THE FIRE CALL

Fall 2026

an official Publication of the Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts

In this Issue:

- *If You Can't Communicate, You Can't Operate*
- *Fire Districts Pay Tribute to 9-11 25th Anniversary*
- *Legislative Report*
- *2027 Calendar & Checklist*



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In This Issue

Features

Instructors' Judgment Calls Shield Fire Department 38
If You Can't Communicate, You Can't Operate 42
Fire Districts 25th Anniversary Tribute 52

Columns

President's Message 6
Association Update 8
Fire Counsel Notes: Legislative Report 10
Compliance Corner 15
Legislative Update 16
Membership Matters 18
Around the State 20
Pension Pointers 28
Movin' On Up: Manhattan FPD 32
District Profile: Beecher FPD 36
New Member Spotlight 46
In the News 56
Calendar of Events 58

Other Information

Educational Opportunities 9
Fire Pension Investment Fund Election Reminders 15
Associate Member Directory 19
Foundation Golf Outing 48
2027 Calendar & Checklist of Annual Responsibilities 50
2025 Audited Financial Report 54
Statement of Ownership 54



Page 38



Page 42



Page 52

About the Cover: *The IAFPD welcomed the **America United Traveling Exhibit** to its Conference this past June. Photo provided courtesy of Paul Grzelak.*

***America United:** The Days After 9/11 is a powerful traveling exhibit that tells the story of how America came together in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Featuring authentic steel beams from the wreckage of the Twin Towers, this exhibit provides an interactive space for visitors to reflect, learn, and share their thoughts on unity, resilience, and the spirit of helping others. This exhibit is available for loan to museums, libraries, schools, veterans' organizations, and other institutions nationwide. For further information, please visit The Children's Museum in Oak Lawn. https://www.cmoaklawn.org/america-united-exhibit*

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President's Message



By Damon Schuldt, Martinton FPD

As we have moved past the month of September, we reflect on the 25th anniversary of the tragic 911 event. It is certainly hard to believe it has been so long since that fateful day and we are now at the point that a new generation doesn't remember the day or the preceding days that followed. Many, if not all of us, remember where we were and what we were engaged in during Sept. 11th, 2001. I distinctly recall the skies being void of aircraft during the next couple days after 911 – likely something we may never witness again. I would like to quote an excerpt from the book titled "Brotherhood" by Tony Hendra. This book was written post 911 and published 1 March, 2002, to chronicle the immediate aftermath of that event and the loss suffered by the FDNY. In the introduction by Frank McCourt, Rudolph Giuliani and Thomas Von Essen, we read the following: *"everyday things in a firehouse – helmets, bunker gear, boots, a workout area, a card table, a row of beds, fire poles, - have an additional layer of meaning. They underline that a Firefighter's job is mostly waiting, always living in an edgy state of readiness for unknown perils. In times of tragedy, everyday things become mute memorials. They have an awful stillness to them as they now wait...for people who will never come."*

Next I will turn your attention to a very important and timely topic of the Firefighters Pension Investment Fund (FPIF) elections. All fire department's who have full-time employees who participate in the Article 4 pension system, or commonly called the Downstate Pension Fund, have a representative vote occurring in November. This includes municipal fire departments and fire protection districts. Within municipal departments the Mayor casts the vote and in fire protection districts the board president will vote. The FPIF does not currently have a specified board position reflective to represent fire protection districts. Our incumbent candidate needs to be re-elected in an effort to represent the Fire Protection Districts. Having a fire district trustee on the pension board is a definitive plus.

All applicable FPD President's please cast your vote for Karl Langhammer before Dec 1st. He is a former POC FF, current trustee and treasurer with the Carol Stream Fire Protection District. His financial expertise and wiliness to serve makes him a great candidate for the FPIF. See Karl's flier in this edition of the Fire Call for additional information.

The Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Conference was recently held in Champaign in early September and hosted by the Illinois Fire Service Institute. This great event has expanded to a day and a half experience along with a bonus day of strategic planning. Congrats to Matt Perez and the conference planning committee for their efforts. If you have the opportunity to attend any of their future events, please do so – you won't be disappointed.

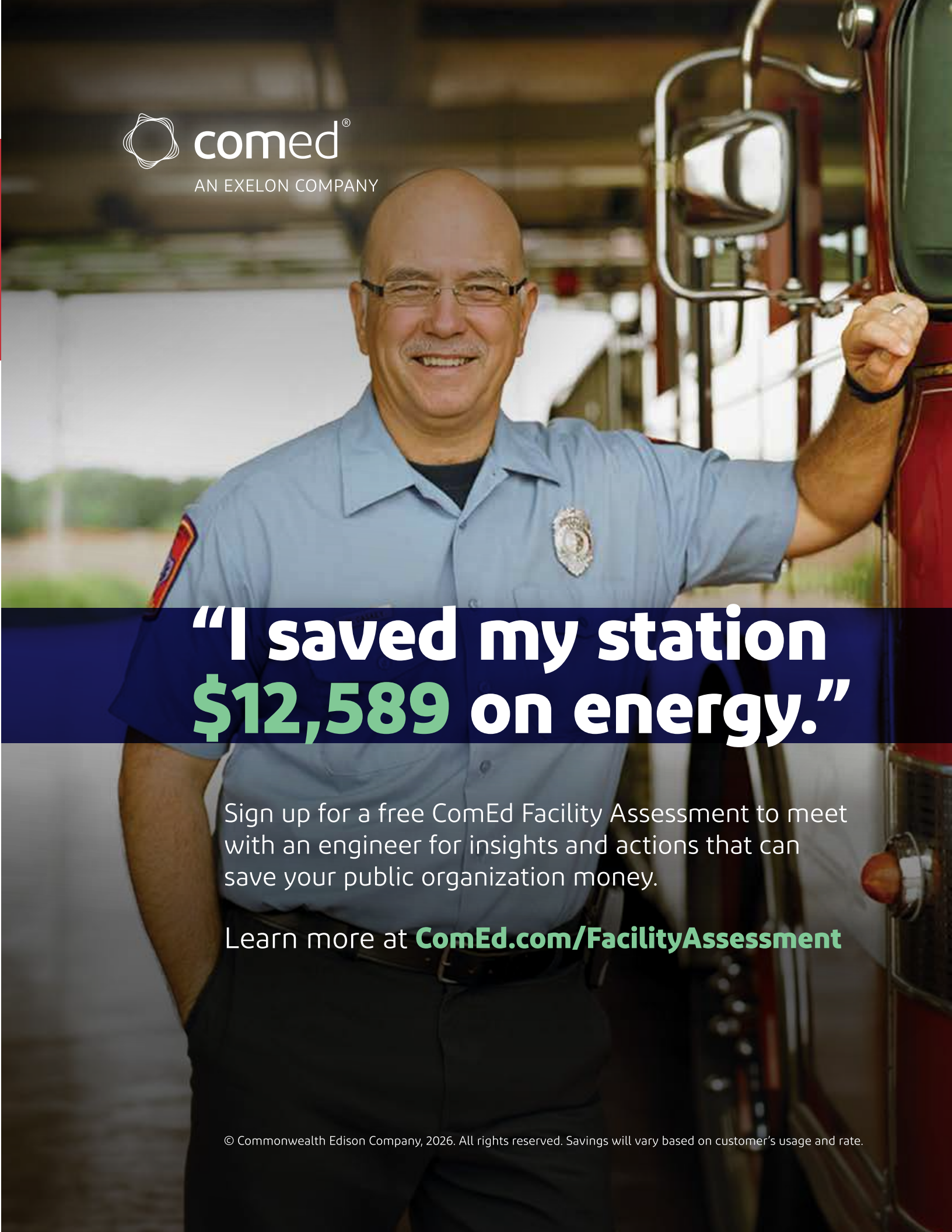
Another awesome annual IAFPD Foundation golf outing was held on Aug. 21st. This year proved to be another great event with enthusiastic golfers, great prizes and beautiful weather. Many thanks to our committee, board members, auxiliary, staff, golfers, sponsors and volunteers who participated in any way, particularly Steve Schultz and Larry Brown who did an exemplary job making this event happen. Please join us next year on August 20th as we repeat this exceptional fund raising outing. All proceeds go in the Foundation toward scholarships to fire & EMS personnel, Trustees and other support activities.

We would love to have you attend any of our educational opportunities during these fall and winter months. A 12 hour Essential Trustee Training class will be held on November 6th & 7th with in-person classes at Plainfield FPD along with simultaneous satellite classes at Barrington-Countryside FPD. We will provide an in-person Continued Trustee Training (CTE) session on November 14th in Cherry Valley and an online CTE session in January. Our ever popular Winter Conference will be held at the Regency in O'Fallon, Ill. on Feb. 26 & 27. Look to our website or watch your email for registration information.

I recently attended a day at the Illinois Firefighters Conference held in Peoria October 16 - 18. This opportunity provides worthwhile training at an affordable cost while providing free lodging courtesy of the State Fire Marshal's Office. I would strongly encourage every fire department in Illinois to take advantage of this awesome event.

Lastly, I would remind everyone to remember Veterans Day on November 11th. Honor those who are currently serving, those who have served and those whom we have lost in service of our country. My father served nearly four years in service to the United States Army during WW II making Veterans Day a special one for me. Spend some time with a veteran, make their day special and thank them for their service! Have a great holiday season and stay safe! ■

Damon Schuldt, IAFPD President
Martinton Fire Protection District


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Association Update



Beyond the Paycheck
People, Partnerships and Purpose

By Cheri Breneman
Association Administrator

There are many rewards that come with my role at IAFPD that extend well beyond a paycheck. Among the greatest are the people I meet, the relationships I build, and the opportunity to work alongside individuals who are truly dedicated to making a difference in the fire service. As fall settles in and we begin reflecting on another busy year while looking ahead to 2027, I am reminded of the many programs, activities, and special events where IAFPD has had the privilege of being represented. Conferences and educational programs naturally bring people together, providing valuable opportunities to network, exchange ideas, and strengthen partnerships. Sadly, attending funerals and memorial services has become more frequent than any of us would wish. Yet, even during these difficult occasions, they are reminders of the remarkable individuals who have shaped IAFPD, its membership, and our affiliated fire service organizations. It is truly an honor to have known and worked alongside so many dedicated fire service members who have left a lasting legacy.

While ***The Fire Call*** regularly features announcements, event highlights, and photographs, I wanted to share a few opportunities that demonstrate the strength of our fire service and the many ways IAFPD remains involved.

Illinois State Fair: Volunteering to educate families about home and fire safety is especially rewarding. We hope the information we share is never needed in an emergency but knowing that a simple conversation could someday help save a life makes the effort worthwhile.

Community Risk Reduction Meetings: Opportunities to collaborate with fire service professionals and community partners who share a commitment to preventing emergencies before they happen.

Camp I Am Me Fire Prevention Week Luncheon: An inspiring gathering featuring remarkable stories, well-deserved recognitions, and support for Burn Camp.

IFCA Conference & Tradeshow: A well-attended event that allows us to reconnect with mutual members, supporters, and industry partners while exploring the latest technology and equipment in the fire service.

IFA Down & Dirty: An action-packed weekend offering affordable, hands-on firefighter training led by experienced instructors who generously share their knowledge and expertise.

Legislative Summit: A day spent alongside leaders representing 12 fire service organizations, working together to identify priorities and develop a coordinated legislative agenda for the upcoming spring session. A powerful reminder of what can be accomplished through collaboration.

Essential Trustee Training (ETT): A fire protection district with knowledgeable, well-trained trustees sends a powerful message to its community. IAFPD's specialized 12-hour, three-part program provides an important foundation for effective district governance.

IAFPD Winter Conference: Our winter gathering in O'Fallon brings together approximately 40–50 fire protection districts, 150 attendees, and 20 vendors for networking and 12 hours of quality education designed for fire district trustees, pension trustees, and fire chiefs.

Continuing Trustee Education Sessions – A tradition spanning more than 40 years, these programs remain an excellent opportunity to meet neighboring district officials, exchange ideas, and enjoy a day of learning and camaraderie with legal experts.

Cheers to 85 Years! – In 2027, IAFPD will celebrate its 85th anniversary! Eight and a half decades of growth, change, challenges. We look forward to recognizing this milestone throughout the year, and perhaps enjoying a little anniversary cake along the way!

These experiences are reminders that the value of IAFPD membership extends well beyond the personalized service, publications, and exceptional resources highlighted during membership renewal. The true strength lies in people who contribute their time, expertise, and commitment to advancing the fire service. If you serve a fire protection district and need assistance, we encourage you to reach out. If your department is considering the formation of a fire protection district, we have resources to help guide the process. And if your district is not yet an IAFPD member, I invite you to contact our office and discover the many benefits of belonging.

As we approach the holiday season and close another productive year that seems to have passed all too quickly, please know that the IAFPD Board and Staff are thankful for the people we serve, and the relationships that continue to make our work so meaningful. For me, those relationships and the opportunity to make a difference are among the greatest rewards of all. Wishing you and your families a blessed holiday season and a wonderful year ahead! ■

IAFPD Educational Opportunities





Save the Date!

IAFPD 82nd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June 24-26, 2027

Embassy Suites Riverfront

Hotel & Conference Center - East Peoria, IL

IAFPD Essential Trustee Training (ETT)

The only training of its kind with a curriculum developed specifically for educating the Board of Trustees for Fire Protection Districts. The program discusses all roles, responsibilities, filing, reporting and legal compliance matters that come with administering a fire district. The ETT Program is approved legal training that allows additional compensation for paid trustees who complete the 3-part program. Trustees who completed the training and have received additional compensation are required to attend 3-hours of continuing education each year after they have completed the program.

The Next Presentation for the 3-part ETT
June 24, 25, 26, 2027 in East Peoria

2027 Continuing Trustee Education (CTE)

The CTE sessions emphasize the latest in governance and administration of fire protection districts. The speakers cover the ever- increasing demands and responsibilities of districts today.

Jan. 23	Virtual Event Only - Shawn Flaherty & John Motylinski
Feb. 5-7	NIAFPD Conference - Lombard
Feb. 27	O'Fallon, IL - James Sinclair (at Winter Conference)
March 20	Champaign - James Sinclair & John T. Brady

Fire Counsel Notes



Fall 2026 Legislative Report

By James S. Sinclair, IAFPD Counsel
Stobbs & Sinclair, LTD

This Fire Call's Fire Counsel Notes consists of the annual summary of new legislation enacted by the Illinois General Assembly which is directly or indirectly applicable to or of interest to Fire Protection Districts and/or the Fire Service. These are new laws (Public Acts) which have been passed by both houses of the General Assembly and approved by the Governor. Readers desiring to read an entire enactment may do so by going online to ILGA.GOV and selecting "Public Acts" under "Legislation & Laws" to access the enactments by Public Act (PA) number which is supplied with each summary below. These enactments are from the 104th Session of the General Assembly approved since the last annual report. Both the Public Act number and the bill number are provided along with the effective date of the law. Readers are encouraged to regularly check the IAFPD website for legislative news and updates and, when requested, to participate in the legislative process by reaching out to the State Representatives and Senators in their area for direct contact regarding bills being supported or opposed by the Association.

