

EVERY DAY IS A LEARNING DAY

TACKLING TOUGH TALK

Spring 2024



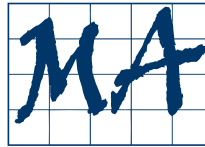
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Moving into the 21st Century with New Technology!



Chief R. Scott Ewing
NYS AFC President

AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE Installation Ceremony in Syracuse, N.Y. on June 17, 2023, my installation speech included goals and a vision for the association during my term as president. As in the fire service, vision and goals are important for the organization, and they are needed for continued growth in the future. Change is difficult for some, but new ideas are always good within an organization.

One vision was to move our association into the 21st century with a goal set by our Conference Committee – Programs Sub-Committee to develop an app that will enhance our attendees' and vendors' experience at the association's conferences and expositions.

This app, once downloaded on a smartphone and/or tablet by attendees and vendors, will give them the opportunity to receive event information, access interactive expo floor plan maps, receive certificates for training completed, and track CMEs for EMS classes and credits for code enforcement training attended. These are just a few examples of what this technology can provide to our attendees and vendors to make the events a success.

The Conference Committee – Programs Sub-Committee presented this idea to the board of directors after reviewing four vendors. The board of directors, after hearing and reviewing the presentation conducted by the committee, approved the use of the app at the Long Island Metro Fire/EMS Expo and the NYS AFC 118th Annual Conference & FIRE 2024 Expo in June.

Conference Committee Chairman Anthony Faso and Programs Sub-Committee members did an outstanding job with this task. I would like to especially thank Vice Chairman Chuck Kostyk and Director Tony Tripp for the hours of research and development of the program that helped make this a reality! ●

Thank You



Chief Anthony V. LaFerrera
NYS AFC 1st Vice President

BY THE TIME YOU read this column, the 2024 Long Island Metro Fire/EMS Expo will have concluded. The New York State Association of Fire Chiefs and Islip Town Fire/EMS Museum Educational Center would like to thank all the attendees, exhibitors, and instructors for being a part of this three-day educational event.

Thank you to the students who attended our educational programs, and to those who participated in Hands-On Training. Thank you to our presenters and instructors for your educational leadership and support. We appreciate the support of the Suffolk County Fire Academy, which has conducted HOT at the event for the past two years.

Thank you to the vendors, who are the heart and soul of this event. Your participation makes this an informative event for the fire and EMS personnel of New York state. Exhibit space was sold out once again this year, and we greatly appreciate the enthusiastic support from our vendors.

Thank you to the executive board and board of directors of NYS AFC and the Islip Town Fire/EMS Museum for your leadership. NYS AFC values our partnership with the museum in hosting this event, and we encourage you to visit the museum in Suffolk County. You can learn more about their mission at www.isliptownfirefightersmuseum.org.

In conclusion, I cannot forget the “meat and potatoes” of our Long Island Metro Fire/EMS Expo. THANK YOU to our NYS AFC staff and to the staff of the museum. We appreciate your countless hours dedicated to making the Long Island Metro Fire/EMS Expo a magnificent event. I look forward to seeing everyone in 2025. We will be sharing event highlights in our next issue of *SIZE UP*, along with more details about next year's event. ●

New York State Needs a Sustainable EMS System



Chief Richard L. Lyman
NYS AFC 2nd Vice President

HAVE YOU READ THE white paper from the State EMS Sustainability Technical Advisory Group (TAG) formed by the New York State EMS Council (SEMSCO)? The paper is a comprehensive look at New York state's crumbling EMS system. Search NYS DOH EMS white paper or use this link (<https://on.ny.gov/48KZVHy>) to see the entire report.

According to the white paper summary, "The New York state EMS system has markedly deteriorated over the past several years due to declining volunteerism, lack of public funding to cover costs of readiness, inadequate staffing, rising costs, insufficient insurance reimbursement, rising call volumes, a lack of performance standards, poor understanding of the EMS system by elected officials and the public, NYS home rule, and lack of transparency and accountability for EMS agencies." The authors provide 25 key recommendations to fix the crumbling and fragmented EMS system in New York state. Our residents and visitors deserve better pre-hospital care. New York state needs to create a comprehensive plan to address this issue.

Creating legislation to support volunteer and paid EMS workers would go a long way toward increasing the number of EMTs and paramedics working in the state. The New York State Fire Service Alliance, consisting of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs and other fire service organizations, develops and forwards "Issues of United Concern" to the state Legislature for consideration in the upcoming legislative session.

In the past, the Fire Service Alliance has advocated for and secured the EMS Cost Recovery Act that allows a volunteer fire department to bill for ambulance transport to help offset operating costs. There is a sunset clause in the legislation, which expires on July 8, 2026. If your department has not set up a procedure for EMS billing, it is imperative to do so to show the importance and benefits of the Cost Recovery Act. Go to the FAQs document on the NYS AFC website (<https://bit.ly/3HvEQoH>) for guidance.

Other legislation supported by the Fire Service Alliance and sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer and Assemblyman Steven Otis (Westchester County) would recognize EMS as an essential service, establish a special district for the financing and operation of general ambulance services, and expand access to health insurance and retirement benefits available to EMS providers. Also, in her 2024 State of the State Address, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that she will advance legislation to support EMS as an essential service. For the complete Issues of United Concern agenda, turn to page 9 or go to the NYS AFC website (<https://bit.ly/42bQ23k>).

The legislative actions that have passed or are under consideration will be helpful, but more needs to be accomplished. The TAG report notes that, "In some localities across New York state, municipal funding has supported efficient and effective EMS response. In these locales, future viability may well depend on shared services and scale economies." We can certainly learn from their success and use this to help create a template for success in other communities. There are many issues to work out. However, working together, we can accomplish the recommendations set by the TAG. ●



Changes for the New Year



Chief Bruce E. Heberer
NYSAFC CEO

I HOPE YOUR NEW year is off to a good start. As we begin 2024, I would like to update you about some recent changes at NYSAFC, most notably with our Annual Conference and *SIZE UP* magazine.

For the 118th Annual Conference & FIRE 2024 Expo, we are bringing back free One Day Tickets for entry to the expo, which will be available from our vendors. We have also contracted with The Oncenter to purchase over 7,000 parking spots in the parking garage adjacent to the conference center to provide as much free parking as possible. Our goal is to deliver the best training, vendor interaction, and networking activities as possible to our members, while keeping the event as affordable as possible.

Another change is to the event schedule. The General Session, including our Memorial Service and Keynote Address, will kick off on Thursday afternoon at 12:00 p.m. The exhibit floor will open that day at 3:00 p.m. and remain open until 7:00 p.m. to better serve our members and vendors.

The next change is to our Hands-On Training program. After hearing from students and instructors, we have revamped the training schedule so that most of our programs are four hours in length. We did this to decrease downtime at the stations, allow students to take additional programs in the same time frame, and allow those who want to mix training with the Conference & Expo to split their time as desired.

We are providing attendees with the best experience possible, blending HOT courses and lectures with vendor interaction and entertainment. We are providing all of the above while keeping both attendee and vendor costs reasonable.

Our primary objective is to train the fire service. With that in mind, our staff is also working on new, innovative ways to get the best training out to the membership! They spend hours researching topics, programs, and instructors, all while considering the needs of our members so that we can continue to be the leader in fire service training.

Starting this year, we are also changing the distribution of our magazine, *SIZE UP*. We are moving from a quarterly to a tri-annual publication with spring, summer, and fall/winter editions. We are doing this for several reasons, most notably production time savings for our communications coordinator, Mary Hanlon. With all that we are producing and the many new channels and platforms we are using to communicate with our members, along with the fact that our last two quarterly magazines came out just two months apart, this change should allow us to become more efficient. Along with efficiency comes cost savings, which will allow us to redirect funding into our educational programs, a great trade-off for the association.

Be assured that *SIZE UP* will continue to feature articles by some of the most accomplished leaders in the industry, who share their knowledge and donate their time for the advancement of the fire service. You'll also continue to find columns by our board members and dedicated committee members. If you're not already reading it, I encourage you to check out our monthly e-newsletter, *The NYSAFC Bugle*, and to follow us on social media. You'll find us on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. You can learn more on our website, www.nysfirechiefs.com. NYSAFC members will also continue to enjoy a subscription to the monthly *Firehouse* magazine.

