members' health should be a department priority.

Our small department of 120 members has seen the dividends of this investment. *Our program discovered coronary artery disease in a 58-year-old member that required bypass surgery; heart arrythmia in a 24-year-old member that required a cardiac ablation; a cancerous liver mass in a 65-year-old member; hypothyroid and thyroid masses in a 17-year-old member; and countless instances of high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and skin lesions, all of which required further investigation*. It's likely that these diagnoses and the life-saving treatments that resulted never would have been discovered without a program being in place.

ACT NOW

If your department doesn't have a comprehensive physical exam and wellness program in place, I urge every department and municipal leader to make this a priority for your upcoming budget cycle. The health and well-being of members must be your priority.

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	845
Top 3 States with the greatest 1&2 Family Deaths	#1 PA 61
	#2 NY 57
	#3 OH 48
Civilian home fire fatalities in 2026: 1304 = 33.4 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?	

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

***False Alarms Are Burning Out Your Volunteers | The Automatic Alarm Problem

Jerry Knapp & Tim Pillsworth

Automatic fire alarms are supposed to provide an early warning. But when false alarms become routine, they can take a serious toll on volunteer fire departments.

On this episode of *Two Vollies and a Guest*, hosts Jerry Knapp and Tim Pillsworth sit down with Kim Weppler, chair of the Rockland County, New York, Chiefs False Alarm Committee and a longtime code enforcement professional, to discuss the growing problem of automatic fire alarm overload.

They examine how repeated false alarms can burn out volunteers, drain department resources, and potentially put real fire responses at risk. Weppler also discusses practical ways communities and fire departments can address the problem through engineering, education, and enforcement, the "three Es."

- Why automatic fire alarms generate so many false alarms
- The impact of false alarms on volunteer firefighters
- How repeated responses drain department resources

- The potential consequences for responses to real emergencies
- How engineering, education, and enforcement can reduce false alarms
- What fire departments and code officials can do to address the problem

1. **The False Alarm Problem Is Rooted in Technology, Education, and Enforcement.**

Weppler frames the false alarm dilemma through what he calls the "Three E's": engineering, education, and enforcement. Each pillar plays a crucial role in both cause and solution.

– **Engineering**: Fire alarm systems have evolved from manned night watchmen and bell towers to fully automated, interconnected devices that alert dispatch centers directly. While this technological leap has expedited responses and helped save lives, it also creates a surge in false activations. Alarms triggered by innocuous dust, steam, or even vaping incidents flood fire departments.

– **Education**: *Many property owners and managers are unaware of how their fire alarm systems operate, or how routine activities can trigger false alarms*. Education is vital—from commercial building owners needing to understand system maintenance requirements to contractors who must know to cover detectors during dusty renovations.

– **Enforcement:** *Without consequences, education alone doesn't stick.* They highlight that meaningful penalties and legal enforcement must accompany education and technology upgrades. Graded fine schedules, starting with warnings and escalating to substantial fees, motivate property owners and managers to correct recurring issues. However, enforcement depends heavily on municipal commitment.

2. VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS BEAR THE BRUNT—AND FACE SUSTAINABILITY RISKS.

False alarms disproportionately affect volunteer departments, where members juggle jobs, families, and other commitments. Repeated calls to non-emergency activations sap their willingness to respond, risking a "boy who cried wolf" scenario where real emergencies receive diminished attention. Pillsbury underscores this harsh reality, sharing his experience responding to frequent false alarms during inconvenient hours, including one where a delay in response to an actual fire occurred due to call fatigue.

The hosts agree that addressing false alarms is integral to sustaining volunteer forces and maintaining quality fire protection. *Without practical solutions to curb these calls, many communities face a future with dwindling responders and degraded safety.*

3. COLLABORATION ACROSS AGENCIES AND LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IS NON-NEGOTIABLE.

False alarm reduction can't be resolved solely within the fire department. The episode makes clear that effective mitigation demands a collaborative village, municipal, and county-wide approach. *Fire chiefs, inspectors, alarm companies, elected officials, courts, and police must align goals and responsibilities.*

For example, fire chiefs can initiate the conversation by reporting repeat offenders and educating building occupants. Fire inspectors then take the baton to conduct code compliance reviews and enforce corrective measures. Local governments must back this up by enacting ordinances, supporting enforcement, and providing adequate funding for full-time inspectors. *Moreover, educating judges and attorneys ensures they take false alarm cases seriously rather than dismiss nuisances with light fines.*

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

Pennsylvania Dispute!