Public Act 104-362 (SB711) EMS Act Changes

Makes multiple changes to the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems Act that will be applicable to many Districts engaged in the provision of emergency medical services. Allows a person who is not an "EMS personnel" to operate an EMS vehicle (1) if the person meets the Vehicle Code requirements for the operation of an ambulance under emergent conditions; (2) if 2 licensed EMS personnel are present; and (3) if patient's condition necessitates all of the EMS personnel present to be involved in the care of the patient. Allows IDPH to grant a waiver allowing non-EMS personnel to operate the ambulance if only one EMS personnel is present. Requires testing of EMS candidates by the National Registry examination system. Requires EMS Systems to address their EMS training program if a first attempt failure rate of 30% or more occurs for those taking a licensure examination. Permits a student enrolled in an IDPH approved course to take the EMR licensure examination after the student has completed the first 40 hours of the course. (Effective Date: August 15, 2025.)

Public Act 104-438 (SB243) OMA & FOIA Changes

Makes numerous changes to the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. A new Section 2.07 is added to OMA prohibiting the holding of a regular or special meeting on an election day. Section 7 of OMA, which allows remote attendance by a board member in limited circumstances, will now allow a service member on active military duty to attend a meeting under OMA remotely. Section 2 of FOIA has been amended to add to the definition of "person" in the Act to include "any individual acting as an agent of a corporation, partnership, firm, organization, or association. Section 2 of FOIA is also amended to provide that the definition of "public record" does not include "junk mail" (unsolicited commercial mail or electronic communications received, *but which are not responded to*, by an official, employee, or agent of the public body). Section 3 of FOIA now requires that any FOIA request which is submitted electronically to a unit of government must contain the actual records request *in the body of the communication* and may not locate the request in an attachment or hyperlink. Section 3 of FOIA now provides that if a unit of government has a reasonable belief that a person (rather than a bot or an AI generation) did not submit a FOIA request, the unit may require the requester to verify orally or in writing that the requester is a person and the time for the unit to respond is tolled until such verification is provided. If there is no verification within 30 days, the unit may deny the request. Section 4 of FOIA now requires that if a unit of government has a website, it is required to post the information about the unit of government required by the Act on the website. Districts which have a website, regardless of how it is maintained, will need to post the required FOIA information on their website. Section 9.5 of FOIA regarding the Public Access Counselor (PAC) has been amended to provide that an officer or employee of a public body which discloses records in accordance with an opinion of the Attorney General (PAC Opinion) is immune from liability by reason of the disclosure and will not be liable for penalties under FOIA. Section 3 of the Local Records Act is amended to define junk mail as in the amendment to FOIA and to take junk mail out of the category of materials that

Continued on page 12

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Fire Counsel Notes

Continued from page 10

cannot be destroyed or disposed of by a unit of government without Local Record Act Commission approval. (Effective Date: January 1, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0523 (HB5480)
OSFM / Fire Investigation / NERIS

Makes changes concerning fire investigation and incident reporting by the Office of the State Fire Marshal, including requiring reporting to be done using the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS). (Effective Date: June 26, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0581 (HB1353)
Volunteer Emergency Workers

Amends the Volunteer Emergency Worker Job Protection Act. Provides that employment protections for volunteer emergency workers apply to volunteer emergency workers participating in required training, including a prohibition on termination and penalizing (rather than only termination). Provides that the employer may not require the employee to take vacation time or other compensatory time in order to respond to an emergency or participate in training. Provides that the Act does not apply to any employer that is a municipality with a population of 15,000 or more (currently 7,500 or more). (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0582 (HB2137)
Local Government / Technology

Amends the Governmental Account Audit Act to require units of local government covered by the Governmental account Audit Act and which have a website to post information on the website explaining where their audit and financial reports are publicly accessible, including a link to the Comptroller's website. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0599 (HB4292)
Fire Districts / Fund Transfer

Amends the Fire Protection District Act to allow a fire protection district board, by majority vote, to transfer money from its ambulance service fund to another district fund once per year, provided sufficient funds remain for current and future obligations and the transfer does not impair the district's finances or public safety mission. (Effective Date: July 24, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0610 (HB4477)
EMS Systems / Various

Amends the EMS Systems Act to require each EMS System to adopt a Department-approved "Just Culture" policy for evaluating and responding to human error, at-risk behavior, reckless behavior, and failures to perform services. Establishes procedures and limits for EMS disciplinary reviews and suspensions, including the authority of local and State review boards. Requires the Department of Public Health to issue EMS personnel a physical or digital license and removes the requirement that licensees carry a copy while on duty. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0611 (HB4491)
Public Employee Disability

Amends the Public Employee Disability Act to provide that eligible public employees who suffer an injury or illness in the line of duty that prevents them from performing their duties may continue receiving their full gross pay, including pensionable salary, without deduction from or interruption of accrued sick leave, compensatory time, vacation credits, or pension service credits. Provides that illness-related benefits continue while the employee is unable to work due to the illness, but for no longer than one year for the same illness. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0623 (SB2102)
Tax Levy Filing

Amends Section 18-50 of the Property Tax Code (35 ILCS 200/18/15) to permit the filing of a taxing district's annual budget and appropriation ordinance and estimate of revenues with the County Clerk either electronically or by paper submission and, if filed electronically, requires the County Clerk to accept the filing and to acknowledge the filing by providing a receipt to the taxing district. (Effective Date: July 24, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0625 (HB2709)
Fire Marshal / Track Deaths

Amends the State Fire Marshal Act. Provides that all fire departments and units of local government that provide fire protection services in the State shall report the death of any firefighter employed by the fire department or unit of local government to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Specifies the information that shall be reported to the Office. Provides that the Office shall publish an annual report concerning the information reported and shall make the report available to the public. Effective immediately. (Effective Date: July 24, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0635 (HB2836)
Government Account Audit

Amends the Governmental Account Audit Act to increase, beginning in fiscal year 2027, the revenue threshold for governmental units subject to the Act's requirement for an annual audit by a certified public accountant from $850,000 to $1.4 million. Effective immediately. (Effective Date: July 24, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0681(HB4842)
First Responder Stress Service

Amends the First Responders Suicide Prevention Act to expand confidentiality and privilege protections for peer support and critical incident stress management (CISM) services, regardless of the provider's agency affiliation. Protects related communications and records from disclosure or compelled testimony, subject to limited exceptions, including imminent threats of serious harm, mandated reporting, participant consent, certain estate waivers, and communications made to facilitate fraud or other crimes. Allows disclosure by subpoena for good cause shown. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0683 (HB4844)
Jury Duty Pay

Requires, beginning January 1, 2027, that employers more than 25 employees compensate an employee at their regular rate of pay for time serving on jury duty. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0686 (HB4867)
Vehicle Code / Lights Exemption

Makes changes regarding emergency and other vehicle warning lighting

Continued on page 14



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Fire Counsel Notes

Continued from page 12

under the Illinois Vehicle Code. Makes no significant changes to fire and EMS vehicle emergency warning lighting requirements. (Effective Date: July 31, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0696 (HB5193) EMS / Mental Facility Transport

Amends the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems Act. Removes the requirement that the patient must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In provisions concerning when EMS personnel may contact Online Medical Control or an EMS Medical Director or review of Emergency Communications Registered Nurse to request a bypass of or a diversion from the closest emergency department and request transport to the closest or appropriate EMS System-approved mental health facility. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0704 (HB5446) EMS Rural Staffing / Part-Time

Amends the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems Act to require the Department of Public Health to allow an alternative rural staffing model for vehicle service providers serving rural or semi-rural populations of 10,000 or fewer inhabitants that exclusively use volunteers, paid-on-call employees, part-time employees, or a combination of these staffing types. Changes made by this Act do not apply to employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement. (Effective Date: July 31, 2026.)

Public Act 104-0732 (SB3517) Ground Ambulance Services

Amends the Illinois Insurance Code and related health insurance laws to establish coverage and payment requirements for ground ambulance services, including services provided by nonparticipating ambulance providers. Requires applicable health insurance policies to cover emergency and urgent ground ambulance services and limits an insured's out-of-pocket costs for services from a nonparticipating provider to the amount that would apply to a participating provider. Beginning October 1, 2026, nonparticipating ground ambulance service providers must annually report specified average gross charge rates to the Illinois Department of Public Health, including rates for basic and advanced life support, specialty care transport, evaluation or treatment without transport, paramedic intercept, and loaded mileage. The Department must publish the reported rate information beginning January 1, 2027. Also establishes payment requirements for insurers and prohibits nonparticipating ambulance providers from balance billing patients beyond applicable deductibles, coinsurance, or copayments. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0748 (HB3951) Blue Reflective Road Markers

Amends the Illinois Highway Code to allow units of local government to place a 4-inch square blue pavement marker on a highway, street, or road to identify the location of a fire hydrant or water supply. Requires the marker to be placed on the side of the roadway near the fire hydrant or water supply and requires the unit of local government to obtain an encroachment permit from the agency having jurisdiction over the highway before placing the marker. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

Public Act 104-0828 (SB3798) Mental Health 9-1-1 Calls

Amends the Emergency Telephone System Act, Community Emergency Services and Support Act, Illinois Police Training Act, and related provisions governing emergency mental and behavioral health response. Beginning July 1, 2027, requires public safety answering points (PSAPs) to comply with approved protocols for identifying 9-1-1 callers experiencing mental or behavioral health emergencies and determining when referral to a behavioral health response, including mobile mental health relief providers, is appropriate. Requires coordination among 9-1-1, 9-8-8, EMS, law enforcement, and behavioral health providers and establishes additional requirements for regional planning, data collection, and crisis-response protocols. Also incorporates community response options into Crisis Intervention Team training and addresses the circumstances in which law enforcement may participate in or provide transportation during behavioral health emergencies. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

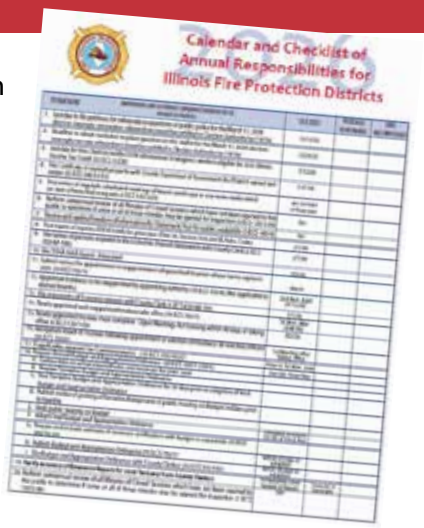
Public Act 104-0841 (SB2645) Fire Station Rehabilitation / Grants

Amends the State Fire Marshal Act to expand eligibility for the Fire Station Rehabilitation and Construction Grant Program to include not-for-profit fire departments that are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, in addition to units of local government. Also amends the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act and related provisions governing State grants, including changes to the Illinois Stop Payment List and stop-payment procedures. The Act eliminates the statutory distinction between "temporary" and "permanent" stop-payment status but does not eliminate stop-payment status itself. (Effective Date: January 1, 2027.)

NOTE: The foregoing is only a partial listing of new legislative enactments. So far in the 104th General Assembly Session there have been **854 Public Acts** approved**.** Undoubtedly, there are other enactments which may have an impact on fire protection districts. These will be the subject of future reporting as they are identified.

Readers with concerns they believe can be addressed by legislative action should submit their ideas for legislative proposals to the IAFPD Legislative Committee headed up by IAFPD Vice President Marvin Hill. The Committee meets regularly to consider legislative proposals which will benefit fire protection districts and the fire service in general. The IAFFPD collaborates with its partner fire service organizations to put forward legislative proposals. This includes the Northern Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts and the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association. Each fall, the Committee participates in the Fire Service Legislative Summit which brings together all the fire service organizations to consider bills for submission to the General Assembly which are agreed upon by all participants in the Summit. Additionally, the IAFPD, through its lobbyist submits its own legislative proposals independently or in collaboration with its legislative partner organizations. ■

Compliance Corner



- Check Out the **2027 Calendar & Checklist of Annual Responsibilities** printed in this Issue of the Fire Call!
- Be certain to file the District's Annual Tax Levy prior to the Last Tuesday in December (**December 29, 2026**)
- Comply with Election Code provisions regarding Trustee Elections at the April 6, 2027 Consolidated Election including the filing period for Trustee Nominating Petitions (**November 16, 2026—November 23, 2026)** and file Certification of Candidates by **January 28, 2027**
- Verify that Fire Chief Submits Roster of Eligible Firefighters for Illinois Income Tax Credit by **January 12, 2027**
- Adopt Resolution for any District ballot initiative by **January 19, 2027** and file Certification of Question with County Clerk(s) by **January 28, 2027**

IMPORTANT ELECTION REMINDER
RE-ELECT
KARL LANGHAMMER
Carol Stream Fire Protection District
IFPIF Board of Trustees

IAFPD urges every eligible Fire Protection District to support the re-election of Karl Langhammer, an experienced Fire District and Pension Fund Trustee as well as a current Trustee of IFPIF Board of Trustees

IMPORTANT VOTING INSTRUCTIONS

WHO VOTES	The Fire District Board President must cast the vote—not the Pension Board President or another official.
HOW TO VOTE	Cast ONE vote for Karl Langhammer. DO NOT select a second candidate.
MAIL BY NOVEMBER 20	Mail early to allow delivery before the December 1 deadline.
NEED A BALLOT?	If your district did not receive a ballot, contact Cheri Breneman at cheri@iafpd.org or 217-525-6620 for assistance with a replacement ballot.

WHY FIRE DISTRICT REPRESENTATION MATTERS
The IFPIF Board oversees firefighter pension fund investments and actuarial calculations used to determine annual minimum employer pension contributions. Of 296 Article 4 firefighter pension funds, 109 are Fire District pension funds—approximately one-third of the total. Fire Districts do not currently have a dedicated seat on the IFPIF Board. IAFPD continues to advocate for a permanent Fire District representative to ensure our unique perspectives and needs are heard.

WHY KARL LANGHAMMER?
Karl has served as an Executive Trustee on the IFPIF Board since 2025 and is a member of its Investments & Operations Committee. His experience includes 22 years with the Carol Stream Fire Protection District, service on both the Fire District and Pension Boards, seven years as a paid-on-call firefighter, and service as Treasurer.
Karl brings valuable experience, fiscal prudence, and a commitment to responsible fiduciary oversight.

PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR BALLOT HAS BEEN MAILED
After mailing your completed ballot, please send a brief confirmation to cheri@iafpd.org. IAFPD will follow up with districts that have not yet confirmed mailing their ballots.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO ENSURE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS HAVE A VOICE ON THE IFPIF BOARD

Legislative Update



Session Overview - Spring 2026

By Brittan Bolin
IAFPD Lobbyist

According to the IL Constitution, the General Assembly must convene each year on the second Wednesday in January. This is considered the spring legislative session, although it begins in January and typically concludes on the last day of May. But there are two other times that the General Assembly meets providing additional opportunities for lawmaking: the fall Veto Session and the Lame Duck session.