Our association prides itself on keeping our expenses under control so that our financial focus is on providing services. As I've mentioned before, our staff focuses on this every day and most nights throughout the year. The productivity and dedication of our staff – Sue Revoir, Mary Hanlon, Meg Aurelia, and Jeremy Rodd – continues to provide the greatest return to our members through our expos, training, seminars, and member benefits.

I always encourage everyone in the fire service to become an active member of our association. NYSAFC is open to all, chief officers, company officers, firefighters, commissioners, coordinators, and EMS members. Our association is focused on the betterment of the fire service through our Annual Conference, legislative agenda, and training programs! Membership makes us stronger. With numbers, we can continue to reinvest in the fire service, both legislatively and through continued education. By attending one of our regional trainings or seminars that are presented by some of the best in the business nationwide (most of them held at a fire department near you), sharing your experiences, and interacting with other firefighters and the instructors, inevitably you and your department will benefit. Let's continue moving forward together. Stay focused, stay positive, stay educated, stay safe, and stay healthy!



Some Thoughts Based on Psalm 139...

*Rev. Leon I. VanWie, Past Chief Chaplain
New York State Association of Fire Chaplains, Inc.*

¹GOD, INVESTIGATE MY LIFE; get all the facts firsthand.

²I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.

³You know when I leave and when I get back; I'm never out of your sight.

⁴You know everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence.

⁵I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too – your reassuring presence, coming and going.

⁶This is too much, too wonderful – I can't take it all in!

⁷Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit? To be out of your sight?

⁸If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there!

⁹If I flew on morning's wings to the far western horizon,

¹⁰You'd find me in a minute – you're already there waiting!

These are some of my favorite verses from the scriptures reassuring me that God knows me and is with me no matter what. I hope that you also find great strength in these verses. God is with us – PERIOD! There is no place we can go to get away from God – PERIOD!

My struggle is that at most every fire scene or on every EMS call or at every fire service meeting I've ever attended... I find firefighters, EMTs, and so many others who don't have this assurance. And, you might even be one of them.

You probably know who they are, and you can tell by their actions. They seem lost, but they aren't sure what they are

even looking for. There is something lacking in their lives, an emptiness that they are trying desperately to fill. Some, unfortunately, will try drugs to fill the void, or attention-grabbing dangerous behaviors, or always live life on the risky edge, or a variety of other ways people try to fill the emptiness.

Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), the French mathematician and philosopher, put it this way, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator."

When the Lord fills the emptiness, the vacuum in your heart, you have a sense of being complete and knowing you are never alone.

The work we do is sometimes lifesaving, usually challenging, and often dangerous. Psalm 139 assures us that there is nothing we can do and nowhere we can be, where God is not there. Friends – that is really great news.

As a chaplain, I have never attempted to force my religion or my beliefs on anyone, as that goes against everything a chaplain is supposed to be. However, as a chaplain, I have attempted to be the presence of God (to represent God), often-times when people are having their worst

day ever. Obviously, if someone asks, I'm very willing to share my faith, but I've never forced my beliefs on anyone.

It is my hope, that as I'm with people as they are going through a difficult time, they might be reminded that God is with them also. It is my hope – it is always my hope. And I'll share the good news one more time: Psalm 139 assures us that there is nothing we can do and nowhere we can be, where God is not there. Friends – that is really great news. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leon VanWie served as chief chaplain of the New York State Association of Fire Chaplains, Inc. from 2020-2022. He began in the fire service in 1976 and became a chaplain within a year. VanWie was an EMT for over 15 years and currently serves as the chaplain and president for the Town of Watertown Volunteer Fire Department, chaplain for the City of Watertown Fire Department, and a deputy fire coordinator for Jefferson County in the role of chaplain. He belongs to numerous county and state fire organizations and has been a pastor since 1973. VanWie can be contacted at leonvanwie@gmail.com or (315) 771-9142 (voice and text).

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New York's 2024 Legislative Session and its Impacts on the Fire Service

Todd Vandervort, The Vandervort Group, LLC

THE 2024 NEW YORK State Legislative Session officially began on January 3, 2024. Governor Kathy Hochul gave her State of the State address on January 9 and promptly released her \$223 billion Executive Budget Proposal on January 16. This year's financial picture is bleaker than last year, as New York faces a \$4.3 billion deficit. The governor's budget plan would close this gap and would also be the largest in state history, without raising taxes.

In preparation for the 2024 session, the New York state fire service organizations met on December 2, 2023, to develop a joint legislative agenda of "Issues of United Concern" (IUC). The 2024 IUC agenda includes several initiatives that will require state funding in the budget, as well as proposals for building code-related initiatives, EMS services, and recruitment and retention. The good news for the fire service is that many of the governor's priorities outlined in her State of the State and her Executive Budget Proposal align with the fire service IUC agenda.

The New York State Senate and Assembly will now review the governor's proposed budget and accept, amend, or reject her proposals, or add new agreed-to language. We will advocate for our relevant fiscal issues to be included in the final New York state budget, and our policy agenda items in stand-alone bills that will be under consideration during the 2024 legislative session, which is scheduled to end on June 2, 2024.

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS HIGHLIGHTS

- **Update Codes and Standards for Better, Safer Buildings**

At the governor's direction, the Codes Council will undertake an **overhaul of building codes** designed to bring New York up to the latest standards on resilient building. Governor Hochul will direct state agencies to develop a **comprehensive climate change adaptation and resilience plan** to ensure state entities

and localities can equitably adapt to climate change, including assessing impacts on disadvantaged communities, ecosystems, infrastructure, and vulnerable economic sectors.

- **Modernize Emergency Medical Services**

Governor Hochul will advance legislation to make EMS an **essential service** to ensure that emergency medical service providers are required to respond to emergencies. In addition, Governor Hochul will build upon the progress made in last year's budget by directing the newly established EMS statewide task force to create five "EMS zones." Each zone will maintain its own EMS workforce to augment local EMS agencies where the workforce is insufficient and can be deployed to respond to emergencies statewide. Finally, Governor Hochul will establish a first-in-the-nation **Paramedic Telemedicine Urgent Care** program, which will use paramedics in rural areas and a health care provider via telemedicine to deliver low-acuity emergency services in a fixed location to decrease demands on the EMS system and reduce unnecessary ER visits.

- **Reduce Fatal Fires**

Governor Hochul will advance several strategies to tackle the increase in fire deaths, addressing both **residential fire safety and lithium-ion battery safety**. These include providing funding to the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) to launch **Fire Action Teams**, which will be dispatched to fatal fires to evaluate causal factors and develop resources tailored to **communities' specific risk factors**, and to expand the state's **fire investigation capacity**. Additionally, Governor Hochul will advance legislation to **ban sales of lithium-ion batteries that do not meet minimum standards for safety**.

- **Support First Responders with Mental Health Services**

Governor Hochul will increase funding for suicide prevention programming and

peer-to-peer training for first responder organizations.

- **Housing**

The governor is focusing on a plan to spur residential housing development, including 15,000 new homes on state-owned land, and streamlining the regulatory process around new development.

GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **EMS and Hospital at Home**

This proposal would further the state's goal of meeting the needs of care in home and community settings. It also seeks to allow for Medicaid coverage to reimburse EMS providers for treatment in place and transportation to alternative health care facilities.

It would expand hospital services outside of a health care facility by expanding existing home care collaboration models and making it easier to involve multiple types of licensed entities, including hospitals, home care agencies, and emergency medical services. The bill would also enhance and modernize emergency medical services to ensure comprehensive and efficient emergency medical responses.

- **Safe Lithium-Ion Batteries**

This bill would restrict the sale of lithium-ion batteries or refurbished lithium-ion batteries to use in micro-mobility devices to those batteries that have been certified by a nationally recognized testing and certification laboratory. It would establish safety standards for the sale of lithium-ion batteries, prohibit the sale of uncertified batteries, and establish fines for violations. The Department of State (DOS) would be authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to provide any additional safety standards.