A dispute in Millcreek Township, Pennsylvania, is brewing between the Belle Valley Volunteer Fire Department and the township's growing career fire department, the Millcreek Fire Department. Township officials say Belle Valley is violating its agreement and township code by declining to provide access to its station, apparatus and

equipment, failing to use the township's common records system and responding to only about half of its recorded emergency calls. According to township figures, Belle Valley responded to 167 of 326 calls in 2025 and 145 of 261 calls so far in 2026. Millcreek says those staffing and response concerns helped drive its expansion from nine paid firefighters in 2023 to 30 full time firefighters providing around the clock coverage and says the goal is reliable service rather than eliminating volunteers.

On defense, Belle Valley strongly disputes how the transition is being handled, calling the push for access to its station and resources a potential "back door" transformation or merger and asking township supervisors to intervene rather than allow the process to move forward through what it describes as threats. The township has given Belle Valley until the end of September to comply with requirements, while Belle Valley says it remains willing to discuss legitimate improvements to emergency services.

Florence, South Carolina

As reported in December 2025, Florence County, South Carolina, is moving forward with the phased consolidation of seven career and volunteer fire departments into Florence County Fire Rescue. The county financially unified the districts in 2014 and is working toward a single operational organization with centralized command, standardized training, countywide purchasing and more consistent staffing. The combined system will cover 625 square miles through 34 fire stations and include hundreds of career and volunteer firefighters. Officials say no stations are expected to close, and the existing combination model will remain. The county has appointed its first fire chief, continues hiring personnel and recently opened a new station in June 2026. This is another example of regionalization and the merging/consolidating of agencies and resources on a large scale to improve overall service delivery!

Onondaga County Proposed Consolidation

The Town of Manlius is collaborating with the Villages of Minoa, Manlius and Fayetteville, the Town of Pompey and the Kirkville Fire District to explore the opportunity to form a new consolidated Fire District to make services and costs more equitable across the whole town.

Fire companies merge in Cambria County, Pennsylvania to strengthen public safety

Two Cambria County fire companies have announced a merger aimed at strengthening public safety services in the communities they serve.

The Portage Volunteer Fire Company No. 1 and the Summerhill Township Volunteer Fire Company are beginning a new chapter in their combined more than 200-year history as the Mainline Fire and Rescue Service.

The newly formed company will provide fire and rescue services to an expanded coverage area that includes the boroughs of Portage and Cassandra, the townships of Portage and Summerhill, portions of Croyle Township and mutual aid support to surrounding communities throughout Cambria County.

By combining resources, personnel, training and equipment, Mainline Fire and Rescue Service hopes to enhance public safety and create a stronger, more sustainable fire and rescue organization for the region.

Minoa, NY, Hires 20 Part-Time Firefighters as Volunteer Cadre Dwindles

Elizabeth Doran, Syracuse.com

When Donald Grevelding joined the Minoa Fire Department 38 years ago, the village had about 80 volunteer firefighters. Today, that's dwindled to about 30. And only about 18 or 19 regularly respond. So the village took a bold step this summer: It hired 20 part-time firefighters.

With little public debate and a unanimous village board vote, the department went from one, part-time paid firefighter – Grevelding – to having almost as many paid firefighters as volunteers. The change added more than half a million dollars to the village's $5.7 million budget.

Minoa's firefighting challenges are universal to places across Upstate New York and nationwide, where rural and suburban communities rely on volunteers to bolster and sometimes answer all emergency calls.

As volunteer ranks have shrunk, more departments over the years have added paid staff, including in DeWitt, Liverpool, North Syracuse, Clay and Camillus. Minoa's neighbor, the village of East Syracuse, recently hired 10 part-time firefighters at $25 an hour to shore up its staff.
[MINOA IS A VILLAGE IN ONONDAGA COUNTY, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES. AS OF THE 2020 CENSUS, THE POPULATION WAS 3,657. MINOA IS IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE TOWN OF MANLIUS AND IS EAST OF SYRACUSE.]