The purpose of the fall Veto Session is to provide legislators with an opportunity to respond to any veto actions taken by the Governor. There are four different actions that the Governor can take on bills that have been enacted by the House and Senate and sent to his desk. 1) The Governor can sign the bill into law, 2) he can issue a total veto, essentially rejecting the legislative changes, 3) he can issue an amendatory veto, making substantive changes to the bill that the General Assembly can approve or override, and 4) he can make a reduction veto of appropriation bills passed by the legislature impacting the amount of funding for state purposes.

The chamber of origin must transmit bills to the Governor within thirty days of their passage. The Governor then has sixty days to review the legislation and decide if he will use his veto powers. During the current Pritzker Administration, relatively few vetoes have been issued, which leaves legislators with scheduled legislative days during the fall where they can address unfinished business from the previous spring session or advance emerging issues. While the veto session is typically six days divided over two or three weeks, many significant pieces of legislation have been advanced during this brief session.

The second type of session that occurs usually every two years is a "lame duck" session. This refers to additional legislative days scheduled at the end of the two-year General Assembly, usually in January just prior to the inauguration of a new General Assembly. The term "lame duck" refers to legislators who will not be returning to the House or Senate due to retirement or election loss. These so-called lame ducks, without the specter of reelection may be empowered to vote for legislation that they would not support otherwise. Like the Veto Session, the lame duck session provides opportunities for important bills to pass.

This year, the veto session is scheduled for November 17-19, and December 1-3. One bill that could impact fire protection districts is House Bill 5391, sponsored by Representative Natalie Manley (D-Romeoville) and Representative Amy Elik (R-Alton). House Bill 5391 would overhaul the financial reporting requirements for units of local government and replace the current system, which is imposed across multiple statutes, with one statute with four categories of governments based on annual external revenues with levels of escalating reporting requirements.

The Government Reporting Enhancement and Transparency Act is an initiative of the Illinois CPA Society intended in part to address a shortage of certified public accountants in the state that specialize in local government audits. Along with other local government organizations, IAFPD has been represented in discussion that were held over the summer and is supportive of provisions of the act that would provide relief for small units of government from a full financial statement audit.

The CPA's proposal is ambitious and not without opponents among the many stakeholders that would be affected. Although it is expected to be heavily negotiated, the bill's sponsor has stated she make try to get the bill moving in the veto or lame duck session. As always, we will be closely monitoring the actions of the House and Senate during these extra days of session for potential impact on our member districts. ■

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Michael W. Frerichs
Illinois State Treasurer

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL US AT OUTREACH@ILLINOISTREASURER.GOV

Membership Matters



Celebrating 2026 and Looking Ahead

By: Karrie Beneky
IAFPD Administrative Assistant

As we wrap up 2026 and look ahead to a new year, IAFPD is proud to celebrate another year of education, engagement, and connection across Illinois. Thank you to our members and fire service partners for helping make our association stronger!

A Year of Learning and Connection

Our educational programs continued to bring trustees, chiefs, and administrators together to strengthen their knowledge and share experiences. This spring, 271 members representing 84 fire protection districts participated in Continuing Trustee Education (CTE), online or in person. Additionally, 68 trustees from 51 districts completed Essential Trustee Training (ETT).

Our fall ETT program, presented in partnership with the Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts at Plainfield FPD, with a satellite location at Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District, is expected to welcome 47 attendees from 31 districts. The Nov.8 CTE session at Cherry Valley Fire Protection District also has strong interest, with 40 trustees, chiefs, and administrators from 34 districts registered. As we offer this fall session for the second year, we welcome your feedback on the timing and location.

Our conferences brought members together as well, with 110 fire service leaders from 50 districts attending Winter Conference in O'Fallon and 243 attendees representing 79 fire districts, departments, and fire service organizations joining us for IAFPD's 81st Annual Conference in East Peoria.

It's Renewal Time!

As the 2027 membership renewal season begins, now is a great time to make sure your membership information is current. IAFPD's online membership platform, **GlueUp**, helps members access discounted event registration, *The Fire Call*, networking tools, the IAFPD Membership Directory, and other online resources. Each member should have a unique email address and a current mailing address on file. District administrators can also use the primary district profile to update district information and add, update, or remove members from the district roster. Keeping your information accurate helps ensure you receive important communications and can access member benefits.

Stay Connected with the MyGlue App

Take IAFPD with you wherever you go! Download the **MyGlue mobile app** to conveniently access your membership on the go. Scan the appropriate QR code below to download the app for your device. Sign in using your GlueUp account credentials. **Tip: Use the email address you use for district business.** You can only use one email per account. Need help activating your account or updating your information? The IAFPD office is happy to assist.

For iPhone users

For Android users

Sign in using your GlueUp account credentials. Need help activating your account or updating your information? The IAFPD office is happy to assist.

Questions about membership, training, or GlueUp?

Contact Karrie at **karrie@iafpd.org** or **(217) 525-6620**. I look forward to seeing you in 2027!

Mark Your Calendar for 2027

Looking ahead, be sure to save these dates:

- **January 23:** All-Virtual Continuing Trustee Education
- **February 27–28:** Winter Conference, Regency Conference Center, O'Fallon
- **June 24–26:** IAFPD Annual Conference, Embassy Suites Conf. Center, East Peoria

We look forward to another year of learning, collaboration, and connection with our members throughout Illinois. Thank you for being part of the IAFPD community. Together, we are stronger! ■

IAFPD Associate Members - 2026

A.E.C. Fire * Safety * Security, Inc.
217-529-3003
aecfire.com/home

Air One Equipment, Inc.
(847) 289-9000
www.aoe.net

American Fire Training Systems, Inc.
(630) 257-3659
americanfiretrainingsystems.com

American Response Vehicles
(573) 443-8881
americanfiretrainingsystems.com

AMR New Lenox
(815) 722-1900
www.amr.net

Banner Fire Equipment, Inc.
(618) 251-4200
bannerfire.com

BKV Group, Inc.
(312) 279-0470
bkvgroup.com

Bliss McKnight
(309) 270-1365
www.blissmcknight.com

Cashion Fire Equipment, LLC
(314) 770-9000
www.cashionfire.com

CIP Solutions, LLC
(855) 215-2477
www.cipsolutionsinc.com/firefighters

Compass Insurance Partners
(309) 962-6111
compasscoverage.com

Digital Benefit Advisors
(815) 857-2000
digitalbenefitsadvisor.com

Dinges Fire Company
www.dingesfire.com

Discovery Works Collaborative
(630) 377-1056
discoveryworkscollaborative.com

Eagle Engraving, Inc.
(844) 957-7455
www.eagle-engraving.com

Ed M Feld Equipment Company
(800) 568-2403
www.feldfire.com

E-Enviornmental Solutions
(844) 957-7455
e-enviro.com

Hinshaw CPA Office, LLC
(309) 527-2300
www.hinshawcpa.com

Emergency Service & Insurance Program by McNeil & Co.
(607) 756-4970
www.mcneilandcompany.com

EMS|MC
emsmc.com

Fire Service, Inc.
(800) 578-4281
www.fireserviceinc.com

Fire Truck Resource
(815) 832-4475
firetruckresource.com

Foster Coach Sales, Inc.
(815) 625-3276
fostercoach.com

Garage Technologies Inc.
www.shopgarage.com

Garner Sales and Service
(309) 831-7337

Global Technical Systems, Inc.
(217) 243-4874
globaltechsys.com

Howard Simon & Associates
(847) 945-0340
www.howardsimon.com

Illinois Public Risk Fund
(800) 289-4773
www.iprf.com

ISPFCU
(800) 255-0886
www.ispfcu.org

John T. Brady Law Office
(309) 676-0415
www.johntbradylaw.com

Johnson Fitness & Wellness
(952) 224-1236
www.johnsonfitness.com

Lauterbach & Amen, LLP
(630) 393-1483
www.lauterbachamen.com

Mac's Fire & Safety, Inc.
(217) 324-5361
macsfire.com

McGrath Law Office, P.C.
www.mcgrathpc.com

Metro Paramedic Services, Inc.
(888) 461-1435
metroparamedics.com

Municipal Emergency Services
(309) 447-6780
www.meslifesafety.com

National Fire Sprinkler Association
(708) 403-4468
www.nfsa.org

Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board
(708) 403-4468
firesprinklerassoc.org/nifsab

Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.
(630) 682-0085
ottosenlaw.com

Paramedic Billing Services
(630) 530-2988
paramedicbilling.com

Performance Services
(847) 466-7720
www.performanceservices.com

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www.hastingsair.com

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Railside Citrus Insurance Agency
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railsidecitrus.com

RWK Solves IT
(877) 795-4801
rwksolvesit.com

Sawyer Falduto Asset Management, LLC
(630) 941-8560
www.sawyerfalduto.com

SCBAS, Inc.
(309) 444-7442
www.scbas.com/#/scbas

Stifel
(314) 342-8457
stifelinstitutional.com

Stobbs & Sinclair, Ltd.
(618) 465-6978
sslalaw.com

Strongpay
(847) 945-0340
www.strongpay.com

Studio 222 Architects
(312) 850-4970
s222arch.com

VFIS / Midwest
(630) 889-3516
www.vfismidwest.com

Around the State

A Word from our Fire Service Partners

From the Editor: The following column is intended to provide our readers an update on fire service activities from around the state.

Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal

Fire Prevention Week is a tradition that dates back more than a century, rooted in the lessons learned from the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. It reminds us that prevention is not just an idea, it is a responsibility and a foundation of safety in every home, school, business, and community across our state.

This year's theme, "Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower," gives us an opportunity to talk about one of the most important and evolving fire-safety issues facing our communities.

Lithium-ion batteries power so much of our everyday lives from phones and laptops to e-bikes, scooters, power tools and other devices. When they are damaged, improperly used, or charged incorrectly, they can create serious fire risks.

But Fire Prevention Week is also an opportunity to think beyond one topic and even beyond fire prevention itself. As we continue to build Community Risk Reduction awareness across Illinois, I want to challenge each of us to think outside the box.

Ask yourself: What are the risks in my community, and what can my department do to help reduce them?

What are the risks within my department and how can we reduce those risks helping to keep our members safer?

Maybe that means talking about safe charging and smoke alarms. But maybe it also means addressing fall prevention among older adults, connecting residents with healthcare resources, promoting carbon monoxide safety, helping families prepare for emergencies, addressing mental health and wellness, or partnering with other organizations to address the specific risks identified in your community. Our communities don't experience risk in separate categories so our approach to reducing risk shouldn't be limited to one category either. That is the true power of Community Risk Reduction.

CRR gives us a framework to look at the data, identify the risks that are affecting our residents, and develop strategies that address those risks before they result in an emergency. And we have more information available to us than ever before. As CRR continues to take hold and expand across Illinois, the quality and depth of the data we collect continues to improve. For that, we sincerely thank all of you.

Thank you to the departments that continue to work hard to submit accurate and timely information. We know there may be bumps in the road as NERIS continues to evolve, but please know that support is available, and your efforts are making a difference. That data is more than a report. Data tells a story. It can tell us where fires are happening, who is most at risk, what types of incidents are occurring, and where we have opportunities to intervene before the next call comes in. When we use that information to demonstrate that a prevention program is reducing risk, we can tell an even more powerful story. We can show our elected officials, community leaders and residents that prevention works. We can demonstrate that our efforts are not only saving lives and reducing emergencies but potentially reducing the demand on our emergency response system and helping communities use their resources more effectively.

And that brings us to another important part of Community Risk Reduction —economic incentives. One of the five E's of CRR is Economic Incentives. When we can demonstrate through data that we're reducing risk, there can be financial benefits to our communities. Prevention and risk reduction efforts can contribute to a community becoming a lower-risk place to live and do business, which can have implications for things such as insurance costs and ISO evaluations. That gives us another reason to collect the data, analyze it and most importantly use it. We shouldn't just be able to say, "We held a program." We should be able to say, "We identified a risk, we implemented a strategy, and here is the data showing the difference we made." That is how we demonstrate the value of prevention.

I'm incredibly proud of the work being done by fire departments across Illinois. Departments large and small are visiting schools, hosting open houses, installing smoke alarms, conducting community outreach, helping residents understand battery safety, working with vulnerable populations and building partnerships that extend well beyond the traditional fire service.

I want to encourage you to keep doing that but don't be afraid to try something different. Look at your community. Look at your data. Talk to your residents. Talk to your healthcare partners, senior organizations, schools, businesses, emergency managers and other community organizations. Find

Continued on page 21

Around the State

Continued from page 20

out what is creating risk in your community and ask what role your fire department can play in reducing it. Sometimes the best prevention program may not look like a traditional fire prevention program at all. Every one of effort has the potential to make our communities safer and everyone gives us another opportunity to build relationships and demonstrate the value of the fire service. That is the power of partnership. That is the power of data. And that is the power of Community Risk Reduction. The tools and technology will continue to change. Our data will continue to improve. The risks facing our communities will continue to evolve. But our mission remains the same: to save lives, protect property, reduce risk and build safer, stronger communities across Illinois.

Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) announced the application period is now open for the FY27 Small Equipment Grant Program. OSFM will award a total of $6 million to eligible fire departments, fire protection districts and not-for-profit ambulance services across Illinois to purchase small firefighting and emergency medical equipment.

For FY27, OSFM has increased the maximum grant award to $50,000, nearly doubling the previous maximum of $26,000.

During the FY26 grant cycle, OSFM awarded nearly $6 million to 264 fire departments, fire protection districts and EMS providers across the state.

Interested departments and ambulance services must submit applications electronically utilizing the application portal that can be found on the agency's website.

This program is an innovative approach to a problem that has long caused difficulties for the fire departments and not-for-profit ambulance services in Illinois, particularly those that have hardships in generating the necessary revenue for small equipment. The grants allow eligible applicants the opportunity to purchase small tools and equipment that they may otherwise not be able to purchase. Most Illinois fire departments, fire protection districts, and township fire departments are eligible to apply. In addition, stand-alone, not-for-profit ambulance service providers are eligible to apply.

It's important to note that applicants must meet certain pre-qualification requirements in order to be considered for a grant. These include:

- Being NFIRS and NERIS compliant for the previous two years (October 2024 – September 2026)
- Being pre-qualified with SAM.gov and the State of Illinois Grantee Portal.

Additional information including the application can be found at: https://sfm.illinois.gov/currentfocus/fy-27-small-equipment-grant-.html

Michele Pankow
Illinois State Fire Marshal

Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI)

IFSI staff have been busy with fall training activities. Courses held in Champaign and across the state have provided first responders with a wide range of high-quality training opportunities.

The fall session of Basic Operations and Advanced Technician Firefighting Academy concluded at the end of October. After seven weeks of intense training candidates returned to their communities prepared to begin their careers as firefighters.