- **Extend the Suspension of the Subsidy to Revolving Loan Fund from Cell Surcharge Revenue**

This bill would extend the existing suspension of the annual transfer of \$1.5 million from the Public Safety Communications

Account to the Emergency Services Revolving Loan Fund for two fiscal years. This transfer was previously suspended for FY 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Emergency Services Revolving Loan Fund is a means to assist local governments, fire districts, and not-for-profit fire/ambulance corporations in financing emergency response equipment, such as firefighter apparatus, fire engines and ambulances, and construction costs related to the housing of such equipment. Since it is structured as a revolving loan fund (i.e., payments of principal and interest are deposited into the fund) and presently there is a robust balance, eliminating the annual transfer from the Public Safety Communications Account should not diminish the ability of the Revolving Loan Fund’s administrators to make new loans.

- **Training stipend for volunteer firefighters**, which will also help with recruitment and retention... \$6,500,000.

- **Grants to municipalities to support local fire investigations...** \$3,300,000.
- **Volunteer firefighting and emergency services recruitment and retention fund...** \$300,000.
- **County Partnership Grants Program** for the provision of grants to counties, except counties wholly contained within a city, for the development, construction, installation, consolidation, or operation of public safety communications systems or networks designed to support public safety answering point centers... \$85,000,000.
- Services and expenses of organizations related to **suicide prevention, peer-to-peer training, and other mental health supports and services** for first responders... \$2,000,000.

OTHER IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR 2024:

- Building code-related initiatives include adoption of the 2024 Uniform Codes,

including provisions for residential sprinklers.

- Improving tax benefits for volunteer firefighters, including increasing the state income tax credit, which has been stagnant at \$200 since 2006, and removing an arbitrary prohibition on collection of both the state income tax credit and real property tax exemptions.
- Recruitment and retention tools, including allowing reimbursements for reasonable expenses incurred at the discretion of the authorities having jurisdiction and achieving parity for VFBL by raising the benefit to the same level as workers’ compensation.

As always, we have an aggressive agenda ahead of us. We look forward to working with our fire service and EMS partners, as well as the board and Government Affairs Committee members of NYSAFC to advance our legislative agenda and advocate for these meaningful changes for the fire service. ●

2024 New York State Fire Service Alliance Legislative Agenda – Issues of United Concern

THE FIRE SERVICE ALLIANCE, consisting of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York, County Fire Coordinators’ Association of the State of New York, Firefighters Association of the State of New York, New York State Fire Marshals and Inspectors Association, and Volunteer Fire Police Association of the State of New York, gathered in Troy, N.Y. on December 2, 2023, to develop the following priorities from each association’s respective legislative agendas. The identified priorities are to be advocated for through mutual efforts.

BUDGET ITEMS

Projected deficits will be anticipated and kept in mind as the governor and the Legislature develop the FY 2025 state budget.

- Improving tax benefits available to volunteer firefighters.
 - Increasing the state income tax credit, which has been stagnant at \$200 since 2006.

- Amending 2006 language to remove an arbitrary prohibition on collection of both the state income tax credit and any local real property tax exemptions.
- Combatting fire deaths by providing a sales tax exemption on home life safety products.
- Provision of cost relief to underwriters related to administration of cancer coverage.

BUILDING CODE-RELATED INITIATIVES

- Adoption of the 2024 Uniform Codes, including provisions for residential sprinklers.
- Lithium-ion batteries: ensure responsible sale and use and adequate training for emergency responders.
- Continued emphasis on illegal conversions.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

- Ensuring maximum participation in Cost Recovery, continue education campaign around, and work to justify an

elimination or extension of the 2025 “sunset clause” included in original passage. Unfortunately, at present, this sunset clause is restricting participation in the program.

- Designating EMS as an essential service, which would require municipalities to provide it to their residents in a reliable manner and would create a minimum standard of care through regional and state EMS councils.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- Striving for maximum participation in DHSES training stipend program to encourage its renewal.
- Allow “reimbursements for reasonable expenses incurred” at the discretion of authorities having jurisdiction.
- Achieve parity for VFBL – rightfully raising the benefit to the same level as workers’ compensation.
- Development and support of “peer-to-peer” counseling programs for first responders. ●



2024-2025 NYS AFC Officer Candidates

THE NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS Committee of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs has announced the following slate of officer candidates for 2024-2025.

Officers will be sworn in during the 118th Annual Conference & FIRE 2024 Expo Installation Ceremony, scheduled for June 14, 2024, 4:00 p.m., at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, Persian Terrace, in Syracuse, N.Y. The ceremony is open to all event attendees and association members.

Members can learn more about the NYS AFC board of directors, committee members, and regional representatives, and view the association Constitution & By-Laws at www.nysfirechiefs.com/aboutnysafc.

PRESIDENT: ONE-YEAR TERM

- Chief Anthony V. LaFerrera – North Babylon Volunteer Fire Company

1ST VICE PRESIDENT: ONE-YEAR TERM

- Chief Richard L. Lyman – White Plains Fire Department

2ND VICE PRESIDENT: ONE-YEAR TERM

- Chief James E. Hare – Hilton Fire Department

DIRECTOR – VOLUNTEER: THREE-YEAR TERM

- Chief William K. Owen III – Stittville Fire Department

DIRECTOR – CAREER: THREE-YEAR TERM

- Chief Stefano Napolitano – Rochester Fire Department ●

NYS AFC VOTING & ELECTION GUIDELINES

Voting for the proposed changes to the Constitution and the election of officers (if necessary) will take place during the 118th Annual Conference in Syracuse, N.Y., at The Oncenter – Room 8, on Friday, June 14, 2024, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. and Saturday, June 15, 2024, from 9:00-11:00 a.m. You must be an Active Member (dues paid 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting), have joined the association 90 days prior to the Annual Meeting, and have government photo identification with you in order to vote on association matters. Visit www.nysfirechiefs.com/aboutnysafc for a copy of the NYS AFC Constitution & By-Laws.

Proposed Changes to Constitution

THE FIRST READING OF the proposed changes to the NYS AFC Constitution was conducted at the association membership meeting on September 23, 2023, in Schodack, N.Y. The second reading will take place on June 13, 2024, from 12:00-1:00 p.m. at The Oncenter Ballroom during the 118th Annual Conference General Session in Syracuse, N.Y. The proposed changes are as follows (strikethrough indicates items to be changed):

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE III

OFFICERS

~~Section 2. The President, First Vice-President and Second Vice-President shall be elected and installed at each annual meeting to serve until a successor is elected and installed at the next annual meeting.~~

Section 2. The President, First Vice-President, and Second Vice-President shall be elected and installed for a one-year term at the annual meeting and will serve until a successor is elected and installed at the subsequent annual meeting. The President, at his/her discretion, could choose to run for a second term.

~~Section 8. Any active member of this Association who is a bona fide resident of the State of New York and, as provided for in Article V, Section 10, and Article III, Section 3 may hold office.~~

Section 8. Any active member of this Association who currently resides in the State of New York for twelve months a year, has been a member for at least five years, is a current or past member of a committee, has been a five (5) bugle chief, and, as provided for in Article V, Section 10, and Article III, Section 3, may hold office. ●



New Year, New Projects

William Maloney, Chairman

AS WE MOVE INTO a new year, I'd like to bring you up to speed on some of the projects the Volunteer Chiefs Committee has been working on.

As of this writing, the updated *NYS AFC Fire Chief's Reference Guide* that has been in development is in the editing and formatting stage. We hope to see this out sometime in 2024.

In the meantime, our committee will be busy once again working to help ensure the fire service continues to advance, as it always has. For a new project, we are compiling a list of current or possible funding streams that can help departments offset budgets or shortfalls to continue providing the equipment and PPE needed to stay current with NFPA standards. This information will be added to a resource page on our website as soon as it's complete. The idea behind this project is to help new leaders learn where to go to apply for this type of funding, as well as to offer suggestions of what has worked in the past with member line items or community block grants from local governments.