FIRE APPARATUS

FA Viewpoints: Single- or Two-Stage Pumps?

Bill Adams

Centrifugal pump designs with straight vanes (and presumably water-powered) started in the late 1600s. The first two-stage centrifugal pump introduced in 1849 for industrial applications eventually became one of the major fire apparatus adaptations in the mid 20th century. It didn't last long. Depending on who you believe, 75% to more than 90% of the fire pumps delivered today are single-stage. It is unknown if they are purchased because of cost or fire-ground efficiency.

There are numerous people well versed in writing about fire pumps delivering water that have more expertise and time-in-grade than I have. They include Gary Handwerk, Dominic Colletti, and Larry Davis. Theirs and other commentators' writings and the documentation published by the fire pump manufacturers delve into the mechanics of horsepower, rpm, torque, types of motors, and fuel efficiency as well as finite performance characteristics. My commentary about such technicalities would merely be plagiarizing someone else.

Two-stage pumps and their transfer valves have been topics of discussion for many years. Varying opinions are the same, albeit decades apart. My comments are NOT intended to demean every pump operator. However, the pragmatic viewpoint of some operators today is, "Just tell me which button to push and don't bother me with technicalities." Regardless of being newbies or seasoned veterans, that attitude can cause catastrophic damage to a fire pump and can get firefighters injured.

From one of my 2013 columns: "Joe taught driver training and pump ops when I joined in the early 1960s. He was a grouchy old coot but he knew his fire trucks. He probably could tell by the sound of the motor and pump more about what was happening to a rig than today's onboard computers can. He'd say, 'Hear that? Ya hear that, kid? Listen. When that relief valve opens, you can hear the vibration in the pump.' Not all relief valves had indicator lights, so you had to continuously watch the pressure gauge to make adjustments. He taught us to listen in case we didn't have our eyeballs surgically attached to the gauges. *Joe could not accept a pump operator would actually leave the panel—for any reason. But, he said if you couldn't see the gauges (there were just two—compound and pressure), you had to listen to the pump.*

We ran two-stage pumps, and the older rigs didn't have indicator lights to show if the transfer valve was in pressure (aka series) or capacity (aka volume and parallel). He taught us to keep an eye on the pressure gauge and listen for the "thump" when changing over. He said you'd hear the "flapper" thump just before there was a change in pressure. I can't remember what it was, but there was a maximum pressure you could be at when changing over. That miserable old man could tell by the clapper's thump if you exceeded it. The new Macks came with indicator lights on their transfer valves, but Joe didn't trust them. "Listen for the flapper and look at the gauges, 'cause them damn lights don't always work," he'd say.

Simplistically plagiarizing other writers, a single-stage pump's one large impeller can deliver 100% of the pump's capacity. A two-stage pump in the volume mode has two smaller impellers, each delivering 50% of its capacity. When the two-stage pump is in the pressure mode, one impeller discharges its 50% capacity into the other impeller, thereby boosting the pressure with no increase in volume.

CHANGING OVER

The following is likely to alienate some pump manufacturers, training officers, as well as some fire department hierarchy. The decision to keep a two-stage pump in the volume or pressure setting is up to each individual fire department. Hopefully, the decision is based on evaluating past usage and hazards within a response district rather than, "That's how we've always done it." Are 99% of your fires one-line calls, or do you regularly pump more than 50% of a pump's capacity?

Old-school training required the pump operator (or the officer, if the rig responded with one) to decide which mode to start pumping two-stage pumps *before* the first line was charged. If the operator or officer "thought" the rig might have to pump more than 50% of its capacity, the rig would start out in volume. That is a major decision. Well-trained and experienced personnel might be capable of doing so. However, newbies or even seasoned operators in slow running companies with little experience in actual fire duty, limited training, or lackadaisical attitudes should not be put in that position.