The Basic Operations and Advanced Technician Firefighting Blended (BOF) class will conclude in December. Throughout this 20-week program firefighters from across Illinois worked on developing their skills and knowledge while learning to operate safely and effectively on the fireground.

There is always something happening at IFSI. Keep reading for more updates.



IFSI Responder Intervention Team (RIT) Program Changes

The Responder Intervention Team (RIT) Program will undergo the following changes in 2027.

Due to changes in federal funding beyond IFSI control, grant funding will no longer be available to cover technician and chief level courses. As a result, all 2027 RIT Under Fire and RIT Chief Under Fire courses will require tuition. The cost for each course will be $2,650 for Illinois students and departments.

Responder Intervention Team (RIT) Basic courses will continue to be funded through the Cornerstone Program. This training is supported through the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal and is available at no cost to Illinois departments.

Course Name Changes

The current Responder Intervention Team (RIT) Rescue Technician course is returning to the course name RIT Under Fire. Responder Intervention Team (RIT) Chief will become RIT Chief Under Fire.

The current RIT Technician and RIT Chief course listings will become inactive on the IFSI training menu in early November 2026.

Updated Course Schedule

The IFSI team has carefully reviewed the curriculum to ensure delivery of an effective and efficient training schedule. To better accommodate travel requirements and staffing schedules, the traditional technician and chief formats will be reduced to four days. While the schedule has been streamlined, students will continue to receive the same high-quality, hands-on instruction that has defined the program.

Registration for all 2027 RIT Under Fire and RIT Chief Under Fire classes opens on November 9, 2026. ***Available 2027 Class Dates***

- February 8-11, 2027
- May 3-6, 2027
- May 17-20, 2027
- November 8-11, 2027
- November 29-December 2, 2027
- December 13-16, 2027

Visit fsi.illinois.edu for more info.

Continued on page 23

IFCA ASSESSMENT & CONSULTING SERVICES

FIRE SERVICE DECISIONS DESERVE *FIRE SERVICE EXPERTISE*

Since 1975, the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association has helped fire departments and fire protection districts select personnel for supervisory positions from the rank of Engineer through Fire Chief. Today, our team of active and retired fire service leaders, along with other public safety experts, helps agencies make sound decisions about people, operations, and the future.

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- Custom Assessment Exercises
- Post-Candidate Reviews
- Entry-Level Firefighter Oral Interviews
- Chief Officer Hiring Services
- Interim Chief Placement
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CONSULTING SERVICES

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- Response performance measurement
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illinoisfirechiefs.org/professional-services

Around the State

Continued from page 21

WINTER FIRE SCHOOL

Registration for the 2027 Winter Fire School opens on November 2. This unique training event gives first responders the opportunity to strengthen their skills in cold weather conditions. Courses are available for all experience levels.

Students can tailor their training experience to meet individual needs by choosing from hands-on exercises, live fire training, and classroom instruction.



Course offerings include:

4-Hour Courses

- Advanced and Commercial Forcible Entry
- Ice Rescue Awareness
- iPumps
- Rope Operations Recertification Skills for Trained Rescuers
- Searching for Fire vs Searching for Victims
- Residential Firefighting Tactics (NEW)
- VEIS Room and Beyond (Vent, Entry, Isolate, Search)

8-Hour Course

- VEIS Room and Beyond (Vent, Entry, Isolate, Search)

12-Hour Courses

- Engine Company Winter Operations
- Basic RIT
- Investigation for Vehicle Fires
- Leadership Development and Decision Making- Winter Leaders Course

16-Hour Course

- Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) – Second Edition

Winter Fire School attendees are eligible to receive up to 2 nights of funded hotel accommodations. Rooms are limited and assigned only after class enrollment. Conditions do apply.

Visit the IFSI website for complete details and full Winter Fire School course descriptions.

Jim Keiken
Director

IL Fire Inspectors Association

For budgeting purposes, fire department membership dues will increase to $150 beginning January 2027. While no one wants to raise dues, the good news is that the half-day mini seminars will be **free to IFIA members**. For departments that would send just two people to a seminar, the increase in dues and no charge for the mini seminars is a savings to you. The full day events usually have costs associated with them and there will be a nominal charge for those events.

In November, we will be holding our annual Did You Know class. This free, virtual morning class will provide an overview on many different topics. We recognize that not everyone likes every topic, so by providing many subjects, if you find one that you really want to delve deeper into, contact information will be provide so you can follow up.

We have presented three classes on the Introduction to Fire Inspections. Remaining are ones scheduled are November 14th at Tolono, and March 13th at Washington. These are FREE. While this eight-hour class will not give you any certification, it will provide you a high-level overview of the inspection process. This is designed for someone with no inspection background, or someone who just wants a refresher. This should give attendees the confidence to do basic inspections such as a church, insurance office, a small restaurant, barber shop, etc. Registration for this is in our website training tab.

Throughout the year we offer several OSFM Fire Inspector certifications and Public Fire and Life Safety classes. As these become confirmed, they will be posted on our website. Registration can be done from there. At this point, there is an Inspector 1 class scheduled in Romeoville in January. Class information and registrations can be found on the training tab of our website.

Each year we meet in December to plan the upcoming year. Should you have any ideas of what we should do, not do, etc., please contact a member of the Board or our office.

Our Annual Fire and Life Safety conference will be March 10 – 12 at Par a Dice, in East Peoria. There will also be a pre-conference on Tuesday afternoon. At the time of this writing, not all of the topics have been locked down, but by publication, hopefully most will be in place. You can check our website where the most updated information can be found. It will also be in our weekly email blasts.

Upcoming events:

Nov. 20 – VIRTUAL, Did You Know? FREE
December – Holiday social event
January – Inspector 1, Romeoville

Robert Morris
Executive Director, IFIA

Illinois OSHA

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Continued on page 24

Around the State

Continued from page 23

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Continued on page 25



Around the State

Continued from page 24

schools, hosting open houses, installing smoke alarms, conducting community outreach, helping residents understand battery safety, working with vulnerable populations and building partnerships that extend well beyond the traditional fire service.

I want to encourage you to keep doing that but don't be afraid to try something different. Look at your community. Look at your data. Talk to your residents. Talk to your healthcare partners, senior organizations, schools, businesses, emergency managers and other community organizations. Find out what is creating risk in your community and ask what role your fire department can play in reducing it. Sometimes the best prevention program may not look like a traditional fire prevention program at all. Every one of effort has the potential to make our communities safer and everyone gives us another opportunity to build relationships and demonstrate the value of the fire service. That is the power of partnership. That is the power of data. And that is the power of Community Risk Reduction. The tools and technology will continue to change. Our data will continue to improve. The risks facing our communities will continue to evolve. But our mission remains the same: to save lives, protect property, reduce risk and build safer, stronger communities across Illinois.

Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow, The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) announced the application period is now open for the FY27 Small Equipment Grant Program. OSFM will award a total of $6 million to eligible fire departments, fire protection districts and not-for-profit ambulance services across Illinois to purchase small firefighting and emergency medical equipment.

For FY27, OSFM has increased the maximum grant award to $50,000, nearly doubling the previous maximum of $26,000.

During the FY26 grant cycle, OSFM awarded nearly $6 million to 264 fire departments, fire protection districts and EMS providers across the state.

Interested departments and ambulance services must submit applications electronically utilizing the application portal that can be found on the agency's website.

This program is an innovative approach to a problem that has long caused difficulties for the fire departments and not-for-profit ambulance services in Illinois, particularly those that have hardships in generating the necessary revenue for small equipment. The grants allow eligible applicants the opportunity to purchase small tools and equipment that they may otherwise not be able to purchase. Most Illinois fire departments, fire protection districts, and township fire departments are eligible to apply. In addition, stand-alone, not-for-profit ambulance service providers are eligible to apply.

It's important to note that applicants must meet certain pre-qualification requirements in order to be considered for a grant. These include:

- Being NFIRS and NERIS compliant for the previous two years (October 2024 – September 2026)
- Being pre-qualified with SAM.gov and the State of Illinois Grantee Portal.

Additional information including the application can be found at: https://sfm.illinois.gov/currentfocus/fy-27-small-equipment-grant-.html

Erik Kambarian, Chief
Div. of Occupational Safety and Health (IL OSHA) - IL Dept of Labor

Camp I am Me

Fire Safety Advocates Honored at Annual Fire Prevention Week Luncheon

Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance honored four fire safety and prevention advocates at the 85th annual Fire Prevention Week Luncheon which was held on October 8th. The event, which took place in Woodridge, included award presentations to Dan Medina of the Addison Fire Protection District, Countryside Fire Protection District, Sarah Fellows from Channahon Fire Protection District, and Nate Rice from Peoria FD/ Normal FD.

Addison Fire Protection District's Daniel Medina received the Special Recognition Award for his ongoing commitment to fire safety and prevention and his willingness to step forward when the fire service needs a voice. From representing the fire service at legislative and media events to helping bring stakeholders together on emerging safety issues, Dan consistently advocates for safer communities and a stronger fire service.

Countryside Fire Protection District was presented with a Life Safety Award for its comprehensive, year-round approach to fire and life safety education, reaching residents from young children to older adults and individuals with disabilities. Through programs, partnerships, home safety initiatives, and community engagement, Countryside has made prevention an ongoing priority throughout its community.

Sarah Fellows also received a Life Safety Award, for her significant impact on fire safety education, prevention, and community engagement since joining the Channahon Fire Protection District. Drawing on her background in early childhood education, Sarah has expanded programs for children and seniors, increased community participation, and helped position the fire department as a welcoming and proactive community partner.

Nate Rice, formerly with Peoria Fire Department, now with Normal Fire Department, was recognized for his leadership in fire prevention and Community Risk Reduction and for influencing the broader fire service to view prevention as an essential priority by being presented with the Wayne Luecht Memorial Award. Through innovative programs, extensive community outreach, smoke alarm installations, and professional leadership, Nate has helped make prevention an ongoing focus while serving as a model for other fire departments across the state and country.

A special thank you goes out to our moderator and panelists who spoke on the importance of having a strong fire safety public education presence within the community – Matt Perez (OSFM), Stephen Clayton (Highland FD), Ron Echtenacher (Countryside FPD), Shawn Sollberger (Peoria FD), and Marisa Tomich (New Lenox FPD). The generous sponsors

Continued on page 27

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Around the State

Continued from page 25

of the luncheon included Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, National Fire Sprinkler Association - Illinois Chapter, 1-800 BoardUp, Battalion Board-Up, Promos 911, Reliable Fire Equipment, Romexterra Restoration, and Servpro Team Zubricki.

2027 Summer Camp Volunteer Requests Now Being Accepted

Even though the 36th annual Summer Camp program will not be taking place until June of 2027, preparations are already underway for the signature event. Camp I Am Me's Summer Camp is Illinois' camp for young burn survivors which provides a special and unforgettable one-week experience for approximately 60 children each year. Through the generosity of donors, supporters, sponsors, and volunteers, Camp I Am Me offers this unique experience at no-cost to the campers, including lodging, meals, all of the special activities, events, and transportation to and from the camp.

Whether you have been attending camp as a volunteer for 10 years or are looking to become involved for the first time, completing the Summer Camp Request to Volunteer Form is the first necessary step to becoming involved in next year's camp. This allows Camp I Am Me to properly identify volunteers to staff the cabins and activities, ensuring the kids have the best week of their year!

If you are interested in volunteering at the 2027 Summer Camp, which requires being at camp for eight days and nights (Saturday-Saturday), visit www.IFSA.org/get-involved. The deadline to submit your request is Friday, February 5, 2027.

Philip Zaleski
Executive Director

Firefighters' Pension Investment Fund

Preliminary Fiscal Year 2026 Investment Performance (July 1 – June 30, 2026)

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, FPIF delivered a preliminary pre-audit return of 17.1%, surpassing the Fund's policy benchmark return of 16.0% and substantially exceeding the long-term actuarial assumption of 7.125%.

The Fund's success extends beyond a single year. Over the most recent three-year period, FPIF achieved an annualized return of 14.4%, compared with 13.7% for the benchmark. This sustained performance underscores the value of the Fund's diversified investment approach and long-term focus.

Equity Markets Drive Strong Results

Global equity markets were the largest contributor to fiscal year performance, with gains across both domestic and international allocations.

U.S. Equity returned 22.7%, while the Russell 3000 Index return of 22.8%, as continued strength in technology and growth-oriented companies supported market returns.

Non-U.S. Equity gained 30.6%, exceeding the MSCI ACWI ex USA IMI Index return of 26.6%.

Emerging Markets Equity was a standout performer, returning 57.3% and significantly outperforming the MSCI Emerging Markets IMI Index return of 40.3%. Strong security selection and favorable market conditions contributed to the exceptional result.

Fixed Income Continues to Add Value

The Fund's fixed income portfolio provided stability while also generating returns in excess of benchmark expectations. Total Fixed Income returned 4.9%, outperforming the Bloomberg U.S. Universal Index return of 4.2%. Credit and Emerging Markets Debt returned 13.9%, ahead of the benchmark return of 11.8%, driven largely by strong results within the Emerging Markets Debt allocation. While fixed income serves an important risk-management role within the portfolio, the asset class also contributed meaningfully to overall Fund performance during the year.

Growth in Private Market Investments

FPIF has strategically expanded its alternatives portfolio, growing from $814.1 million in June 2025 to $1.368 billion as of June 2026—an increase of more than $500 million through a combination of OCIO partnerships and FPIF's internally managed investments. During this period, real estate holdings increased to $732.9. million, while infrastructure reached $192.6 million, private credit grew to $332.0 million, and private equity totaled $111.1 million.

2026 Trustee Election Update

The FPIF Election Panel has finalized the slate of candidates for the 2026 Trustee Election. ***2026 Trustee Election Final Slate of Candidates***

Beneficiary Trustee (4-year Term) Gregory Knoll (Retired Firefighter, Homewood) - Elected by Acclamation

Executive Trustee (4-year Term) Douglas Krieger (City Manager, Naperville) - Elected by Acclamation

Executive Trustee (2-year Term) Mary Burress (Mayor, City of Pekin) Karl Langhammer (Treasurer, Carol Stream Fire Protection District)

Participant Trustee (4-year Term) Jason Skilondz (Firefighter, Wheaton) - Elected by Acclamation

Participant Trustee (2-year Term) Michael Mounts (Firefighter, Lake Forest) - Elected by Acclamation

The FPIF Board of Trustees congratulates Douglas Krieger, Gregory Knoll, Michael Mounts, and Jason Skilondz on their election and extends its sincere appreciation to all candidates for their interest in serving as a trustee. An election will be held this fall for the Executive Trustee - 2-Year Term position. Eligible voters will choose between Mayor Mary Burress of the City of Pekin and Treasurer Karl Langhammer of the Carol Stream Fire Protection District.

Key Election Dates

- **October 23**- On or before Oct, 23, 2026, ballots and election materials will be mailed to eligible voters.
- **December 1**- Election Day. Eligible voters must ensure completed ballots are received by the election vendor no later than 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 1, 2026.