Back in November, our committee was contacted by the Association of Fire Districts in Rockland County to join them at a meeting to discuss the current problem of recruitment and retention. They are looking for input and wanted to also get New York State Assembly and Senate members to listen as well. I asked my local representative, Assemblyman Scott Bendett of District 107, to go with me on the 2 ½-hour trip because he is very supportive of the fire service in our area. The other reason we went is because, as we all know, this is not just a problem in Rockland County or New York state – it's nationwide. One thing I took away with me was that not all recruitment ideas are the same. While there may be similarities, what may work in Spring Valley won't necessarily work in Schaghticoke. At the meeting, putting a work group together from across the state to brainstorm ideas was discussed. The Volunteer Chiefs

Committee will be talking about this issue at an upcoming monthly meeting.

If there is anything that you're struggling with, please reach out to our committee through the office and

we will try to help. Email the office at info@nysfirechiefs.com or call (800) 676-3473 and a committee member will follow up with you. Until next time, stay safe, and thank you for what you do. ●



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2024 Training Underway

NYSAFC'S 2024 CLASSROOM-BASED TRAINING series kicked-off in January with Company Officers Leadership Training (COLT). The association's two-day leadership development program for current and aspiring officers was scheduled for Erie, Fulton, and Monroe counties.

COLT 2024 lecturers included Chief Thomas LaBelle (Prince William County [VA] Fire & Rescue System), Chief Tony Perez (Pasco County [FL] Fire Rescue), and Deputy Chief Tom May, Captain Ed Tracey, and Lieutenant Hector Lopez (Rochester Fire Department). LaBelle is also a past executive director of NYSAFC.

The 2024 Seminar Series "Searching – The Offensive and Defensive" with Lieutenant Michael Scott (Fire Department City of New York) began on January 16 in Orange County. 19 seminars will be presented this year, with the series concluding in November.

The Regional Hands-On Training season started in early March with "Flashover" programs in Nassau County. NYSAFC's three regional courses are currently scheduled for sites across New York state through October.

Visit www.nysfirechiefs.com to view the training calendar and learn more about NYSAFC educational opportunities. ●



Lecturers Tom LaBelle and Hector Lopez, NYSAFC Hands-On Training Coordinator Paul Melfi, Lecturer Tony Perez, NYSAFC CEO Bruce Heberer, and Lecturers Ed Tracey and Tom May at the Fulton County COLT program.



NYSAFC Regional Rep & Instructor Brian McGorman, Seminar Series Lecturer Mike Scott, and NYSAFC 2nd Vice President Rich Lyman at the Orange County Seminar.



Upcoming 2024 Events

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MARCH

26-28

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)
Reno, NV

MAY

14-16

Community Risk Reduction (CRR)
Glendale, AZ

APRIL-MAY

30-1

FRM 2024
Las Vegas, NV

JUNE

6-9

International Hazardous Materials Response Teams Conference (Hazmat)
Baltimore, MD

AUGUST

14-16

Fire-Rescue International (FRI)
Dallas, TX

NOVEMBER

14-17

Symposium in the Sun
Clearwater Beach, FL



Act Now to Save the Federal Fire and SAFER Grant Programs!



Director of Government Relations & Policy Ken LaSala
International Association of Fire Chiefs

AS WE START TO prepare for the National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner on April 29, it is important to finalize our agenda for the year. My last column laid out the agenda for 2024, and sadly, not a lot has changed. So, here is an update on where things stand.

1 FUNDING FOR THE FEDERAL FIRE PROGRAMS

On September 28, the House passed its Fiscal Year 2024 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill (H.R. 4367). The bill included \$10 million for the U.S. Fire Administration's new National Emergency Response Information System; increases to the AFG and SAFER grant programs to \$370 million each; and an increase to the Urban Search and Rescue program to \$45.832 million. The Senate bill (S. 2625) would provide cuts to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program and the USFA.

Congress has not taken any definitive action on the FY 2024 appropriations since then. So far, the senators and representatives have passed a series of continuing resolutions to prevent the federal government from shutting down. As we approach the halfway point for the federal fiscal year, the federal government is operating under a new continuing resolution that would provide funding for some agencies, like the Department of Transportation and Department of Veterans Affairs, until March 1 and fund the rest of the government, including the Department of Homeland Security, until March 8. President Joe Biden may not release his FY 2025 budget request until early March.

When you are here in Washington in April, it will be important to explain

to your senators and representatives about the need to pass annual funding for the USFA, AFG, and SAFER programs on time. The delays in funding make it harder for USFA to continue development of its NERIS data system. In addition, Congress must continue to appropriate funds for the AFG and SAFER programs in order to prevent them from expiring on September 30.

2 THE FIRE GRANTS AND SAFETY ACT (S. 870/H.R. 4090)

The Fire Grants and Safety Act (S. 870/H.R. 4090) has reached a stalemate. Both bills would authorize increases in funding for the USFA without offsetting cuts elsewhere and extend the sunset date of the AFG and SAFER programs past their proposed authorization dates. Due to quirks in the new House rules, these facts prevent the Fire Grants and Safety Act from being considered on the House suspension calendar, which allows for passage of a bill with a two-thirds vote of the House and no amendments.

It will be important to meet with your representatives in April. Please ask them to talk to House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) about the importance of the AFG and SAFER programs. We will need members of the New York delegation to contact the speaker's office to demonstrate the wide support for protecting the AFG and SAFER programs. The House must act to preserve the AFG and SAFER grant programs.

3 LEGISLATION TO REAUTHORIZE FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL CANCER REGISTRY FOR FIREFIGHTERS (H.R. 3821/S. 2119)

Unfortunately, Congress removed language to reauthorize the National Cancer Registry for Firefighters from

the National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 118-31). The good news is that there is support for the bill in the House. H.R. 3821 would authorize an increase in funding for the program to \$5.5 million for FY 2024 through FY 2028. The bill passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee and is awaiting expedited consideration on the House floor through the suspension calendar. We are still working to pass this legislation this year.

There are a couple of other bills that the NYS AFC and IAFC are hoping to pass this year:

1 SETTING CONSUMER STANDARDS FOR LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES ACT (H.R. 1797/S. 1008)

Representative Ritchie Torres (D-NY) introduced H.R. 1797 to direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission to promulgate safety standards for rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, which are found in electric bikes, electric scooters, and other micro-mobility devices. The bill is designed to improve the construction of rechargeable lithium-ion batteries to prevent fires. It passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee on December 6 and is awaiting consideration on the House floor. H.R. 1797 has 14 co-sponsors, including New York Representatives Andrew Garbarino, Yvette Clarke, Pat Ryan, Jamaal Bowman, Anthony D'Esposito, Adriano Espaillat, Dan Goldman, Jerry Nadler, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Grace Meng. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer introduced the Senate companion bill (S. 1008). Much like the legislation to reauthorize the national firefighter cancer registry, this legislation may pass the House and Senate this year.



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2 VOLUNTEER FIRST RESPONDER HOUSING ACT (H.R. 4787/S. 1988)

Another bill that shows some promise is the Volunteer First Responder Housing Act (H.R. 4787/S. 1988). This legislation was introduced by Representative Andrew Garbarino (R-NY) and Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI). It would allow volunteer firefighters to participate in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Good Neighbor Next Door program, which would allow a 50% discount from the list price on a home in a revitalized area. The bill also would allow volunteer firefighters to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Single-Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program. This program provides loans to low- and moderate-income households to build or renovate a home in eligible rural areas. Volunteer firefighters would be eligible for the program even if their income exceeds the maximum allowable income level by up to \$18,000.

H.R. 4787 has 10 co-sponsors, including Representatives Mike Lawler and Claudia Tenney. S. 1988 has three co-sponsors, but none of the New York Senators. As Congress begins work on legislation to help farmers and rural communities this year, we are hoping to include this legislation. Please ask your representatives and senators to co-sponsor the Volunteer First Responder Housing Act (H.R. 4797/S. 1988).

This year, it is especially important to attend the National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner on April 29, and to use this time to meet with your members of Congress. We really need a large fire service presence to pass legislation to protect the AFG and SAFER programs. As you can see, we also have other important bills that need to pass this year. In addition, your members of Congress will be home a lot this year on the campaign trail. Please take advantage of this opportunity to meet with them at home and continue to advocate for our programs. You always can access the IAFC's *Hot Sheet* of legislative issues at www.iafc.org/gr.