Knowing how to change over and what can happen when doing so are equally as important. Pump manufacturers as well as individual fire departments have their own recommendations and procedures, and most say to throttle back discharge pressure before changing over. What that pressure is varies. Some might not require informing hose crews. If you have a couple of lines working inside a building and you arbitrarily decide to change over and possibly reduce the discharge pressure to their lines by over a half, it might result in some very unhappy firefighters. If pumping in volume and you decide to arbitrarily change over to pressure, you could possibly double the discharge pressure to a handline crew working in a precarious position. They too may want to chitchat with the pump operator.

Besides being detrimental to the safety of firefighters, changing over at high pressures will have the technocrats espousing about pump damage—water hammer, implosions, cavitation, hearing sounds like gravel—and then listening to the white coats bellowing after the repair estimate.

The transfer valve that changes the two-stage pump's setting is what Old Joe above referred to as moving the flapper (or clapper valve) in the pump. Many were damaged to the point of having to be replaced. In the 1970s, one manufacturer introduced a ball valve for changing over that eliminated destroying the flappers but not all the possible damage to the pump or possible injury to the firefighters on the receiving end of the discharged water.

A few points to ponder:

- If you're going to specify a pump that'll deliver high discharge pressures (say greater than 300 pounds per square inch), do you carry hose, nozzles, and appliances designed to operate at those pressures?
- One pump manufacturer's training brochure says, "Be certain to warn everyone involved before switching between volume and pressure." Does your standard operating procedure specify that?
- If you have a two-stage pump, do you operate the transfer valve on weekly rig checks?
- Is your priority having an efficiently operating diesel engine that'll have a longer lifespan and increased fuel savings or having a fire pump that meets specific fireground requirements?
- You may not belong on the apparatus purchasing committee if you don't intimately know the difference between a single-stage and a two-stage fire pump.

GREEN ENERGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE FIRE SERVICE

NY Town Eyes Extending Moratorium on Lithium-Ion Battery Facilities

The Kingston, NY Town Board members expect to add six months to a lithium-ion battery facilities moratorium currently set to expire on Nov. 1. Supervisor Erin Enouen said on Monday, Sept. 14, that the additional time is needed for planners and consultants to finish drafting the process needed for energy storage systems to be considered in the town. "We have our planner and we're receiving some technical assistance but there's nothing difficult," she said. "The moratorium is to give us time to draft zoning regulations and we are working on it," Enouen said. "We don't have that ready, so we just wanted to make sure that we're not having the moratorium expire before we have something in place."

There are no applications in front of the town, but Enouen has watched as other Hudson Valley communities have grappled with the absence of regulations, such as in Saugerties and town of Ulster. There have also been consequences of some approvals — in Warwick, facilities in the village and near a school have had fire incidents.

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

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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

Ex-Woodsboro, MD, Fire Chief Shares 9/11 Response of 'Little Truck that Could' at Camp David Ceremony

Susan Nicol

"We had the little truck that could -- and did."

That's what former Woodsboro Fire Chief Micky Fyock says about the mutual aid call to the Pentagon 25 years ago.

They had something no other department in the wider Washington metro area had – a 1955 B-85 open cab Mack ladder truck – that was small enough to get through the Pentagon tunnels.

On Friday, Fyock shared the story of his department's response with the little truck at a 9/11 ceremony at Camp David.

"It was quite an honor. I never ever believed I'd be invited to Camp David – let alone be the guest speaker!"

There was no need to write anything down. Keeping it to the 10 minutes they requested, would be a challenge as he is widely known for being down-to-earth and telling it like it is.

"I just told them our story -- how our little volunteer fire company in Frederick County came through."

Driving down I-270 that morning 25 years ago was strange as the truck and chief's vehicle were the only ones, except for a tractor-trailer, on the usually busy highway.

"I remember telling the crew we had a very important job. They were depending on us and that's all that mattered. I didn't care if we had to tow it back or bring it back in pieces…I also told them there was going to be a lot of security and not to do anything that was going to get us shot," he said with a laugh.

They were met by a military official who asked: "How can I help you to help me."

The late Rob Compton steered the rig through the narrow tunnels and over planks firefighters had placed over supply lines.