Upcoming Meetings

- FPIF Audit & Compliance Committee - Dec. 1, 2026, 9:00 AM
- FPIF Investments & Operations Committee - Dec. 1, 2026, 10:00 AM
- FPIF Election Panel -Dec. 8, 2026, 10:30 AM
- FPIF Board of Trustees - Dec. 10, 2026, 9:00 AM

Pension Pointers



Pension Trustees' Recorded Comments Denied Disabled Member a Fair Hearing

By Chandler Cathey & John Motylinski

An Illinois appellate court recently reversed a police pension board's decision to terminate a line-of-duty disability pension, holding that the board's decision was against the manifest weight of the evidence and that the officer was denied due process when two trustees who had made disparaging remarks about him at a recorded board meeting were allowed to sit on his hearing panel. *Mahan v. Marion Police Pension Board*, 2026 IL App (5th) 260066.

Joshua Mahan suffered a line-of-duty injury, for which he was awarded a line-of-duty disability pension in 2012. His benefits were continued after reviews in 2016 and 2017, but the Marion Police Pension Board terminated them in 2018. Mahan sued, and the Williamson County circuit court reversed. Persisting, the Board terminated Mahan's benefits again in 2021. The Fifth District Appellate Court reversed in 2023, finding that the termination was against the manifest weight of the evidence. Along the way, the appellate court also expressed disapproval of the Board's attorney serving as both the Board's counsel and the hearing officer.

In March 2023, the Board met to approve the retroactive benefits it owed Mahan following the reversal. The meeting was recorded. On the recording, pension trustees and the Board's attorney were captured joking about Mahan. When the Board learned that Mahan would need to come in to complete paperwork, one trustee remarked, "I bet he'll come in jogging," which drew laughter. Later in the discussion, the same trustee suggested that Mahan "must have a bill to pay," and when the Board's attorney speculated that Mahan was "probably working at his other job," the trustee interjected, "[t]eaching Zumba someplace." A second trustee, responding to a comment about how to win the next time, said "let's go for broke," and later voted to approve the retroactive payment "under protest."

In November 2024, Mahan's attorney moved to exclude the two trustees from the hearing. The Board responded that the comments were made in jest and taken out of context. The hearing officer—who this time was not the Board's attorney—played the recording and asked each trustee whether they could be fair and impartial and decide the case solely on the evidence. Both said they could, and the hearing officer denied the motion. The two challenged trustees then moved and seconded a motion to terminate Mahan's benefits, which passed by a 3-2 vote. The Board's written decision characterized the remarks as merely "thoughtless and indiscreet."

The Fifth District reversed *again*. The court explained that pension applicants are entitled to due process in the Board's administrative proceedings. Due process requires an impartial tribunal. Although board members are presumed to be objective, a claimant can establish bias by showing that a disinterested observer might conclude that the board had in some measure adjudged the facts and the law of the case before hearing the evidence. Significantly, if even one decision maker is not disinterested, the entire decision fails.

Applying that standard, the court could not find that the two trustees had not prejudged Mahan's claim. The jogging and Zumba comments reflected a fixed view of Mahan's physical capabilities, which was the very question the Board would decide at the next hearing. The court also noted that the trustee who made the Zumba remark knew from the prior hearing that Mahan actually worked selling modular homes. Whether Mahan had bills to pay, the court observed, was irrelevant to the Board's obligation to pay retroactive benefits once a reviewing court overturned its decision, and the "under protest" vote reflected a lack of

Continued on page 29

***About the Author**: **John Motylinski,** a partner with the firm, has proven to be a valuable asset to the firm's pension practice. He represents many of the firm's pension funds and has handled administrative hearings, as well as successfully defended board decisions on administrative review. Most recently, he has counseled the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund on Americans with Disabilities Act regulations governing web content accessibility. He is well versed on the Illinois Pension Code and laws affecting local governments, and he will be relied upon to handle research and preparation of draft documents for the SURS engagement.*

***Chandler Cathey** joined Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo as a law clerk in 2025 while working on his Juris Doctor from Loyola University Chicago School of Law. Having recently passed the Illinois Bar Examination, he is beginning his legal career with a focus on real estate law, estate planning, litigation, and municipal law.*

Pension Pointers

Continued from page 28

decorum and professionalism. The court reserved its sharpest criticism for the "go for broke" remark, which was made before any evidence for the next hearing had been developed. That statement, the court wrote, revealed "a blatant disrespect for the required impartiality of the Board" and undermined the fiduciary duty that trustees owe to pension beneficiaries.

As for the trustees' assurances to the hearing officer, the court stated that accepting that the trustees had set aside their bias for purposes of the hearing "borders on the incredulous." The court held that Mahan was denied due process and suggested that the two trustees be removed from any future hearings involving him.

The court separately held that the termination was against the manifest weight of the evidence. The Board had relied on an independent medical examiner who concluded that Mahan had suffered only a temporary soft-tissue strain. By contrast, functional capacity evaluations showed that Mahan could perform only medium-demand work, below the heavy physical demands of police work. The court added that it was unaware of any reason why the fitness standards that apply to new officers should not also apply to an officer returning to duty after a line-of-duty injury.

Although *Mahan* involved a police pension fund, its lessons apply equally to firefighters' pension boards under Article 4 of the Illinois Pension Code. A pension board's role is not to "win" a disability case, but to provide a fair hearing and decide each claim impartially on the evidence. Trustees should assume that anything said about a claimant during board business, even in jest and even months before a hearing, may later be played back as evidence of prejudgment. When a recusal motion raises a genuine question about a trustee's impartiality, the trustee's own assurance of fairness may not be enough to cure it, and the board should carefully consider whether stepping aside is the more prudent course. Boards should also ensure that the medical opinions they rely on address the actual physical requirements of the position, and that their written findings explain why one opinion was credited over conflicting evidence. Finally, the court's earlier criticism of board counsel doubling as hearing officer is a reminder to keep advisory and adjudicative roles separate.

As *Mahan* illustrates, procedural missteps can undo a board's decision regardless of the merits. Pension boards are thus encouraged to work with counsel to ensure their administrative hearings are conducted fairly and their decisions will withstand judicial review. ■



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Movin' On Up

Manhattan Fire Protection District



District Overview

The Manhattan Fire Protection District (MFPD) serves more than 26,000 residents across over 142 square miles in Will County, Illinois. Its service area includes the Villages of Manhattan and Peotone, along with portions of Manhattan, Wilton Center, Jackson, Will, Peotone, and Green Garden Townships. The District provides a comprehensive range of emergency services, including fire suppression, emergency medical response, motor vehicle accident response, technical rescue, fire prevention, and public education.

Following its 2023 consolidation with the Peotone Fire Protection District, MFPD has grown into one of the region's largest and most capable fire protection districts. The consolidation expanded the District's service area and operational responsibilities while strengthening its ability to provide coordinated emergency services to a growing population.

The District operates three fire stations and responded to 2,733 calls in 2025, averaging approximately eight calls per day. Approximately 70% of those calls involve emergency medical services and motor vehicle accidents, highlighting the essential role the District plays in providing both fire protection and emergency medical response.

MFPD operates as a combination department, supported by 28 career personnel, 28 part-time personnel, and six interns. Its leadership and administrative team includes a Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, Administrative Battalion Chief, Fire Marshal, Fire and Life Safety Educator, administrative assistant, and receptionist. Daily staffing is planned for 13 personnel across the three stations, with a minimum staffing target of 10 personnel to maintain operational readiness and emergency response coverage.

As the District continues to grow, it is also investing in its leadership structure and long-term operational capacity. Effective November 1, 2026, the District will promote its first three career Battalion Chiefs, marking a significant milestone in its organizational development. This advancement will strengthen command-level leadership, enhance supervision and coordination, and position the District to meet the increasing demands of its expanding service area.

Under the leadership of Fire Chief Steve Malone and the Board of Trustees, the District continues to invest in its personnel, facilities, equipment, and emergency response capabilities. The District achieved an **ISO Class 1 rating in 2020 and is expected to maintain that in 2026 after completing their latest ISO review**, reflecting its commitment to excellence in fire protection and service to the community.

Then and Now

As Manhattan and the surrounding areas continued to grow, the District recognized the importance of evaluating its emergency response capabilities and ensuring its facilities were positioned to meet the community's changing needs.

Beginning in early 2022, the District undertook an extensive planning and evaluation process to determine the best long-term solution for relocating Station 81. Using five years of call data, response-time information, population growth patterns. Regarding the projected community needs, the District evaluated multiple options, including maintaining two stations in separate areas versus relocating Station 81 to a more strategically positioned site. The goal was to improve response times to heavily populated and high-traffic areas while maintaining effective service to the downtown district. After careful consideration, the District determined that relocating Station 81 to a new site near Eastern Avenue and Smith Road offered the most effective and cost-conscious solution for meeting current and future needs.

This project represents more than the construction of a new building. It reflects the District's commitment to long-range planning, responsible financial management, and ensuring that emergency services keep pace with community growth. The project is an important part of the District's 20-year vision for maintaining strong, reliable fire protection services.

Improvements

The relocation and construction of the new Station 81 is the District's most significant recent facility improvement. Designed to combine the tradition and

Continued on page 33

Movin' On Up

Continued from page 32

identity of the Manhattan Fire Protection District with modern functionality, the new station provides an improved environment for firefighters while supporting the demands of today's emergency services.

The facility was designed with operational efficiency, firefighter readiness, and the needs of a growing community in mind. Its modern design honors the District's history while providing the infrastructure necessary to support its future. Prior to 2025, the District ensured the two other stations were up to date, knowing the cost of the new station would be priority in 2026.

The project began with an original estimated construction cost of approximately $9 million. As planning, negotiations, and site-development requirements progressed, the anticipated cost increased to approximately $11 million. Additional challenges included delays in intergovernmental negotiations and unexpected water, sewer, and wastewater infrastructure expenses. The District used alternative revenue bonds for funding the project as well as grant money from a local business development.

The District worked through these challenges while continuing to advance the project and protect its long-term operational objectives. The new station represents a significant investment in the community and the District's ability to provide effective emergency response for decades to come.

The site-development process also involved collaboration with local governmental partners. The larger property provides opportunities to coordinate future public-service needs, demonstrating how intergovernmental cooperation can support broader community objectives while advancing a critical public safety project.

What did we learn?

One of the most important lessons from the Station 81 project is the value of comprehensive planning, early coordination, and realistic budgeting. A major facility project involves much more than the cost of the building itself. Land acquisition, utility extensions, wastewater management, site preparation, and other infrastructure requirements can significantly affect the final cost.

Districts considering similar projects should evaluate the entire site-development process as early as possible, including utility availability, connection costs, drainage, wastewater requirements, and the responsibilities of potential governmental partners. Establishing clear intergovernmental agreements and defining financial obligations before construction begins can help reduce uncertainty and avoid costly delays.

The District's experience also reinforces the importance of using historical call data and response-time analysis to guide major capital decisions. Rather than simply replacing an aging facility or selecting a location based on convenience, the District evaluated how different options would affect service delivery across its coverage area.

Finally, strong leadership, collaboration with local officials, and support from the community are essential. Large public safety projects require a long-term perspective and a willingness to work through unexpected challenges while remaining focused on the ultimate goal: providing the best possible service to residents.

What's Next?

The completion and opening of the new Station 81 marks an important milestone in the Manhattan Fire Protection District's continued development. The District will focus on maximizing the benefits of the new facility, supporting its firefighters, and maintaining the equipment and infrastructure necessary to meet evolving emergency response demands.

Looking ahead, the District will continue to evaluate staffing, equipment, technology, training, and facility needs as the community grows. Leadership will remain focused on strategic planning, fiscal responsibility, intergovernmental cooperation, and maintaining the highest possible level of emergency services.

The Station 81 relocation project demonstrates that investing in the future requires more than building a new facility. It requires thoughtful planning, a clear vision, and a commitment to the people who depend on the District every day.

For the Manhattan Fire Protection District, moving forward means continuing to build on its tradition of service while preparing for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

The Manhattan Fire Protection District continues to take a proactive approach to maintaining its fleet and ensuring personnel have the equipment necessary to respond safely and effectively to emergencies. As part of this commitment, MFPD implemented a comprehensive 10-year fleet replacement plan that is reviewed and updated annually to account for changing operational needs, vehicle conditions, and long-term budget priorities. Several key fleet investments are planned over the next three years. In 2026, the District expects delivery of two brush trucks, representing an investment of approximately $800,000 and strengthening its capabilities for brush fires, wildland incidents, and other emergencies requiring specialized apparatus. In 2027, the District plans to replace a staff vehicle and anticipates ordering a new pumper tender to maintain reliable water supply capabilities throughout its service area. In 2028, the District expects delivery of an ambulance remount, extending the useful life of its ambulance investment while maintaining dependable emergency medical response capabilities.

The District uses a structured financing approach to support these purchases. Fire engines and pumper tenders are financed, while other vehicles are purchased using capital funds. This approach, combined with the annual review of its 10-year fleet replacement plan, allows the District to anticipate major expenditures, distribute costs over time when appropriate, and prioritize equipment needs without losing sight of long-term financial sustainability.

These investments reflect MFPD's continued commitment to planning ahead, maintaining dependable emergency response resources, and ensuring its personnel are prepared to serve the more than 26,000 residents across its 142-square-mile service area. Along with the new Station 81 and the expansion of its command structure, the District's fleet replacement strategy is another important step in preparing for the future of fire and emergency services. ■



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District Profile



Beecher Fire Protection District





Location:
Fire Station 44
711 Penfield Street
Beecher, IL 60401

Training Facility Location:
30236 S. Town Center Rd

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 759 Beecher, IL 60401

Trustees:
District President: Margie Cook
District Treasurer: David Kolosh
District Secretary: Michael Waterman
District Trustee: Bruce Becker
District Trustee: Lyle Siefker

Fire Chief:
Joseph Falaschetti

DISTRICT BACKGROUND:

The Beecher Fire Protection District has provided fire and emergency services to the Beecher community for more than 140 years. Its roots date to 1884, with the first formal fire company organized in 1887 with 24 volunteer firefighters. The Beecher Volunteer Fire Department was formally organized in 1911, and in 1973 the Beecher Fire Protection District was established as an independent special taxing district to provide sustainable fire protection throughout the community. Since that time, the District has evolved from an all-volunteer fire department into a modern combination fire and EMS organization providing 24-hour emergency response. Today, the District provides fire suppression, advanced emergency medical services, rescue, fire prevention, public education, and community risk reduction services to the Village of Beecher and surrounding rural areas. Despite significant changes in population, development, emergency call volume, and the complexity of the services required by the community, the District continues the tradition of community service that began over a century ago.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Achieving an ISO Class 2 rating:

One of the District's most significant accomplishments was improving the Village of Beecher's ISO Public Protection Classification from Class 4 to Class 2, effective in 2023. The evaluation considers areas such as staffing, training, emergency communications, water supply, equipment, and response capabilities. At the time of the announcement, only 126 Illinois departments had achieved Class 2.