TACKLING TOUGH TALK – How to Approach Difficult Conversations

Thomas LaBelle

There are many folks within our industry that exhibit many of the tendencies of the “Alpha” member. We want folks who are appropriately aggressive, train hard, and have a heart for the work. There are few problems we’re not ready to attack head-on... except talking to one another when our team members don’t meet the mark. Having direct conversations with people about their actions is difficult for a large number of our leaders.

I’m unsure as to why this act is so incredibly difficult for so many. I think, perhaps, it is rooted in our difficulty in accepting and often handing out praise. Go ahead, try to praise a firefighter. What you’ll often get is a humble “aw-shucks” response that seems to brush off their actions as unworthy of comment. Over time, it is easy for leaders to lessen the attempts at recognition. However, praise and critique go hand in hand.

There is a relationship between praise and criticism or critique. Each seeks to

improve performance through feedback, positive and negative. The goal at the end of the day is to help the team understand what “good” performance looks like. And to help individuals, as well as teams, understand what “better” performance looks like as well. To be clear, we praise in public and critique in private – but it still needs to occur.

There are many great articles and books on mastering the techniques for having the tough talk. The book *Crucial Conversations* is a great place to start and has many resources to help you through the process. You can also find lots of resources on the internet, but most follow a pretty simple format:

1 Start with the truth. Often, our feelings are hurt (actually, our ego and/or pride are hurt), and it can cloud our judgement. What is the real issue, what do I want to convey, and what role did I play before, during, or after the event?

2 When you begin the conversation, state openly what you hope to achieve. Don’t jump to the conclusion, but tell your perspective and allow the other person to tell theirs. Often, what you thought you knew wasn’t quite the truth. Ask

the person if they see things differently, and if so, how?

3 Keep an eye out for fight-or-flight reactions. If people get excited or shut down, the truth is, you scared them. Help them express their concerns. And help them refocus on the goal. Remember, the goal isn’t for you to be right, it is to help the person achieve the organization’s goals.

4 Once the conversation is finished (and it may take more than one sitting), come up with a plan. What do improved behaviors or actions look like? How will we confirm it’s happening? Who is responsible for retraining, getting resources, counseling, etc.? And finally, when you have success, how will you recognize it – how do they know the critique is over?

I don’t want to suggest that these conversations are easy. When we care about people and our organizations, it hurts when the two don’t mesh. It is simply difficult to have a difficult conversation. We often wait in the hopes of a perfect time to talk, only to find that the passage of time makes it even harder to bring up something that happened in the past. But who would you want to be your leader – the person who takes you aside and has difficult conversations based on trust and a desire for you to succeed, or the person who is letting you fail because they don’t have the courage to have a difficult discussion? ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom LaBelle is chief of a combination department in Virginia. He has over 30 years of experience in career, combination, and volunteer organizations. Before moving to Virginia, LaBelle worked for the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs. He greatly dislikes New York winters and tries to avoid them at all costs.





MODELING

Good Looks and Good Behavior

Paul Melfi

Albert Bandura was known as the originator of social learning theory, including modeling. Researching psychology (iResearchNet), the following paragraph defined modeling and is being used to kick-start this article: “Modeling is one way in which behavior is learned. When a person observes the behavior of another and then imitates that behavior, he or she is modeling the behavior. This is sometimes known as observational learning or social learning. Modeling is a kind of vicarious learning in which direct instruction need not occur. Indeed, one may not be aware that another is modeling his or her behavior.”

Nothing stated in this article will be new to any of us, and almost certainly was not shaped by me. Someone once said that we are the purest human we will ever be on this earth fresh out of the womb. From that point on, everything we learn – both good and bad – is the result of this theory. My three grandchildren are great examples of modeling, just as we were at that age. Once in a while, something poor will slip out of one of their mouths, and my son or daughter will make an attempt to scold them. Often, a comment slips from my mouth, suggesting that they are wasting their time yelling at the children, because they are like parrots. What they hear, see, and say will be repeated, so watch what you are doing.

How does this relate to the fire service and to the leadership role that you are in?

We all have a mentor, and we have likely been modeling that person long before recognizing it. On one early morning, we were called to a fire in an old hospital that was turned into a bar at street level and a four-story multiple apartment complex. The first arriving boss, a veteran captain, arrived on the scene and calmly reported, “Heavy smoke, people hanging from windows, one person just jumped into a dumpster. Strike a second alarm, send multiple ambulances. We are going to be working for a while!” As a young firefighter riding backward on the second due engine, I asked the firefighter riding next to me, “Did I just hear the captain right?” After an amazingly run operation by that veteran captain, with no deaths, I wanted to be like him. The entire scene was tranquil and calm. Had he been a screamer, which we all have one or two, I am sure that scene would have looked entirely different with a poorer outcome.

With this in mind, let’s look within ourselves, accept that we are no longer pure, accept our flaws, and work on correcting them so that we can model the behavior that will be identified in this article. Too many times, we hear the comments “these kids today don’t blah, blah, blah” in the firehouse. As identified earlier, we were just like my grandchildren at one time, so nothing really has changed. As leaders, we need to overcome that generational blah and become the positive modeling person. Many a firehouse has a sign stating: “Leave your ego at the door!” A common interpretation of that sign could be “Don’t be arrogant or a jerk.” Whether a new firefighter



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or a chief officer, anyone would likely struggle if they stepped into your day-to-day activities and had to learn on the job. But sometimes this is the way we do it in the fire service. We hire, promote, and expect more than what is possible at times. Quite possibly, becoming less superior and more understanding of other peoples' struggles, in addition to your own, could in turn make you a better leader.

1 Let's start with a **positive attitude**. We have all heard the following – your attitude determines your altitude and your attitude is contagious. We all work harder in a positive attitude environment. Yes, everyone can have a bad day. That's the day your work at being less of a jerk is more difficult, but most important. It doesn't matter if you are a dishwasher or the restaurant owner, everyone has a job, and each job is supportive of the other. Making sure your members understand that you know how important every position is will assist you in keeping them motivated and fortifying the positive environment. How you treat your people is what you will get from them. Nothing harms your team more than getting in the negative ditch with them.

2 **Respect for all**. When I was promoted, a local newspaper reporter asked what I was going to do as the operations chief. My response was, "Take care of my members so that they will take care of the citizens of the city." Throughout your career, you may notice that if there is not respect in the firehouse, it may negatively bleed into the services you provide outside. Chief Alan Brunacini used this saying as part of the Phoenix Fire Department mission statement... "BE NICE!" Nothing will keep you farther away from any harassment issues than that statement. Being nice usually, if not always, wins. Brunacini also said, "If you want to make change in the workers' behavior, change the behavior of the boss."

3 Work on your **communication skills**. This is not about how good we gab, or the tone and volume of our voice. It is about **listening**. Active listening is not just a saying, it is the only way we learn from others. Listening all the way from the top to the bottom, from our bosses to the youngest firefighter, we can learn a whole host of things. One of my youngest firefighters taught me this. While working on a project given to me, this firefighter showed up to talk about a problem. At some point during

the conversation, because I was still sort of working on the project, he commented, "You have not heard a word I have said." I turned away from my computer, went to the other side of my desk where he was sitting, sat down, and listened. Decades ago, this young firefighter taught me about active listening, a lesson I never forgot. Active listening will also show people that you are trustworthy and care.

4 What about **teamwork**? Sports teams often play at the level of their opponent. The problem with this analogy is that your opponent is always trying to win with no exceptions. Whether it is a heart attack or a structure fire, that event will beat us unless our team is at its highest level of efficiency and competence. We all have to be on the same page at every moment. There is little room for complacency and any other hiccups. President Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying, "Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." That spelled out training to me over the course of my career. In my travels, many an officer stated to me, "We have a training officer for that." My response was always the same, having held the training officer job myself for many years. Your training officer is not with you at 3:00 a.m. You must have your team trained the way you want them to operate at that moment. There are no exceptions.

5 Next is **being present**. Yes, there are moments when you need to be in your office getting work done. Get out of your office and interact with your members. This entails working on your time management. You have to be seen often, and by all means, show up at all the training events. Your credibility is constantly being checked by those above you, and more importantly, those below you. Show them that you are a firefighter. Even though you have a white shirt, underneath it is always a blue t-shirt, because we are all firefighters. The rank only exposes you to more accountability to your members and yourself. We all want to return to our families at the end of the job.