Once they reached the courtyard, an abandoned military vehicle prevented them from getting close to the building.

"No problem. Rob was a mechanic. He crawled under it and disabled the transmission. We just pushed it out of our way."

Through the night, the Woodsboro crew trained a stream to prevent the fire from spreading. It was an eerily quiet operation with only radio transmissions breaking the silence.

Exhausted firefighters, who'd spent Sept. 11 working to control the fire and searching for victims, slept on the body bags placed in the courtyard.

Some firefighters and military personnel inquired about their rig, watched for a while and thanked them for making the trip to assist.

"I saw a man standing, just staring. So, I asked if he was OK. He pointed to where the plane hit and said it was where he worked. When I told him I was glad he got out, he said: 'No, I was at the dentist. But my co-workers were in there.'"

They sat for a bit on a bench. Then, the man got up and walked away.

That encounter as well as seeing victims amid the wreckage remain with him.

When they were placed in service, they emerged from the tunnel to a beautiful sunny day.

After admitting they had photographs of their rig operating at the most important mutual aid call, their camera was confiscated.

"They promised to return it. But, of course, they never did."

The department received a letter from President Bush who thanked them for their work. All who responded are named.

Until Friday, the volunteers who responded under the cover of darkness and performed a vital function were not recognized or included in any functions. You also won't find the patch from Woodsboro Volunteer Fire Company with others.

Fyock said he was very surprised when he got the invitation about the Camp David ceremony.

"We went through a lot of security to get clearance to get access," he said, adding his wife, Diane, accompanied him.

In addition to paperwork, they were met off base by a government official and went through several other levels of security.

"The event was held in the hangar used by Marine One…I kept thinking it was such an honor to be there…"

Retired Hagerstown, MD, Fire Chief W. Kyd Dieterich, who now owns Truck 16, also was grateful for the invitation to join the Camp David event.

"It was a little slow on the hills. But we made it," he said, adding that he and the rig also went through a security check before he drove into the presidential retreat.

Dieterich added it was an honor to attend and show off the unique truck that played an important role at the Pentagon.

"Everything was impressive. They appreciated me bringing the truck."

Just as it was 25 years ago at the Pentagon, no cameras or cell phones were allowed at the Catoctin Mountain retreat. As of Monday, they were still waiting for official photos.

Fyock joked that before addressing the crowd, he whispered to the chaplain to pray he would only be up there for 10 minutes. "She said not to worry about that…"

After the ceremony, they, along with firefighters from Vigilant Hose Company in Emmitsburg, who brought their tower to hang a flag, were given a tour of Camp David.

"President Reagan like to ride horses. When he left office, they converted the stables into a fire station."

When he looks back to the operation 25 years ago, the chief said he couldn't be prouder how his little volunteer fire company stepped up and made a difference.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SMILE

CAMPING: where you spend a small fortune to live like a homeless person.

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

WHO ARE YOUR CAFDA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2026?

OFFICERS
President, Tom Rinaldi, Commissioner, Stillwater Fire District
1st Vice President, Ellen Martin, Deputy Treasurer Clifton Park Fire District
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Les Bonesteel Past Commissioner, Burnt Hills/Saratoga,
Skip Smith, Commissioner, West Crescent/Saratoga
Joyce Petkus Treasurer Greenfield/Saratoga,
Ed Woehrle Commissioner Niskayuna #1/Schenectady
Art Hunsinger, Ex-Officio Member Clifton Park Fire District.
We would consider expanding the number of Directors if individuals from other counties would volunteer to participate!!

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

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

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

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

CAPITAL AREA BUSINESS PARTNER'S

Welcome to Siddons-Martin Emergency Group, apparatus sales and service.

Business Partner Applications Available At: WWW.CAFDA.NET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Additional concerns raised by coalition members include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Big Lie

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

The Current Bill Advancing Is a Stronger, Better Bill

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

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

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

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

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

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

Advocating for a Workable Program Is Progress, Not Opposition

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To AFDNYS Board Members,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AFDSNY Continues Efforts to Advance Nominal Compensation Legislation

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

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

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

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

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

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