Establishing career Lieutenant/ Paramedic positions:

In 2025, the District completed a competitive testing process and swore in three career Lieutenant/Paramedics, described in the District's annual report as a historic milestone in strengthening its career staffing model and long-term service delivery.

Handling substantial growth in emergency demand:

The District has maintained service as annual responses have risen considerably. It handled 1,165 incidents in 2025, compared with 887 in 2020 and 1,049 in 2019. This becomes even more significant when compared with the 698 calls handled in 2010—an increase of 467 calls, or about 67%, by 2025.

Development of the Community Support/ Mental Health Program:

The District created an innovative program to connect residents experiencing

Continued on page 37

District Profile

Continued from page 36







behavioral-health needs with longer-term services instead of relying solely on repeated emergency department visits. The program works with community and healthcare partners and represents an expansion of the traditional role of a fire district into community risk reduction.

Major success obtaining outside funding:

The District has aggressively pursued grants, donations, and partnerships to obtain equipment without placing the entire cost on local taxpayers. Recent successes include the FY2025 FEMA AFG award for cardiac monitors, the $80,000 Will County Community Mental Health Board grant award, the $26,000 OSFM Small Equipment Grant for power cot/loading equipment, and substantial outside funding toward Brush 44. Combined with earlier AFG, OSFM, Firehouse Subs, corporate, and community awards, this represents hundreds of thousands of dollars brought back into the community.

Expansion of Community Risk Reduction:

Programs such as Be Alarmed! smoke-alarm installation, residential Knox Box assistance, CPR education, senior safety, fall prevention, barn safety, Junior Fire Academy, and public fire education demonstrate a shift toward preventing emergencies rather than simply responding after they occur.

Investment in leadership and organizational development:

The District has made a strong commitment to developing the next generation of fire service leaders by implementing formal leadership development opportunities for both chief and line officers, including participation in the John Maxwell High Road Leadership Program through Bonilla Coaching.

The District has also established a formal Cadet Program designed to introduce young adults to careers in the fire and emergency services. Through partnerships with Beecher High School and the Kankakee Area Career Center, the District is working to create opportunities for local students to gain firsthand exposure to the fire service while helping build a pipeline of future firefighters, paramedics, and community leaders.

Regional cooperation and specialized capabilities:

The District is an active member of MABAS Division 27 and participates in regional specialty capabilities involving hazardous materials, technical rescue, water rescue, fire investigation, and other mutual-aid operations.

Community involvement in long-term planning:

The Pathway to Preparedness initiative is another notable accomplishment. Rather than developing the District's future plans internally, the process brings residents and stakeholders into discussions concerning staffing, EMS, equipment, finances, service expectations, and the future of emergency services. The District describes the initiative as a way to identify community priorities and plan responsibly for future service.

PERSONNEL:

The District operates with a combination staffing model consisting of one full-time fire chief, a part-time deputy chief, a part-time assistant chief, three full-time lieutenant/paramedics, three contracted firefighter/paramedics, and 41 part-time firefighters, paramedics, and EMTs. The District maintains a minimum daily staffing level of four personnel, with staffing increasing to a maximum of five personnel per day when available. This combination model allows the District to provide fire suppression, emergency medical services, rescue, and other emergency response services to the community around the clock.

DISPATCH:

Laraway Communications Center

NON-EMERGENCY SERVICES:

Be Alarmed! Smoke Alarm Installation program, Child Safety Seat Installations & Inspections, Barn Fire Safety Inspections, Steps to Safety Program, Junior Fire Academy, Community Mental Health Program, Senior Check In Program, and Residential Knox Box Rental Program.

FACILITY & APPARATUS:

- Engine 44: 2012 Pierce Arrow Rescue Engine
- Truck 44: 2006 Pierce Enforcer 75ft aerial
- Pumper Tender 44: 2009 Pierce Arrow
- Ambulance 44: 2024 Ford F550 Osage Super Warrior (ALS)
- Ambulance 45: 2019 Ford 550 Osage Super Warrior (ALS)
- Brush 44: 2024 Ford F550 Danko Brush Truck
- Utility 44: 2024 Chevy Silverado 2500
- Reserve Ambulance: 2014 E450 Road Rescue
- (Fire Chief) Chief 44: 2025 Chevy Tahoe
- (Deputy Chief) Chief 45: 2019 Chevy Tahoe
- (Assistant Chief) Chief 46: 2017 Ford F150

DISTRICT FACTS:

Size: 56 square miles

Population: 7,900

Property Value: EAV $343,261,986

Annual Calls: Approximately 1200 although in 2026 our call volume has increased approximately 24% over 2025

EMERGENCY SERVICES:

ALS Ambulances: 2

Non Transport: 1 Engine 44 is ALS Engine (Non-Transport)

MABAS Division: 27



Instructors' Judgment Calls Shield Fire Department from Liability for Firefighter's Training Fall

By Hayley Loufek
Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.

An Illinois appellate court recently ruled in *Hidalgo v. Village of Romeoville*, 2026 IL App (3d) 240676-U, that the Village was not liable for a firefighter plaintiff's injuries sustained during a training drill because of the absolute immunity provided by Section 2-201 of the Local Governmental and Governmental Employees Tort Immunity Act ("Tort Immunity Act").

The decision turned on the training instructors' exercise of discretion in designing and conducting the drill. At common law, municipalities are not immune from liability that arises from ministerial acts, which are performed in a prescribed manner according to a mandate of legal authority and without the individual's discretion as to the act's propriety. But municipalities are immune from liability that arises from discretionary acts, which involve personal deliberation and judgment about whether and how to perform a particular act. Sections 2-109 and 2-201 of the Tort Immunity Act codify that distinction.

Plaintiff in *Hidalgo*, a firefighter and paramedic, attended an Advanced Technician Firefighter training course at the Romeoville Fire Academy ("Academy"), during which he participated in a "bailout" drill, which teaches trainees how to exit a burning building from an upper story. Participants in the drill could use a Class 1 harness that goes around the firefighter's waist, a Class 3 pre-sewn harness that goes around the firefighter's waist and shoulders, or a Class 3 "hasty" harness, which the firefighter would create by tying webbing into a knot. Plaintiff used a Class 1 harness. When he stepped out of a third-story window of the Academy's hose tower, he separated from his harness and fell to the ground.

Plaintiff sued the Village, alleging that it engaged in intentional or reckless conduct through certain omissions, such as failing to use available safety equipment during the drill, failing to inform and instruct trainees on the Class 3 harnesses, and failing to properly train participants in performing the bailout drill. He alternatively alleged that the Village's omissions constituted negligence.

The Village argued that it was immune from liability under Sections 2-109 and 2-201 of the Tort Immunity Act.

Section 2-109 of the Tort Immunity Act provides that "[a] local public entity is not liable for an injury resulting from an act or omission of its employee where the employee is not liable." 745 ILCS 10/2-109. Section 2-201 of the Act provides that, except as otherwise provided by statute, "a public employee serving in a position involving the determination of policy or the exercise of discretion is not liable for an injury resulting from his act or omission in determining policy when acting in the exercise of such discretion even though abused." 745 ILCS 10/2-201.

Courts use a two-pronged test to determine if an employee is entitled to immunity under Section 2-201. First, the employee must hold a position involving the determination of policy or the exercise of discretion. Second, the employee must have engaged in both the determination of policy and the exercise of discretion when performing the act or omission from which the plaintiff's injury resulted. A policy decision is one that requires the governmental entity to balance competing interests and make a judgment call as to what solution will best serve those interests.

Here, the court found that Section 2-201 immunity applied to key training instructors. Plaintiff argued that the assistant instructors did not enjoy immunity because they were required to follow the Academy guidelines created by the course's lead instructor. The court disagreed, finding that the assistant instructors had authority to make decisions during the drill where the guidelines were silent, such as how to secure the ropes and lines to the harness, and that they made those decisions by balancing the interests of safety, time efficiency, and the realism of the drill.

Plaintiff argued that the instructor who served as acting lead instructor on the day of the drill did not determine policy or exercise discretion because he ordered trainees to stop using the Class 3 pre-sewn harnesses during the drill out of adherence to the Academy guidelines and National Fire Protection Association ("NFPA") guidelines, which recognize Class 1 harnesses for use during a bailout drill. However, the evidence did not show that he ordered trainees to stop using the Class 3 pre-sewn harnesses based solely on those guidelines; rather, he testified that he gave this order based on his observation that the pre-sewn harnesses were slowing down the drill and his determination based on years of experience that the hasty harnesses were suitable for the drill. Other deposition testimony also showed that the instructors had authority to make decisions as to how the drill was conducted. The court held that the acting lead instructor's role therefore involved the determination of policy and the exercise of discretion, and he was entitled to immunity.

The same was true for the course's lead instructor, who testified that he developed the Academy guidelines based on the NFPA guidelines but also on his experience as a firefighter and fire service instructor, his research into other industry guidelines,

Continued on page 39

Judgement Calls

Continued from page 38

and considerations of safety, efficiency, and the realism of the drill. Even if he had misread the NFPA standard, as Plaintiff contended, the court explained that this would not defeat immunity because the guidelines reflected his own balancing of those competing considerations.

As for the Village itself, Plaintiff argued it was not entitled to immunity because it did not serve a governmental function subject to the immunities of Sections 2-109 and 2-201. Specifically, Plaintiff argued the Academy did not provide a service to Village residents, operated on funds paid by outside students employed by other fire departments, and there was no evidence that the Academy trainees provided fire or EMS services to Village residents. But Illinois law recognizes that an entity is involved in the operation of government when it is tightly enmeshed with government through direct governmental ownership or operational control by a unit of local government. Plaintiff himself alleged that the Village operated the Academy through its fire department, and the Village admitted as much. The court found the Village was entitled to immunity under Section 2-109 of the Tort Immunity Act.

Finally, Plaintiff argued that the acts and omissions of the training instructors constituted willful and wanton conduct, precluding an immunity defense. But unlike other provisions of the Tort Immunity Act, Section 2-201 does not contain an exception for willful and wanton conduct. Immunity under Section 2-201, the court explained, is absolute and covers both negligent and willful and wanton conduct.

The *Hidalgo* decision serves as a reminder that Section 2-201 protects not only top policymakers, but also employees like training instructors, who make judgment calls balancing competing interests like safety, efficiency, and realism. Moreover, this protection is absolute—there is no exception for willful and wanton conduct.

Fire districts and municipalities in similar situations can therefore put themselves in the best position to rely on that immunity by adopting written training guidelines that set minimum safety standards while leaving room for instructors' professional judgment, and by documenting the reasons behind key training decisions. ■

About the Author: ***Hayley Loufek*** *is an associate attorney at Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd., located in Lisle Illinois. She concentrates her practice in the areas of municipal law and litigation. She assists in matters involving local government liability issues, labor and employment issues, and insurance defense.*



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If You Can't Communicate, You Can't Operate

Fireground Radio Communications: Lessons for Rural Fire Departments

By Dr. Richard George, Lake Egypt FPD

Fifty Years of Progress—and a Continuing Safety Challenge

As a junior firefighter with Rockford's Northwest Fire Protection District, I responded to my first structure fire. We donned our gear, charged into the structure, and went to work confronting the fire. Then we felt a pull on the hose. That was our signal that we were about to run out of water and needed to withdraw until the next water tender arrived.

There was no radio communication to explain what was happening. Our only warning was a physical tug on the hose. Fast-forward fifty years. Last week, I drove a water tender to a fire. Every firefighter from our department and our mutual-aid partners had a portable radio, and personnel were communicating across the fireground. The difference was remarkable. Yet the fundamental challenge remains: firefighters must be able to communicate reliably when conditions deteriorate, assignments change, and seconds matter.

The Reality Facing Rural Fire Departments

Fire protection districts across Illinois face persistent financial pressures. Keeping apparatus fueled, maintaining vehicles, and replacing essential equipment compete for limited resources. Advanced communications systems can seem beyond the reach of smaller departments. Recent fireground incidents and after-action reviews have also reinforced the importance of ensuring that individual firefighters have reliable radio communications. This is a particularly important consideration for rural departments, where staffing limitations and dependence on mutual aid can complicate incident operations.

Our department recently used an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) to purchase portable radios costing approximately $7,000 each for 15 firefighters. These radios provide advanced communications capabilities that support our department's operational requirements. Department members also serve on MABAS technical rescue and hazardous materials (HAZMAT) teams, where interoperability with other public safety agencies is essential.

Our equipment represents one approach to meeting our needs. It is not a requirement that every rural department purchase radios of comparable cost or sophistication.

The essential requirement is that every firefighter operating on the fireground has reliable, properly programmed, and operationally compatible radio communications.

Every Firefighter Needs a Reliable Radio

A department does not need the most expensive radio on the market to improve firefighter safety. It does need to establish and enforce a communications plan that works under actual operating conditions. At a minimum, departments should ensure that:

- Every firefighter assigned to interior operations has an appropriate portable radio.
- Radios are programmed with the authorized operational channels required by the department's communications plan.
- Radio functionality, channel assignments, and communications procedures are checked before entry, consistent with established standard operating procedures.
- Firefighters know how to transmit an emergency message, including a Mayday when necessary, and understand how to activate any programmed emergency signaling feature.
- Personnel do not have to search through an unfamiliar channel list while operating in a hazardous environment.

A radio that cannot communicate with the intended recipients is not an effective safety tool. Purchasing equipment is only the first step; programming, training, testing, maintenance, and disciplined radio procedures are equally important.

Channel Capacity Is Not the Same as Operational Capability

Modern portable radios can support large numbers of channels. Many economical commercial radios offer channel capacity well beyond what a small department needs, while advanced public safety radios can support thousands of channels or talkgroups, depending on the model and system.

But channel capacity should not drive a department's purchasing decisions. A large channel list does not automatically improve safety or interoperability.

The priority should be a manageable, standardized channel plan that reflects the department's actual operating requirements. Firefighters must know which channel to use for dispatch, response, fireground operations, mutual aid, and emergency traffic.

Statewide public safety radio systems can provide substantial interoperability benefits where available and accessible. However, smaller departments should not postpone practical improvements while waiting for a future statewide solution. A well-planned conventional radio system can support effective operations when

Continued on page 43

Communicate

Continued from page 42

it is properly designed, programmed, maintained, and used.

Interoperability Must Be Planned Before the Incident

With the exception of larger departments, rural fire departments frequently depend on mutual aid to manage residential structure fires and other complex incidents. It is not unusual for apparatus and personnel from several departments to converge on a single incident.