6 **Take the blame, give credit**. This is an essential job of the boss. When your team screws up, don't do the blame game. Don't blame the "system." Be courageous, and own up to the failure. You need to understand what failed and how to get it right. Then, you need to

work with the members and train them to do it the right way. Likely, the team failed because of something we were a part of. It may be true that we are the problem. It is our obligation to be the servant, which entails risk and sacrifice. In the leadership job, you can't avoid risk. That is like the ostrich sticking its head in the sand. You have to learn how to manage risk. Additionally important, when the team is successful, give them the credit. Be humble and give the credit where credit is due. Be the coach that helps them find the best of themselves. You did not create the team, and the team is owned by the organization, not by you. You are the servant... serve the team, give credit when due.

7 Lastly, **be curious**. Too many times, we have heard that "This new generation keeps on asking WHY?" As a young firefighter, decades ago, I asked why. Again, nothing has changed... refer to the beginning of this article. As a leader, you need to continue to ask "why?" Get to the kitchen table, the tailboard, the nightly training and ask the "why" questions. Much, much more is learned at these informal settings. You might be surprised how intelligent your members really are, regardless of their age and years of service. You might actually learn a whole mountain of new things that you never knew. ●

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Paul Melfi, EFO, is the Hands-On Training coordinator for NYSAFC. He retired as a deputy fire chief, chief of operations for the City of Olean Fire Department after 26 years of service. Melfi also served as an instructor for the FDIC H.O.T. program and Firehouse Expo. He graduated from the National Fire Academy as an executive fire officer and has a bachelor's degree in fire administration and health and human services. Melfi is a New York state advocate for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Everyone Goes Home/Courage to Be Safe® Program.



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Every Day is a **LEARNING DAY**

Understanding How Firefighters Learn as a Group

Edward Tracey

You are an officer or a senior firefighter in the firehouse when you hear a conversation start on the truck floor between members of the crew discussing different pump operating pressures for a certain building in your district. Curious, you join the conversation and share what you know about the topic. Did training just occur?

Training and education literature indicates that learning can occur at different levels in the workplace. We can

conceptualize learning in the fire service as able to occur on four different levels: at the individual level, at the group or company level, at the organizational level, and at the inter-organizational level (Crossan, Lane, White, & Djurfeldt, 1995).¹

As the fire service typically has a division of labor requiring different groups (companies) to operate effectively, it is vital that learning the trade of firefighting is done at the group level. This article focuses on why it is important to recognize the everyday workplace learning that occurs at the group level.

FORMAL VS. INFORMAL LEARNING

Formal Learning: The fire service tends to put a lot of emphasis on training and learning in the formal learning environment. The formal learning environment is generally regarded as the learning that occurs in the classroom as a teacher or instructor is in charge and educating students. In the fire service, illustrative examples of the formal environment are found in the monthslong recruit firefighter training programs and the practice of a fire officer developing and running the daily (or weekly or monthly) training drill.

Formal learning is an important component of workplace learning, as it is the primary method for learners to acquire new information about their jobs, and it is typically done through classroom instruction and in-service training programs.

Informal Learning: Studies indicate that workers actually learn the majority of the information necessary to do their jobs through informal learning practices. The ratio of information acquisition has been reported as anywhere from 40-90% of all workplace learning knowledge being gained through informal means, with the remaining 10-60% of workplace learning done through formal training (Kim, Hagedorn, Williamson, & Chapman, 2004²; Cross, 2007).³

To clear up the discussion on firefighter learning, informal learning can be characterized as all of the learning that does not occur in the formal (classroom, training grounds, etc.) learning programs. Informal learning is the “everyday” learning that can take place anytime, anywhere, and it can be done by an individual or within a group of people (Illeris, 2007⁴; Schugurensky, 2000).⁵

LEARNING AS A GROUP

One way to think about firehouse group learning is that it is collaborative learning whereby each firefighter in the group contributes to the overall knowledge, skills, and abilities of the larger group or company. Learning as a group occurs when members ask each other for information, share knowledge freely, start to recognize that they have a collective understanding of how to operate, and understand what each member’s role is going to be at an incident, and when each member can perform their tasks under situations without direct supervision.

Firefighters learn from the other members of the group in various ways. Firefighters ask each other questions, they discuss firefighting, EMS, hazardous materials, and special operations topics with each other, and they learn from talking to and observing their co-workers and officers.

When firefighters have a question about something, they may seek out an officer or colleague whom they believe to have the correct answer. A major area of workplace learning study proposes that people learn to work together as they get better at their jobs and participate with their co-workers

in “communities of practice.” Communities of practice researchers theorize that learning takes place as individuals go through their daily routines and practices; that is, when people work together, they learn together (Wenger, 1998).⁶

Reflect on your own experiences in the firehouse. Firefighters sit around the coffee table and talk about recent incidents; they argue about the new equipment, and they pose hypothetical situations to each other. The driver finds an issue with a piece of equipment during rig checks and brings it to another firefighter’s attention for input and feedback. The company stays on scene after an automatic alarm to show the newer members where to spot the aerial apparatus or where to find the lockbox and building keys. All these everyday instances are opportunities for informal group learning to occur.

GROUP LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

Formal training is usually undertaken for two reasons – to make the individual or group better at what they do, or to meet an organizational goal, such as training for compliance or to meet a mandate. For these reasons alone, formal training has a very important role in developing firefighter competence. But, if fire officers and senior firefighters recognize that opportunities for informal group learning often take place, they can cultivate those opportunities into training time that also serves to improve the knowledge and skill level of the entire group. It is important to train fire officers to recognize that these “hidden” learning opportunities occur, as they may very well be the main way in which firefighters learn how to be firefighters.

A major disadvantage of informal learning is that it is often not anticipated; therefore, training materials, SOGs, or policies have not been referenced prior to the event, nor has the drill “flow” or plan been prepared in advance. Officers and firefighters must make sure that they do not give wrong information or “make up” the right answers. With these impromptu training occurrences, it is still important to take the time to find and reference correct information.

Group learning is a type of peer-to-peer learning. This positions firefighters to learn from their officers and colleagues. It is important to make sure that each

member, especially the newer member, is considered part of the learning effort. Peer pressure can have a powerful positive or negative impact on the adult learner. Make sure that you allow for a comfortable learning environment where people can make “safe” mistakes and ask any questions as they develop competence.

Understanding that there are daily opportunities for informal group learning is an important step. Pay attention to what is happening in the firehouse and recognize that this learning is taking place. Guide the group training to the best of your ability with the goal of making the entire company more competent. Then, make sure to take credit for the training time, because you just made your group of firefighters a little bit better at their job. ●

