

# 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.

### Illinois Fire Service Institute

Happy New Year from the Illinois Fire Service Institute. The new year is filled with endless opportunities to train. From our academy program to essential skills firefighting classes to our comprehensive line-up of advanced technical rescue courses, our instructors and staff are prepared to serve. We look forward to supporting the departments and fire protection districts across Illinois with all their training needs.



### 2026 BASIC OPERATIONS AND ADVANCED TECHNICIAN FIREFIGHTER ACADEMY

Registration opened in December for the next cycle of the Basic Operations and Advanced Technician Firefighter Academy. This seven-week resident program prepares firefighters to operate safely and effectively on the fireground. Upon successful completion of the Academy and subsequent courses, students will qualify for state and national certification.

The following courses are included in the program:

- Firefighter I / NFPA 1010 - Basic Operations Firefighter
- Firefighter II / NFPA 1010 - Advanced Technician Firefighter
- American Heart Association CPR
- American Heart Association First-Aid
- Resiliency Development for First Responders
- Opioid Awareness
- Courage to Be Safe
- Fire Service Vehicle Operator – Per OSFM JCAR Section 141.370 – After IFSI course completion, the student is required to complete with their sponsoring fire department:
  - Completion of the required NFPA 1010 competency course
  - Completion of an additional 8 hours of documented driving of the vehicles with differing wheelbases in use by the employing authority having jurisdiction
- Traffic Incident Management Awareness
- ICS 100/200/700
- Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Propane) Firefighting

To meet OSFM and National certification requirements, students will need to complete the Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations course the week following Academy unless they have already earned certification.

We encourage departments to reach out to our Class Support Team if they are currently hiring members and plan to enroll a candidate in the spring cycle. Our staff will provide personalized registration assistance throughout the process.

For complete program details, visit [fsi.illinois.edu](http://fsi.illinois.edu).

**BASIC OPERATIONS FIREFIGHTER ACADEMY I ADVANCED TECHNICIAN**

**ACADEMY AT A GLANCE**

- ▶ 7 week resident program
- ▶ Delivered at the IFSI main campus in Champaign
- ▶ Offered twice a year (spring and fall)

Included in the tuition:

- ▶ 13 courses
- ▶ Physical fitness training program
- ▶ Helmet
- ▶ 6 candidate t-shirts
- ▶ Student textbook, workbook and manual
- ▶ Pro Board and IFSAC certification fees

Upon successful completion of the Basic Operations and Advanced Technician Firefighter Academy, students will earn certification with Pro Board and IFSAC.

After Illinois students complete Fire Service Vehicle Operator through their fire department, they are eligible to apply for OSFM certification.

**SPRING 2026 ACADEMY BEGINS MARCH 2**

**REGISTRATION OPENS SOON: FSI.ILLINOIS.EDU**

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### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

#### FIRE COLLEGE

Registration opens March 1 for the 102<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fire College. This annual training event is scheduled for June 5-7 in Champaign.



The 2026 event will include a complete lineup of hands-on, live fire, and classroom training opportunities. Fire College students will have access to state-of-the-art training props and an expansive cache of tools and equipment.

Fire College classes fill quickly. Watch for the complete event details to be posted in mid-February and plan to register early.

#### 2026 EXPLORER CADET FIRE SCHOOL

The IFSI Explorer Cadet Fire School will be held July 16-19 in Champaign. This unique training opportunity is open to explorers, cadets, and junior firefighters between the ages of 15-20.

The Explorer Cadet Fire School curriculum is intentionally designed to meet the skill level of all attendees. Participants will engage in live fire and



hands-on course activities throughout the four-day event. Student housing is also included in the low tuition cost.

Complete program details will be posted on the IFSI website in March.

#### IFSI 2026 CALENDARS

The annual IFSI calendar is now available. This yearly publication is a showcase of IFSI programs, units, resources, instructors, staff, partners, and special events.



Calendars were mailed to all Illinois departments in December. Individuals or departments wishing to receive additional or personal copies should reach out to the IFSI Marketing Team at [fsi-marketing@illinois.edu](mailto:fsi-marketing@illinois.edu). Please provide the quantity requested and the mailing address.

We thank you for your support in the fulfillment of our mission.

**Jim Keiken**  
Director

#### Illinois Fire Chiefs Association

Thank you for the opportunity to fill you in on what is going on with the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association. The IFCA values our relationship with the IAFFPD. Working together (along with the NIAFFPD) we are planning for our annual Fire Service Leadership Legislative Day in March. Bringing the interests of the Fire Service Leadership to our Legislators is extremely important. The Legislators and staff notice us, and this helps build the relationships that advance our joint interests.

Annually, the IFCA presents up to four Fire Chief of the Year awards, based on the size of the Fire Department or District. This award is the top recognition bestowed upon fire chiefs in Illinois. The award is

presented each year at the IFCA annual conference in October. Applications need to be submitted by August 7<sup>th</sup>. Consider submitting your fire chief for this prestigious award. More information is available at [www.illinoisfirechiefs.org/fcoy](http://www.illinoisfirechiefs.org/fcoy).