That raises a fundamental question: **When multiple departments arrive, can their personnel communicate with one another on the channels designated for the incident?** Interoperability must be established before the alarm sounds. Departments should coordinate with their MABAS Division representatives and neighboring agencies to develop an authorized, consistent radio programming plan. Depending on applicable licensing, programming requirements, and local procedures, that plan may include:

- **MABAS Fireground channels:** Commonly known as the "color channels," these channels support coordinated fireground communications. Departments should follow current MABAS guidance regarding authorized use, power levels, channel assignments, and restrictions on fixed-station or repeater operation.
- **Mutual-aid partner channels:** Where legally authorized and technically compatible, programming neighboring agencies' channels can facilitate coordinated response. Departments should obtain the necessary approvals and confirm that the proposed programming and use comply with applicable FCC licensing and agency requirements.
- **National interoperability channels:** Where applicable to the department's frequency band and radio system, designated national interoperability channels can provide additional options for communicating with outside agencies. Their availability, programming, and use should be verified in advance.

About the Author: Richard George *is the President of the Lake Egypt Fire Protection District Board. He also serves as a Director of the Board of the Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts. He is a communications instructor for the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS) training first responders in Communications Team Leader (COML), Communications Team Technician (COMT) and Auxiliary Communications Members (AUXCOMM) Department of Homeland Security communications curriculum.*

Simply programming a channel into a radio does not guarantee that it is authorized for use, technically compatible, or appropriate for a particular incident. Departments should verify these issues during planning and exercises—not while responding to an emergency.

Radio Configuration and Emergency Signaling

Radio configuration is an important part of fireground safety, particularly when departments use repeaters.

A repeater receives a transmission on one frequency and retransmits it on another. Depending on the system, a portable radio may also support direct or simplex operation, allowing compatible radios to communicate without relying on a repeater.

These operating modes have different coverage characteristics. A firefighter operating in a basement, behind substantial structural obstructions, or inside a metal-sided building may be unable to reach a distant repeater. Direct communications may provide a useful alternative, but simplex coverage is not guaranteed and must be assessed under realistic conditions.

Emergency-button programming deserves particular attention. Departments should understand exactly how their radios transmit emergency alerts, which channels carry those alerts, which radios or consoles receive them, and what happens when a portable radio cannot reach the repeater.

In some conventional systems, an appropriately configured direct-mode emergency transmission may allow personnel nearby to hear an alert without relying on the repeater. However, the correct configuration depends on the radio system, emergency signaling design, and incident communications plan. There is no single configuration that is appropriate for every department. Likewise, switching to a designated direct fireground channel may reduce dependence on repeater coverage and keep tactical traffic local. But departments must preserve the communications paths needed for dispatch, command, and emergency traffic. Channel assignments and radio configurations should be established, tested, and documented before implementation.

Scan Functions: Know What Your Radio Is Monitoring

The scan feature can be useful during routine operations, but it can also complicate communications when a firefighter must monitor a specific tactical channel.

When a radio scans multiple channels, activity on another channel may interrupt or delay reception of the traffic a firefighter needs to hear. The precise behavior depends on the radio, its programming, and the scan configuration.

For that reason, departments should establish clear rules for scan use. During an incident, firefighters should use the channel assigned to their function and configure their radios in accordance with the incident communications plan. Unless the approved configuration specifically requires it, scanning unrelated channels should not distract personnel from their assigned tactical communications.

Portable radios should be set to the correct operational channel before personnel reach the point where immediate communications are essential. Firefighters must know how to select that channel and verify communications without unnecessary delay.

At larger incidents operating under the National Incident Management System (NIMS), command and supervisory personnel may need to monitor more than one communications channel. Branch directors and other supervisors may use multiple radios or an approved multichannel configuration to communicate with command and subordinate units.

The objective is to maintain effective command and control while limiting unnecessary radio traffic to personnel

Continued on page 44

Communicate

Continued from page 43

performing time-critical tasks. Radio assignments should support the incident organization rather than create additional confusion.

Battery Maintenance Is a Safety Issue

Portable radio reliability depends on more than the radio itself. Battery condition, charging practices, and preventive maintenance are essential.

Battery technology has improved substantially since the days of bulky nickel-cadmium batteries. Modern battery designs generally offer better energy density and reduced weight, although performance and service life vary by chemistry, model, age, and operating conditions.

Departments should establish a battery management program that includes:

- Following the radio and battery manufacturer's charging, storage, inspection, and replacement instructions.
- Inspecting batteries and chargers for physical damage, abnormal heating, swelling, or other signs of failure.
- Dating or otherwise tracking batteries when placed into service and recording relevant maintenance history.
- Using compatible, approved batteries and chargers from reputable suppliers.
- Replacing batteries that fail manufacturer specifications or show signs of deterioration.

Some charging systems provide battery condition information or identify potential battery problems. Where available, these features can support preventive maintenance, but they do not replace inspections or manufacturer-directed testing.

The lowest purchase price is not always the lowest long-term cost. Departments should evaluate battery compatibility, documented performance, manufacturer support, warranty coverage, and applicable safety certifications before purchasing replacement batteries. Damaged, counterfeit, or improperly manufactured batteries can present serious overheating and fire hazards. A portable radio with a depleted or failing battery may be unavailable precisely when a firefighter needs it most. Battery readiness should therefore be part of routine apparatus checks and personnel readiness procedures.

Funding, Procurement, and Technical Assistance

Before purchasing radios with federal grant funding, departments should verify the applicable grant requirements, eligible equipment categories, technical standards, and procurement conditions. P25 compliance, interoperability requirements, and other technical specifications may apply depending on the grant program, funding notice, equipment category, and intended use. Departments should not assume that every radio purchase has identical requirements—or that a radio meeting one technical standard automatically satisfies every grant condition.

Digital Mobile Radio (DMR) and Project 25 (P25) are different digital radio standards. Whether a particular radio is eligible for a specific grant-funded purchase must be determined from the controlling grant documentation and applicable agency requirements.

When questions arise, consult the grant administrator, the appropriate MABAS Division representative, and qualified radio-system personnel before committing funds. Early coordination can help avoid purchasing equipment that cannot be used as intended or does not satisfy the applicable requirements.

A Practical Responsibility to Our Firefighters

After five decades in the fire service, I have seen tremendous progress in equipment and communications. Yet the operational principle has not changed: firefighters must be able to communicate when conditions become dangerous and the margin for error is small.

A department does not need the most sophisticated radio system available. It does need a deliberate plan that ensures firefighters have working radios, understand their assignments, can communicate with their team and command, and have a reliable method for transmitting emergency traffic. Every department should review its radio programming, fireground channel assignments, mutual-aid arrangements, emergency signaling, training, and battery maintenance. Local MABAS representatives and qualified communications professionals can help identify gaps and develop practical solutions that fit the department's mission and budget. **Reliable fireground communications are not an optional upgrade. They are a fundamental component of firefighter safety, incident command, and effective mutual-aid operations.**

As MABAS reminds us: "If you can't communicate, you can't operate." ■

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New Member Spotlight



Welcome to IAFPD: Monica Baumgartner, PhD, Senior Broker at Axios Group LLC

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IAFPD is proud to welcome **Monica Baumgartner, PhD, Senior Broker with Axios Group LLC**, to our Associate Membership community. Monica brings a unique combination of medical research experience, professional expertise, and a deeply personal commitment to helping individuals, families, and first responders prepare for life's unexpected challenges.

Through Axios Group LLC, Monica provides a comprehensive range of insurance solutions, including major medical, dental, vision, hearing, life, accident, cancer, hospitalization, disability, and critical illness coverage. Her approach goes beyond offering policies. She works to help clients understand their options, identify their needs, and make informed decisions about protecting their health, families, and financial futures.

A Personal Mission to Protect Others

Monica's professional journey began in medical research, where she served as a professor specializing in clinical and medical trial design, including research involving invitro fertilization and cardiometabolic health. Her background gave her first-hand insight into the importance of informed decision-making and putting people's needs first.

Her transition into insurance was shaped by her own determination to build a better future for her family. After facing professional setbacks while raising three young children, Monica embraced an opportunity in the insurance industry and worked to build a career on her own terms. Those experiences strengthened her belief that everyone deserves a fair chance to start over, build stability, and create something better for themselves and their families.

That philosophy continues to guide her work today.

An Advocate for First Responders and Their Families

Monica considers it a privilege to serve first responders, individuals who routinely put their lives on the line to protect others. She understands that protecting a community also means helping ensure that the people who serve it have access to resources that can support them and their families during difficult times.

An unexpected diagnosis, accident, disability, or loss of a loved one can create tremendous emotional and financial strain. Monica believes thoughtful insurance planning can help families navigate these moments with greater confidence and fewer financial uncertainties. She also encourages people to explore their options early, when they may have more choices and opportunities for long-term protection.

Her guiding principle is simple: clients deserve an insurance coach, not just a salesperson. Monica believes in providing honest advice, respecting each client's privacy, and recognizing that one policy or solution will not meet everyone's needs. Her goal is to make insurance easier to understand and less overwhelming, especially when families are already facing difficult circumstances.

Building Relationships That Make a Difference

For Monica, the most rewarding part of her work is the people she serves. Many client relationships have grown into lasting friendships, and referrals from those clients continue to motivate her. Her family remains a central source of inspiration, reinforcing the value of hard work, perseverance, and taking control of one's future.

Monica also hopes to make a broader impact within the insurance industry by encouraging more professionals to prioritize people over commissions. She believes quality guidance begins with knowledge, integrity, and a genuine desire to help others.

IAFPD is pleased to welcome Monica Baumgartner and Axios Group LLC as an Associate Member. We look forward to seeing Monica and Axios Group at future IAFPD conferences and events.

Welcome to IAFPD!

Contact Monica at: (708) 506-8790
mbaugartnerphd.axios@gmail.com

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- Herscher AutoTech, Inc.
- Holohan Heating & Sheet Metal, Inc.
- Hover Buick GMC, Inc.
- ISPFCU
- Jensen Funeral Homes
- Jim Hoscheid
- JR's Crop Service
- Kankakee Valley Construction Co., Inc.
- Ken's Truck Repair
- La Beau Bros., Inc.
- Lake Egypt FPD
- Langlois Roofing
- Limestone Fire Protection District
- Marquis Energy
- Millennium Technical Services
- National Bank St. Anne, Manteno, Herscher
- Netherton's Body Shop, Inc.
- Paramedic Services of Illinois
- Performance Services sponsor
- Railside Citrus Insurance
- Rawk, Inc.
- Reliable Oil and Tire, LLC
- River Valley Truck Repair
- Riverside Auto Trim and Glass
- Ruder Electric, Inc.
- Ryan's Pier
- Sanders Farm
- Scanlon Collision Specialist, INC.
- Stevenson Powersports, Inc.
- Stifel Nicolaus
- Stobbs & Sinclair, Ltd.
- Tanner's Collision
- Tholens' Landscape & Garden Center, Inc.
- Wolfes' Whispering Winds

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Calendar and Checklist of Annual Responsibilities for Illinois Fire Protection Districts

2027

ITEM/EVENT *(References are to Illinois Compiled Statutes [ILCS] except as noted.)*	DUE DATE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DATE ACCOMPLISHED
1. First day that elected trustee nomination papers may be circulated for the April 6, 2027 Consolidated Election	8/25/2026	n/a	n/a
2. Filing period for trustee nominating petitions for April 6, 2027 election (Board Secretary to certify to election authority [County Clerk(s)] by 1/28/2027)	11/16/2026-11/23/2026	Secretary	
3. Last day to file petitions for referenda on questions of public policy for April 6, 2027 election (example: annexation referendum) (must be certified to election authority by 1/28/2027)	1/4/2027		
4. Last day for Fire Chiefs to notify OSFM of Volunteer Emergency workers eligible for 2026 Illinois Income Tax Credit (35 ILCS 5/234)	1/12/2027	Fire Chief	
5. Deadline to adopt resolution to place question on the ballot for the April 6, 2027 election (example: tax rate referendum) (must be certified to election authority by 1/28/2027)	1/19/2027		
6. File Certificate of exempt property with County Supervisor of Assessments for District owned real estate (35 ILCS 200/15-10)	1/31/2027		
7. Post notice of regularly scheduled meetings of board, send copy to any news media which have filed a request (5 ILCS 120/2.02)	Jan. (or start of fiscal year)		
8. Perform semiannual review of all Minutes of Closed Sessions which have not been opened to the public to determine if some or all of those minutes may be opened for inspection (5 ILCS 120/2.06)	Jan.		
9. Review and update Freedom of Information Act Statement; Post for public availability (5 ILCS 140/4)	Jan.		
10. Appoint or Reappoint OMA and FOIA officers and document in Minutes	Jan.		
11. Post report of injuries (OSHA 300A) for prior year (Title 56, Section 350.250 Ill. Adm. Code)	2/1/2027		
12. File names of persons required to file Economic Interest Statements with County Clerk (5 ILCS 420/4A-106)	2/1/2027		
13. File OSHA 300A Report, if required	3/2/2027		
14. Submit names for appointment or reappointment of appointed trustees whose terms expire in 2027 (70 ILCS 705/4)	March		
15. Appointed trustee(s) to be reappointed by appointing authority (70 ILCS 705/4) (Not applicable to elected boards.)	2nd Mon. April (4/12/2027)		
16. File statements of Economic Interest with County Clerk (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)	5/1/2027		
17. Newly appointed and reappointed trustees take office (70 ILCS 705/4)	1st Mon. May (5/3/2027)		
18. Newly elected trustees take office (70 ILCS 705/4a)	3rd Mon. May (5/17/2027)		
19. Newly appointed and elected trustees must complete Open Meetings Act training within 90 days of taking office (5 ILCS 120/1.05)			
20. Reorganize Board of Trustees following appointment or election of trustee(s) by electing officers (70 ILCS 705/6)	1st Meeting After Taking Office		
21. If applicable, appoint Fire Commissioner(s) (70 ILCS 705/16.02)	Prior to 1st Meeting Monday in June		
22. Prepare Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance (50 ILCS 330/1-330/5)	First Qtr. Fiscal Year		
A. Gather data on actual expenditures and revenues for prior year			
B. Prepare Tentative Budget and Appropriation Ordinance			
C. Post Tentative Budget and Appropriation Ordinance for 30 days prior to adoption of final Budget and Appropriation Ordinance			
D. Publish notice of posting of Tentative Budget and of public hearing on Budget 30 Days prior to hearing			
E. Hold public hearing on Budget			
F. Adopt Final Budget and Appropriation Ordinance	Complete by end of 1st Qtr of Fiscal Year		