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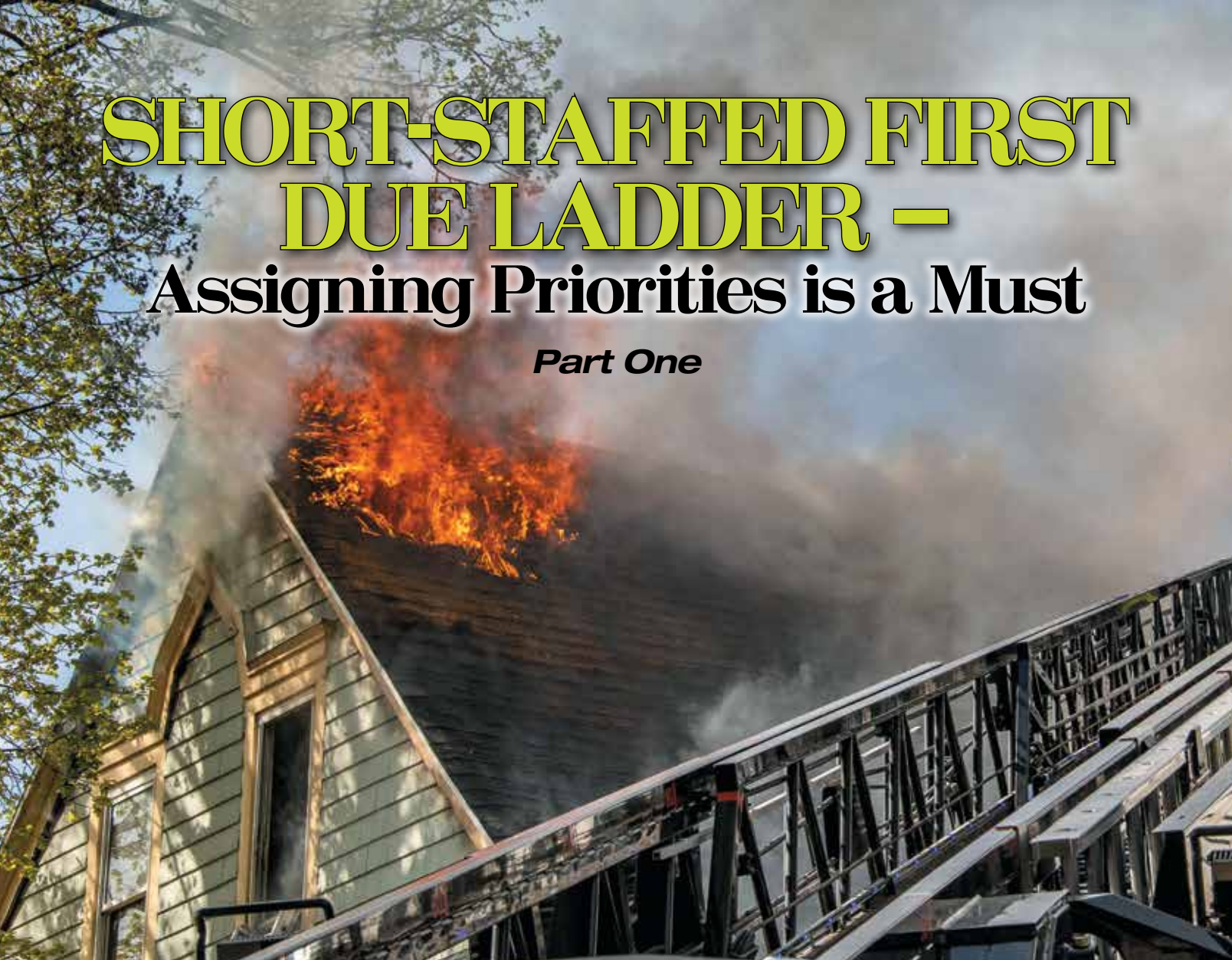
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Edward A. Tracey, Ed.D., is a 31-year member of the fire service serving the last 21 years with the Rochester Fire Department. He serves as the Rescue Company captain with additional responsibilities including collaborative management of the RFD’s technical rescue training, response, and typing programs. Tracey is the lead instructor for the NYS AFC HOT Truck Company Operations program, serves on fire and technical rescue course curriculum committees, and teaches numerous college-level fire protection program courses.

SHORT-STAFFED FIRST DUE LADDER – Assigning Priorities is a Must

Part One



David Campbell

With short staffing affecting both volunteer and career fire departments across the country, we are expected to do more with less. Doing more with less puts civilians and firefighters at an increased risk for serious injury and even death.

As a firefighter, we can only do one thing at a time on the fireground. We can't be expected to fulfill our assigned position, as well as the position that doesn't have a firefighter to fill. Because of this, we should consider prioritizing which positions get filled based on what type of structure fire we are responding to.

Most ladder trucks ride with the following positions:

- Chauffer
- Officer
- Irons
- Can
- Outside Vent (OV)
- Roof

PRIVATE DWELLING FIRES

If we only have one interior firefighter in the back of the ladder when responding as the first due, we should consider assigning that firefighter to the **OV (outside vent)** position. It's a priority for a firefighter to get to the rear of the house to conduct a size up. The first arriving engine officer or IC might not have been able to conduct a 360

or it may have been several minutes since that 360 was first completed and conditions could have changed significantly. The first arriving **OV** has many priorities at a private dwelling fire and can have a significant impact on trapped civilians and the overall operation. They should check the basement windows for a basement fire, check the eaves for smoke under pressure or fire, check the ground for victims who have jumped from upper windows, check windows for smoke/fire showing or a victim at the window, and conduct **VEIS** (vent, enter, isolate, and search) for trapped victims and fire.

MIXED OCCUPANCY FIRES

(A mixed occupancy is a structure that could be two or three stories in height with



a commercial establishment on the first floor and apartments on the floors above.)

If we only have one interior firefighter in the back of the ladder when responding first due, we should consider assigning that firefighter to the **roof** position. The first arriving **roof** firefighter has many responsibilities at a mixed occupancy and can have a significant impact on both trapped civilians and overall fire operations. The first arriving engine officer and IC might not be able to gain access to the rear to conduct their size up. The **roof** firefighter might be the only one to view the rear of the structure. They are the eyes for the IC. They are looking for fire showing in the rear, a setback structure, a victim at a window or one that has jumped. They can

start venting the natural vents (skylights or scuttle hatch). If only one skylight is found on the roof, it usually is above the public hallway and staircase. By venting this skylight, they are making conditions in that hallway and staircase more tenable for firefighters and civilians by helping to remove smoke and heat. If it's a top floor fire, the **roof** firefighter should be cutting a vent hole in the roof. Cutting a vent hole not only helps to improve conditions on the top floor for firefighters and trapped civilians, but also helps to slow horizontal spread of fire in the cockloft. This hole can help prevent a smoke explosion in the cockloft, a flashover, or a backdraft. The **roof** firefighter can also vent top floor windows from the roof. **Note:** Only firefighters equipped with a SCBA should be operating on the roof. Smoke conditions on the roof might require the firefighter to operate on air.

MULTIPLE DWELLING FIRES

(Apartment houses)

If there is only one interior firefighter in the back of the ladder when responding first due, we should consider assigning that firefighter to the **roof** position. This firefighter can have a major impact on the fire and civilian survival. Because of how important the **roof** position is at a multiple dwelling fire, it has been said, "Nothing shall deter the **roof** firefighter from getting to the roof." Just like at a mixed occupancy, the **roof** firefighter might be the first firefighter to view the rear. They are looking for setbacks, smoke/fire venting from a window, victims at a window or victims who have jumped. They are opening the bulkhead door (a bulkhead door is a door on the roof that leads to an interior staircase and public hallway). Opening this door will vent smoke and heat from that staircase and hallway. This also helps to prevent "mushrooming" of smoke and heat on lower floors. If a victim is trapped at a window and can't be reached by an aerial device or rescued by the inside firefighters and the **roof** firefighter is equipped with a life-saving rope, they should start a roof rope rescue operation. If not equipped with a life-saving rope, the **roof** firefighter should have brought a saw to the roof. If there is a top floor fire, the firefighter should start cutting a vent hole. Like the mixed occupancy, cutting the roof can make conditions on

the top floor or floors below better for firefighters and trapped civilians. It can also help prevent the horizontal spread of fire in the cockloft, a smoke explosion in the cockloft, a flashover, or a backdraft. If there is a top floor fire, the **roof** firefighter can vent the top floor windows from the roof. While you may think the position of **forcible entry** should be filled first, forcible entry can be accomplished by the **officer** with the irons.

ONE-STORY COMMERCIAL BUILDING FIRE

If only one interior firefighter is in the back of the first due ladder, we should consider assigning that firefighter the **roof** position. This firefighter might be the only firefighter that can see the rear of the building to check for visible fire. It's important that they take the natural vents and cut a vent hole in the roof. These actions can help make conditions better for firefighters and trapped civilians inside. Just like with the mixed occupancy and multiple dwelling fires, cutting a hole in the roof can help slow down the horizontal spread of fire in the cockloft, a smoke explosion in the cockloft, a flashover, or a backdraft. These phenomena can seriously injure or even kill firefighters.