The Illinois Fire Chiefs Educational and Research Foundation annual scholarship competition is now open. Training and educational classes are expensive and may limit attendance because of costs. This competition provides a wonderful opportunity for firefighters and fire officers to apply for the different certification courses and educational opportunities. The competition closes on March 15, 2026. The Foundation has awarded over \$2.225 million to nearly 3000 recipients. Make sure your firefighters know about this great opportunity. More information is available at [www.illinoisfirechiefs.org/foundation/scholarship](http://www.illinoisfirechiefs.org/foundation/scholarship).

The Foundation also sponsors and funds the Senior Officer Development Program, often providing it at no cost. This is an opportunity for fire department leadership to learn from experts in their fields. This program offers topics necessary for a new company officer and refresher for a veteran officer. Topics areas are selected by the host fire chief with feedback from the surrounding area fire chiefs to meet the needs of the officers from that area. The program can be scheduled in a one-day format (5 topics with a working lunch) or a two-day format (7-8 topics with breakfast and lunch format). Topics include Laws, Regulations & Standards, Firefighter Resiliency Awareness, Conflict Resolution, Leadership for Fire Department Officers (Buddy to Boss, Communication and Role Changes), and Surviving the Modern Fireground. Other topics may be available upon request. For more information contact DC Tim Leidig York Center FPD, [tleidig.fd@gmail.com](mailto:tleidig.fd@gmail.com).

As always, if we can be of assistance do not hesitate to reach out to our office at [info@illinoisfirechiefs.org](mailto:info@illinoisfirechiefs.org) or 847-966-0732.

**John Buckley**  
Executive Director, IFCA  
[execdir@illinoisfirechiefs.org](mailto:execdir@illinoisfirechiefs.org)

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### Camp I Am Me Supporting Burn Survivors During National Burn Awareness Week



Each year, National Burn Awareness Week serves as a critical reminder to the fire service and the communities they protect: burn injuries remain a serious and often preventable public safety issue. As departments across the state reinforce messages about fire safety prevention and general burn risk reduction, there is also an opportunity to highlight another essential part of this awareness campaign, and that is supporting those whose lives have already been changed by burn injuries.

In Illinois, that support is embodied by Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance. Founded and supported by the fire service, Camp I Am Me provides life-changing camp experiences for young burn survivors and their families. Through week-long summer camps and year-round programs, children who have experienced burn injuries are given a safe environment to heal physically, build confidence, and connect with peers who understand their journey.

Firefighters know better that prevention efforts, while vitally important, cannot eliminate every incident. When fires, scalds, and burn injuries do occur, the aftermath can be long and complex both medically and emotionally. Camp I Am Me fills a critical gap by addressing the long-term recovery needs that extend well beyond the hospital stay. For many campers, it is the first place they feel truly understood after an injury.

National Burn Awareness Week is an ideal time for fire departments and trustees to reflect on this full continuum of care. Prevention education saves lives. Survivor support restores them. The Illinois fire service has long played a hands-on role in both; educating the public to reduce risk and stepping forward to support burn survivors through fundraising, volunteering, and advocacy for Camp I Am Me.

As we look towards Burn Awareness Week and beyond, the message is clear:

more work remains. Continued investment in prevention programs, stronger community education, and sustained support for burn survivor services are all essential. By standing behind the efforts of Camp I Am Me, fire departments reinforce a powerful truth that the fire service's commitment does not end when the flames are out.

For fire safety and burn prevention educational tools and to learn about the wide range of burn survivor support programs offered throughout the year, please visit [www.campiamme.org](http://www.campiamme.org).

**Philip Zaleski**  
Executive Director

### Illinois OSHA The Ridge Incident Presentation is now online



Thanks to the Illinois Fire Service Institute, you can now watch the Ridge Incident Presentation on-demand through IFSI's online classroom. The course is a 45-minute version of the in-person presentation IL OSHA has delivered across the state that details the tragic 2021 line of duty death of Lt. Garrett Ramos. The course uses audio and video captured during the incident to walk participants through the events that unfolded at a "routine" single-story residential fire.

The training also provides specific, actionable strategies that can be implemented at structure fires to reduce the risk of firefighter injury or death. It's designed for firefighters at all levels—from probationary members to chief officers—and emphasizes practical strategies for improving operational safety, enhancing situational awareness, and strengthening command decision-making under high-risk conditions.

Fire departments would be well-served to add this to their 2026 training calendar.

[https://www.fsi.illinois.edu/content/courses/programs/description.cfm?course\\_id=1621](https://www.fsi.illinois.edu/content/courses/programs/description.cfm?course_id=1621)

Questions? E-mail us at [DOL.Safety@illinois.gov](mailto:DOL.Safety@illinois.gov) call us at 217-782-9386 or visit us at [osha.illinois.gov](http://osha.illinois.gov) - Fire Department Resources Page: [osha.illinois.gov/fire](http://osha.illinois.gov/fire)

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

## Firefighters Pension Investment Fund Update



The FPIF Board of Trustees met on December 19, 2025, and received a presentation from Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer William R. Atwood on FPIF's investment performance relative to pre-consolidation Article 4 pension fund benchmarks. The report compared FPIF's results to what Article 4 pension funds in aggregate would have likely earned prior to asset consolidation.