ITEM/EVENT *(References are to Illinois Compiled Statutes [ILCS] except as noted.)*	DUE DATE	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DATE ACCOMPLISHED
G. Prepare and include estimate of revenues certification With budget or separately (35 ILCS 200/18-50)			
H. Publish Budget and Appropriation Ordinance (70 ILCS 705/7)	Within 30 days of adoption		
I. File Budget and Appropriation Ordinance with County Clerk(s) (35 ILCS 205/162)	Within 30 days of adoption		
23. Perform semiannual review of all Minutes of Closed Sessions which have not been opened to the public to determine if some or all of those minutes may be opened for inspection (5 ILCS 120/2.06)	July		
24. Adopt Annual Tax Levy Ordinance (70 ILCS 705/14)			
A. Hold Truth in Tax Hearing if required/publish special notice (35 ILCS 200/18-55)	At least 7/not more than 14 days before hearing		
B. Comply with Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (Tax Caps), if applicable (35 ILCS 200/18-185)			
C. File Annual Tax Levy Ordinance/Certificate of Needs and Certification of Truth in Tax compliance with County Clerk(s) (35 ILCS 200/18-15)	Prior to last Tues. in Dec. (12/28/2027)		
25. Prepare annual Treasurer's Statement of Receipts and Disbursements (30 ILCS 15/1)	Within 6 mos. of end of fiscal year		
A. File with County Clerk(s)			
B. Publish and file certificate of publication with County Clerk(s) (or, instead, publish Notice of Audit Availability if CPA Audit is Performed)			
26. Prepare Annual Financial Report (AFR) to Illinois Comptroller and file with Comptroller and on paper with County Clerk(s) (50 ILCS 310/1)	Within 180 days of end of fiscal year		
27. File Annual Comptroller's Report (AFR) with County Clerk(s) to satisfy Fiscal Responsibility Report Card Act (35 ILCS 200/30-30)	Within 180 days of end of fiscal year		
28. If over $850,000* annual revenues, have audit performed by Certified Public Accountant (50 ILCS 310/2) (70 ILCS 705/6.1) If below $850,000 have audit performed by CPA on a quadrennial basis or prepare required financial report (AFR) and have approved by 3/5 vote of Board of Trustees before filing of AFR with Comptroller (*Moves to $1,400,000 for fiscal years beginning In 2027)	Within 180 days of end of fiscal year		
A. File audit with County Clerk(s)			
B. File audit electronically with Illinois Comptroller	Auditor		
C. Publish notice of availability of audit report in lieu of publication of statement of receipts and disbursements			
29. If applicable, submit IDHR Report for sexual harassment/unlawful discrimination judgments/ administrative ruling information required by 775 ILCS 5/2-108(B)	7/1/27		
30. Review all insurance coverages; verify limits; verify premises, vehicle, and equipment coverage and amounts	Prior to annual renewal date		
31. Review tape recordings of all closed sessions of the Board of Trustees and dispose of 18 months after closed session minutes have been approved	Every 18 months		
32. Verify that Fire Department has contacted local school district regarding Safety Drills	9/1/27		
33. File Report with IDPH of Ambulance Billing Rates, if applicable	10/1/27		
34. Verify completion of annual training by both FOIA Officer and Open Meetings Act designate	Annually		
35. Verify completion of annual training and reporting required by Workplace Transparency Act (sexual harassment training) (820 ILCS 96/1-20)	Annually		
36. Verify annual review of and compliance with IDOL mandated policies:	Annually		
A. Fire Dept. Training/HazMat Training (29 C.F.R.1910.156 & 1910.120)			
B. SCBA Medical Evaluations/Fit Testing (29 C.F.R.1910.134)			
C. Hepatitis B Inoculations (29 C.F.R. 1910.134)			
D. Personal Protective Equipment (29 C.F.R. 1910.132)			
E. Facilities (29 C.F.R. 1910)			
37. Review District and Department policies with Fire Officers	Annually		
38. Verify that all firefighters have completed line of duty death beneficiary designation documents	Annually		
39. If applicable as a secondary employer of a career firefighter, submit 40 ILCS 5/4-110.2 report to primary employers of injury or exposure	Within 96 hours of occurrence		

NOTE: The foregoing listing is intended to identify some of the legal requirements which fire protection districts are generally required to meet each year, however, it is not wholly inclusive and most fire protection districts will have additional requirements not listed above which they must meet. Districts should always consult with their legal counsel regarding such other requirements.

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Illinois Fire Protection Districts
9-11 25th Anniversary Tributes



URSA Bay entrance signage



"The Healing Field" Liberty FPD



Woodstock Fire Rescue Stair Climb 2025



Adams Co FF Assn Trit Twnship and Quincy FD tribute





Itasca lowering flag to honor 911



Roberts Park flag half staff



Spring Bay travels to FDNY for 25th



Lisle Woodridge

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Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
STATEMENTS OF REVENUES, EXPENSES, AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS - MODIFIED CASH BASIS
Years ended December 31

REVENUES	2025	2024
Administrative training sessions	$ 18,675	$ 26,580
Associate memberships	6,800	7,500
Conference fees	106,050	151,237
Fire Call	36,290	36,480
Interest	12,753	10,172
Legislative reception	4,058	3,176
Membership dues	237,770	250,633
Miscellaneous	13,253	1,582
Rental income	2,500	12,229
Shipping	-	76
Online learning	6,905	5,535
Text of Laws	6,608	1,590
Trustee handbooks	19,720	4,670
Winter conference	$ 24,570	$ 22,715
Total Revenues	495,952	534,175
EXPENSES		
Program services	436,908	398,250
Management and general	132,470	121,129
Total expenses	569,378	519,379
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(73,426)	14,796
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	639,275	624,479
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	$ 565,849	$ 639,275

Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
STATEMENTS OF ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND NET ASSETS - MODIFIED CASH BASIS
December 31

ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS	**2025**	**2024**
Cash	$ 108,401	$ 236,763
Certificates of deposit	227,920	223,662
Total current assets	336,321	460,425
FIXED ASSETS		
Property and equipment - net	302,169	289,717
Total assets	**$ 638,490**	**$750,142**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Payroll taxes	$ 5,239	$ 450
Advance receipts	2,200	11,200
Accrued real estate taxes	6,227	6,025
Due to IFCA	-	24,467
Mortgage payable - current portion	9,312	8,966
Total current liabilities	**22,978**	**51,108**
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES		
Mortgage payable, less current portion	49,663	59,759
Total liabilities	**72,641**	**110,867**
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	**565,849**	**639,275**
Total liabilities and net assets	**$ 638,490**	**750,142**

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® — **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

1. Publication Title	2. Publication Number	3. Filing Date
The Fire Call	0017358	10/03/2025
4. Issue Frequency	5. Number of Issues Published Annually	6. Annual Subscription Price
Quarterly	4	0.00

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication *(Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®)*: 1201 S. Sixth St. Sprinfield, IL 62703 — Contact Person: Cheri Breneman; Telephone *(Include area code)*: (217) 525-6620

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher *(Not printer)*

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor *(Do not leave blank)*

Publisher *(Name and complete mailing address)*
Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
1201 S. Sixth St.
Springfield, IL 62703

Editor *(Name and complete mailing address)*
Cheri Breneman
Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
Springfield, IL 62703

Managing Editor *(Name and complete mailing address)*
Cheri Breneman
Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
Springfield, IL 62703

10. Owner *(Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)*

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts	1201 S. Sixth St., Springfield, IL 62703

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box → ☑ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address

12. Tax Status *(For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)*
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
☑ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months *(Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)*

PS Form **3526**, July 2014 *[Page 1 of 4 (see instructions page 4)]* PSN: 7530-01-000-9931 **PRIVACY NOTICE:** See our privacy policy on *www.usps.com.*

13. Publication Title: The Fire Call — 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation			Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies *(Net press run)*				
b. Paid Circulation *(By Mail and Outside the Mail)*	(1)	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		
	(2)	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 *(Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)*		
	(3)	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		
	(4)	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution *[Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)]* ▶			0	0
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution *(By Mail and Outside the Mail)*	(1)	Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	3030	3009
	(2)	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	25	28
	(3)	Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)		
	(4)	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail *(Carriers or other means)*	50	50
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution *(Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))*			3105	3087
f. Total Distribution *(Sum of 15c and 15e)* ▶			3105	2957
g. Copies not Distributed *(See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))* ▶				
h. Total *(Sum of 15f and g)*			3105	2957
i. Percent Paid *(15c divided by 15f times 100)* ▶			0	0

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® — **Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)**

16. Electronic Copy Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies ▶	0	0
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) ▶	0	0
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) ▶	3105	2957
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100) ▶	0	0

☐ **I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.**

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership
☑ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the _____ issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner — Date: 09/25/2026

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In The News

Congratulations!



Congratulations to **Manhattan FPD** on the new fire station 81 Headquarters dedication ceremony and celebration on October 17th. This station represents so much more than a new building. It represents the continued support, trust, and partnership of the community they are proud to serve.



Chiefs Steve Malone (L), Bruce Boyle (R), with IAFPD President Damon Schuldt

Congratulations!





Congratulations and shout out to Chief Falaschetti of Beecher Fire Protection District as the recipient of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association Fire Chief of the Year recognizing his dedication, professionalism and commitment.

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The Office of the State Fire Marshal is pleased to announce that it is now accepting applications for the FY2027 Small Equipment Grant Program. This year, applicants will be eligible for up to $50,000 for the purchase of small firefighting and ambulance equipment.

Application Deadline is November 30, 2026!

A Hustle Worth Having

The International Association of Fire Chiefs recently launched A Hustle Worth Having, a national campaign designed to help more people – especially in the Gen Z population – see the purpose, connection and impact that come with serving as a volunteer firefighter. They invite your department to become a campaign ambassador and take advantage of the free, ready-to-customize resources available through the A Hustle Worth Having Ambassador Toolkit. The toolkit includes:

- Social media content
- Flyers, posters, and postcards
- Pictures, videos, and other campaign assets you can use

These materials can be used as-is or customized to support your department's local recruitment efforts, helping you reach prospective volunteers without having to create new content from scratch. Please access the resources, explore the campaign, and learn more at our website: https://hustleworthhaving.org.

IAFPD Foundation
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IAFPD Commemorative Coin

The vision of the IAFPD Commemorative Coin is to honor, acknowledge and show appreciation to people who demonstrate dedication and commitment to the Illinois Fire Service and support the mission of IAFPD.

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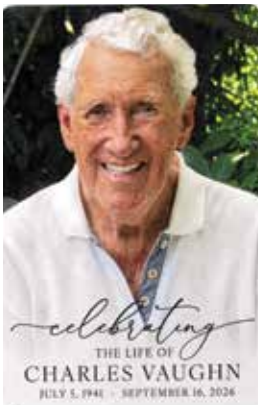
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In Memory

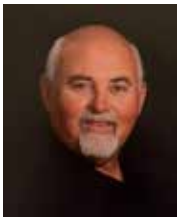


It is with heavy hearts we announce the passing of **Chuck Vaughn, IAFPD former lobbyist**, and an incredibly devoted friend and advocate for the Illinois fire service.

Chuck was hired in 1997 after the passing of IAFPD legend, Kenny Long, and provided 21 years of dedicated service to IAFPD and the Illinois fire service. His commitment, hard work, and enduring friendships made a lasting impact on our organization and the fire service. I have included a list of some of the notable accomplishments that he developed prior to his retirement in 2018.



Dominic Michael Vespa, 86, of Springfield, passed away at 2:36 pm, Sunday, August 9, 2026,He served as a Volunteer Fireman in Riverton Area Fire Protection District for over 65 years and retired from the Illinois Department of Transportation after 35 years of service. He served with the Army National Guard from 1962-1968. Dominic had many roles throughout his time at Riverton Fire. From Firefighter to holding the rank of Safety Officer, and even Chief. Most recently serving on the Fire District Board as a trustee. Dominic had 39 years of service as a nationally registered EMT and was recognized by NREMT in 2013 for 30 continuous years as an EMT.



Chief Jeff Mathre of Newark passed away on September 21, 2026. Chief Mathre dedicated more than 50 years of service to the citizens of the Newark Fire District beginning his service in 1971. Throughout his career, Jeff earned certificates as FF III, Fire Apparatus Engineer, Instructor FO I and Tech Rescue. He was a long-time member of MABAS 14, served as Vice President at the time of his passing.

Illinois Firefighter Fatality





Greg T. Witt (35)
Rutland Dundee Fire Protection District
December 19, 1990 - October 25, 2026

Advertisers Index

Air One Equipment 26
Alexis Fire Equipment ..... Outside Back Cover
American Response Vehicles 41
Cashion Fire Equipment 49
ComEd - AN EXELON COMPANY 7
Compass Insurance 39
Danko 45
FGM Architects 53
First Mid Bank & Trust 29
Foster Coach Sales ..... Inside Back Cover
Hastings Air Energy Control, Inc 34
Illinois Fire Chiefs Association 22
Illinois Public Risk Fund 5
Illinois State Treasurer EPay 17
MacQueen Emergency Group 11
Metro Paramedic Services 40
Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board 2
Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, LTD 13
Paramedic Billing Services 47
Paramedic Services of Illinois 4
Railside Citrus Insurance Agency 55
Sawyer Falduto Asset Management, LLC 57
Sentinel Emergency Solutions ..... Center Spread (30/31)
Stobbs & Sinclair, Ltd 44
VFIS/Midwest 35

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- ✓ Offers access to consumers of the products and services your company provides
- ✓ Includes a listing in the IAFPD Online Directory and two printed listings annually and recognizes their support of IAFPD
- ✓ Has the option to promote products through social media, direct email and website advertising
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Calendar of Events

November 6 & 7
Essential Trustee Training 3-Part Program
(two locations)
Plainfield FPD & Barrington FPD (Livestream)

November 11
Veteran's Day Holiday
Office Closed

November 14
Continuing Education Training
Cherry Valley FPD

November 17-19 & Dec 1-3
General Assembly Veto Session

November 30
IL Fire Services Legislative Summit
Springfield

January 9
Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting
(location pending)

January 12
The Fire Call (Winter) Copy Deadline

January 23
IAFPD 2027 Virtual CTE

January 22-23
IFCA VCOC Conference
Marriott, Bloomington

February 5-7
NIAFPD Annual Conference
Lombard

February 22-26
MABAS Training Summit
Bloomington

February 26-27
IAFPD Winter Conference
Regency Conference Center, O'Fallon

IAFPD Offices will be closed in observance of the following holidays:
November 26-27 - Thanksgiving
Dec. 23 – Jan. 1 - Holiday Break
January 18 - Martin Luther King
February 12 - Lincoln's Birthday
February 15 - President's Day

Details about many of the events mentioned above can be found at ***www.iafpd.org*** *or, by contacting the association at: 217-525-6620*

SAFETY IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

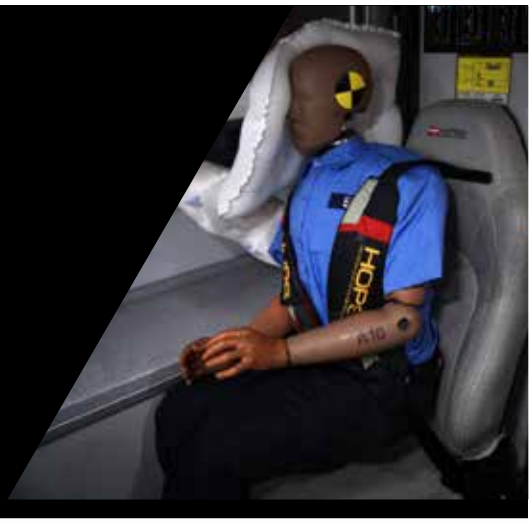
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- ☑ FRC PUMP BOSS MAX PRESSURE GOVERNOR

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