In summary, when responding short staffed on the ladder truck with only one interior firefighter, we should prioritize the position that will have the most positive impact on civilian survival and operations at that specific structure. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Campbell has over 33 years of experience as a first responder, both volunteer and career, and is past chief of the Lawrence-Cedarhurst Fire Department. He is retired from the New York City Fire Department Emergency Medical Services command and instructed at the New York City Fire Academy on haz-mat and terrorism response. Campbell is a nationally certified fire instructor and serves as an adjunct instructor for the National Fire Academy and Department of Homeland Security. He is a Hands-On Training instructor for NYS AFC and has been a lecturer at the Annual Conference & FIRE Expo. Campbell has also provided training for Sunoco Oil Corp., the United States Coast Guard, and fire departments across New York state.



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Thursday, June 13: 3:00 – 7:00 p.m. **NEW!**

Friday, June 14: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 15: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.



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Connect with conference attendees from all over the state and catch up with old friends at the annual Friday night **Block Party** at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown! Join us on June 14, rain or shine, from 5:00-8:30 p.m. Join together with other NYSAFC members and first responders during our special FIRE 2024 ceremonies. Our annual association **Memorial Service** will be held at a new time – 1:00 p.m. – on June 13 at The Oncenter Ballroom. The **Installation Ceremony** for our 2024-2025 slate of officers will take place on a new day – Friday, June 14, 4:00 p.m., at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown. After the ceremony, head out to enjoy the Block Party!



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Personal Values to Follow

John Lewis and Robert Moran



AS WE WRITE THIS column, we are getting ready to celebrate the new year. Last year at this time, we challenged you to develop a “bucket list” of personal and fire service goals for 2023, and we are hopeful you listened and were able to achieve those objectives.

In this new year, we are inspired to offer our own take on several behaviors that require “zero talent,” shared with us by the staff at the Passaic County (NJ) Fire Academy and the legendary fire service officer, instructor, and illustrator Paul Combs. It’s true. It doesn’t take talent to demonstrate these well-regarded personal qualities, and doing so will visibly enhance your own performance and make your department and the fire service in general a better place to live and work.

WORK ETHIC

It takes work to develop yourself into a firefighter that can be counted on by your team members and it is a given there will be days when you will be challenged to perform at a high level. Remain focused on the task at hand or the target you are trying to reach. Work hard, it will pay off personally and professionally.

BE EARLY

ALWAYS arrive early and prepared, whether for your shift or a department event. While we know fires can’t be scheduled, former Green Bay Packers Coach Vince Lombardi had a rule for his players. If you’re not 15 minutes early for my meetings, you’re late. How did that work for him and his organization?

PASSION/LOVE FOR THE JOB

The definition of passion is “a very powerful feeling.” Be passionate about your role. Embrace the feeling. Share the feeling. Love this job daily, good times or bad. Stay away from the cancers and slackers whose focus is to drag you and the organization down. Stay the course.

ENERGY/EFFORT

Like work ethic, we believe the energy and effort you put into your daily performance is a product of how you were brought up, who you have been mentored by, or what you have been exposed to over your life. These are qualities that can’t be taught. They come from within. Exceptional firefighters possess these attributes.

ATTITUDE

Bring a positive attitude to everything you do. There is no room in an organization or our team-oriented environment for those who don’t. We have found positivity to be contagious. Surround yourself with positive people. Always bring your best to the table. Develop a “no exceptions” attitude to everything you do!

BODY LANGUAGE

Your spoken word is a critical tool in communicating with those around you. However, your body language may sometimes say it all. No crossed arms, no eyes to the side, no grumbling, no huffing or puffing. Keep your eyes focused. Tune people in, not out.

BE COACHABLE

Nobody likes a know-it-all. You know that person. Someone in the service for two years who acts and thinks like they have 20 years of experience or someone who just thinks they know it all. Regardless of your time in this profession, there will always be something to learn. Become a student. Keep an open mind and listen to the instructors, coaches, teachers, and mentors you are surrounded by. If you aren’t coachable, you will be left behind.

DO THE RIGHT THING WHEN NOBODY IS WATCHING

We added this to our list because we think this is one of the most critical

behaviors used to define an individual’s integrity, character, attitude, and commitment to their profession and fellow people. Good people will always do the right thing. They care, and they show it no matter who is or who isn’t looking.

TWO EARS, ONE MOUTH

A captain from the Harwich (MA) Fire Department told us this one several years ago. Listen before you speak and don’t speak unless you have something positive to add to the conversation. Here is our golden rule. If you have nothing good to say, keep your mouth shut and move on.

REACH OUT

Be that person that interacts with members from similar and even larger fire departments. Find peers who think like you and can be a source of information. Discuss how other departments deal with problems, train their members, develop goals and objectives, and provide services. Never pass up being introduced or an opportunity to introduce yourself.

BE HUMBLE

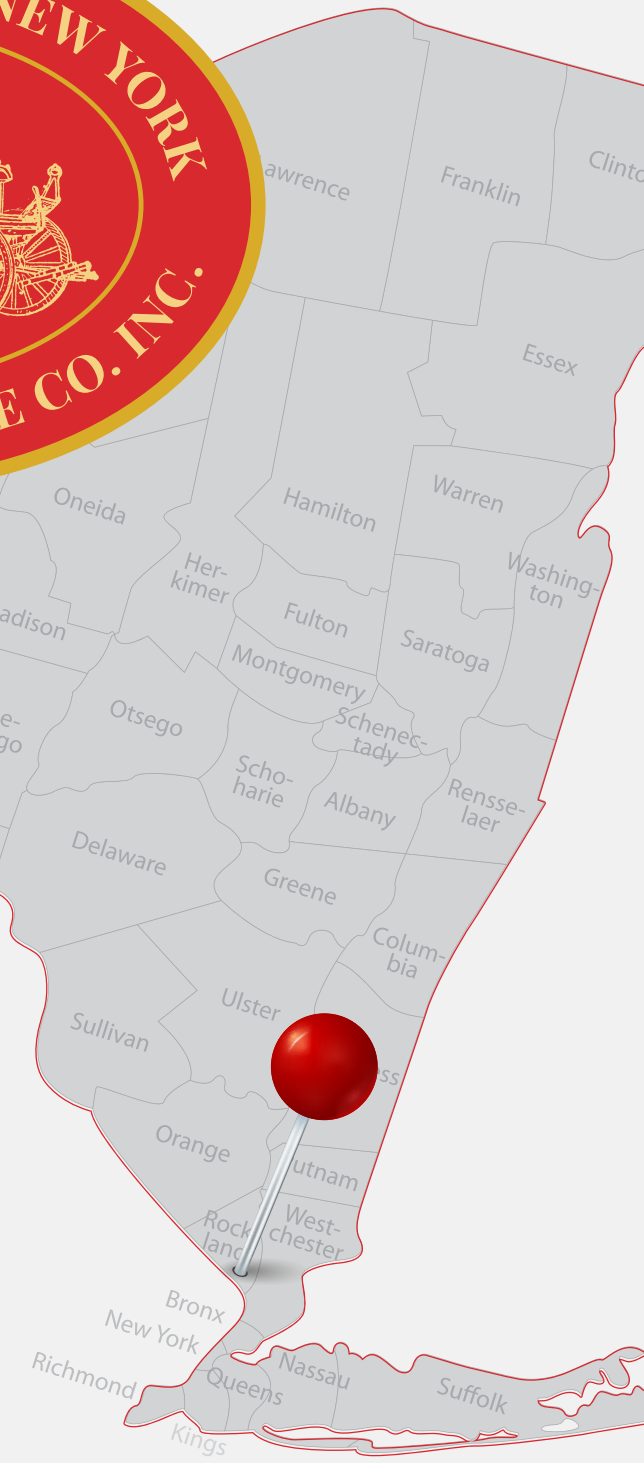
This is a team sport and communication, respect, loyalty, and most importantly, trust, are the principles that drive a team to excellence. There is no room for ego. Keep yourself in check. Be humble, know your job, know your place. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John Lewis joined the volunteer fire service in 1978, began his career as a firefighter/EMT in 1985, and retired as a lieutenant with the City of Passaic (NJ) Fire Department. Robert Moran is chief of the Brewster (MA) Fire Department. He retired after a 27-year career with the City of Englewood (NJ) Fire Department, where he served as chief of department, and is a past chief of the Leonia (NJ) Volunteer Fire Department. They operate Jersey Guys Firefighter Training (www.jerseyfireguys.com).



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