Since consolidation, FPIF has generated approximately \$258.5 million in additional portfolio value beyond preconsolidation benchmarks, strengthening pension funding for firefighters across Illinois.

FPIF continues to deliver improved investment returns at significantly lower cost. Before consolidation, average investment management costs for downstate and suburban police and fire pension funds were 57 basis points, according to the Illinois Department of Insurance.

In comparison, FPIF's total expenses for FY 2025 were just 12.3 basis points, including 3.9 basis points for FPIF operations and 8.4 basis points for investment management. These efficiencies resulted in approximately \$46 million in cost savings during FY 2025 alone.

### Fiscal Year to Date Investment Performance (July 1 – November 30, 2025)

FPIF delivered strong fiscal yeartodate performance, with the portfolio returning 7.5%, slightly exceeding its policy benchmark.

Public equities were the largest contributor, with the Equity Composite up 9.8%, while fixed income investments returned 3.8%, providing stability. Private market investments also produced a positive 5.2% return as the Fund continues to build toward longterm investment targets.

As of November 30, 2025, FPIF assets totaled approximately \$11.0 billion, reflecting net investment gains of \$764 million during the fiscal year to date.

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### Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

At the December meeting, the Board of Trustees accepted the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report and is pleased to report an unmodified (clean) audit opinion for the sixth consecutive year.

FPIF ended the fiscal year with a 13.3% investment return and a net position of \$10,286,871,117.

### Upcoming Meetings

The FPIF Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet on March 13, 2026. Meetings of the Audit & Compliance Committee, Elections Committee, and Investments & Operations Committee are scheduled for March 5, 2026.

### IL Fire Inspectors Association

We have moved to a new website and email platform. In the process, we have found many bad emails that bounced back. In the event you were getting our weekly emails, and are not now, just contact our office. There is also a chance for you to sign up for weekly email updates.

Some important changes to our training offerings.

- To allow a better chance for members who are working on shift, **our training programs will begin at 9 am** beginning in January.
- For *virtual* training, it will be offered at no cost to members. If you are not an IFIA member, the cost will only be \$25
- As a reminder, you are a member if *your department* is a member. If you are unsure, contact our office.

If you not a member of the IFIA, why not? The cost is only \$100 per organization! This allows all members of your department to receive training at discounted prices. To become a member, go to our website at [IllinoisFireInspectors.org](http://IllinoisFireInspectors.org) and click on membership.

At the December planning meeting the new elected Board of the Fire Inspectors were sworn in. They are President - Dan Medina, Addison; Vice President - Ryan

Angelus, Plainfield; Secretary - Dave Bricker, Homer; Treasurer - Steve Lorendo, Tinley Park.

Sign up now for our annual Fire and Life Safety conference is March 25-27, 2026 with a pre-conference the 24<sup>th</sup>.

If you are a business and would like to support fire prevention and education efforts across the State, your sponsorships are sincerely welcomed. Information about that is also on our website at the conference.

Par a Dice hotel room reservations can be made now by calling 1-800-547-0711 or at their website of [www.paradicedoydgaming.com/groups-and-wedding/group-reservations](http://www.paradicedoydgaming.com/groups-and-wedding/group-reservations). Use the group code of FIRC26C. Conference registration should be out very soon.

Our "Pre-Conference" on Tuesday afternoon will be with the OSFM. This session will highlight various rules and regulations from their various divisions. This would be beneficial to your Chiefs and training officers, AND, this is free to IFIA members.

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. **We offer scholarships** to cover the registration fees for our OSFM certification class, that application is available on our website.

If you have taken IFIA classes in 2025, a PDF of those classes, and their CEUs, are available on our website under the training tab. If you'd like a copy of your records, just scroll to your name and do a screen capture of your classes, CEUs. etc. This is our best effort to put them into one place. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to have the certificates in your training file, should there be a need to access them.

### Upcoming events:

- February 27 – VIRTUAL, Site Plan Reviews
- April 13, 20, 27, May 4, 11 – Inspector 2, Addison
- July 27-31 – PFLSE, Romeoville

**Robert Morris**  
**Executive Director, IFIA**



## SAVE THE DATE



### IAFPD Foundation Golf Outing Fundraiser 'Educating the Next Generation'

**August 21, 2026**

**Oak Springs Golf Course: 6740 E 3500 S Rd. St. Anne, IL 60954**

**Registration 10:30 Shotgun start at Noon Rain or Shine**



**Lunch and Dinner Provided Raffles, Door Prizes, Games and FUN!!**

**Questions? Contact: Steve Schultz 815-370-4520 /  
Larry Brown 815-252-2702 / Don Loos 217-430-9136**

**All Proceeds benefit the Foundation Scholarship Program**