

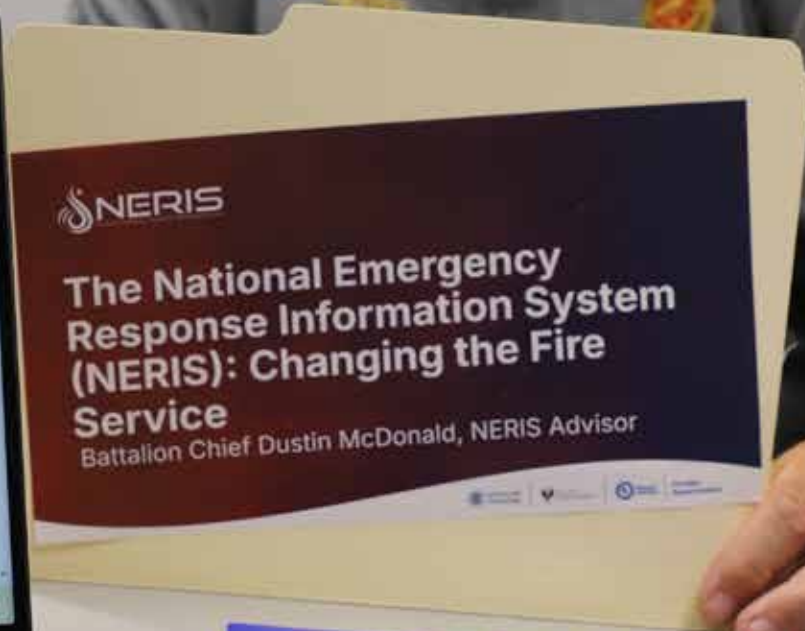
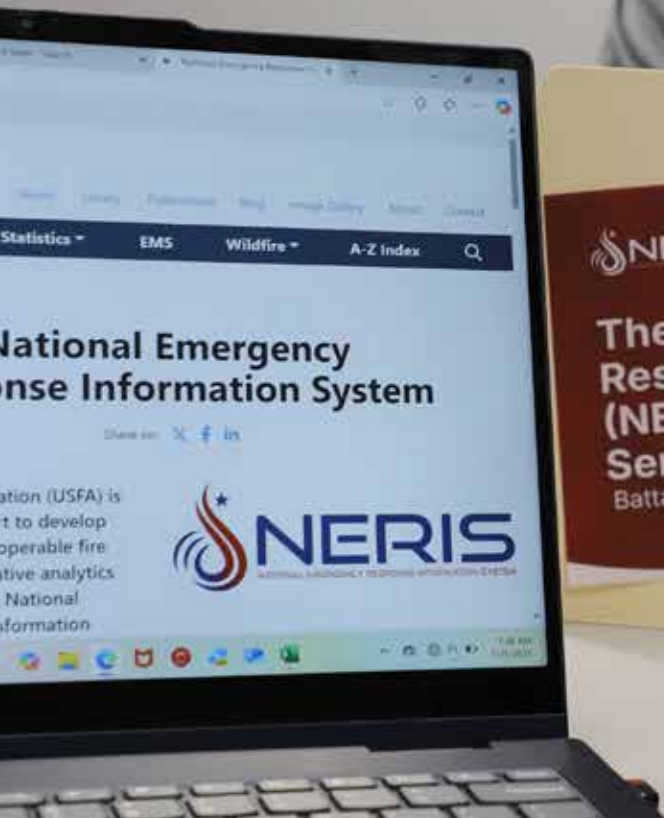
THE FIRE CALL

Summer 2025

an official Publication of the Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts

In this Issue:

- IAFPD Conference Highlights
- Transitioning to NERIS
- Fire Department Leadership
- Ethical Obligations for Pension Trustees





“You can’t change your past, but you can change someone’s future.”

My name is Janean Dyson. On November 20, 2019, I was burned by grease that caught fire while I was cooking. My condo did not have fire sprinklers, so the fire spread quickly.

While trying to extinguish the fire using baking soda and flour, I suffered second- and third-degree burns on my face, neck and hands, leading to two weeks spent in the hospital’s burn unit.

Burns are one of the worst injuries anyone can experience, affecting people both physically and emotionally. Today, I help guide other burn survivors through their healing process. I volunteer my time as a counselor at a summer camp for burn-injured children and also as part of a peer support program through the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors.

I also want to increase the public’s awareness about home fire sprinklers, the only technology that can stop a fire from spreading and prevent burn injuries and deaths. Cooking fires are the leading cause of home fires.* I hate the thought of someone else going through the same experience as me. Every new home and multifamily building should be protected with fire sprinklers.



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*July, 2020 - As reported by the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), the leading cause of home fires and injuries is cooking.



THE FIRE CALL

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About the Cover: The National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) is currently being rolled out by region across the nation, and Illinois fire departments will be brought onboard beginning in December 2025. A new page on OSFM's website (sfm.illinois.gov) to help fire chiefs and other personnel prepare for the shift from NFIRS to NERIS.

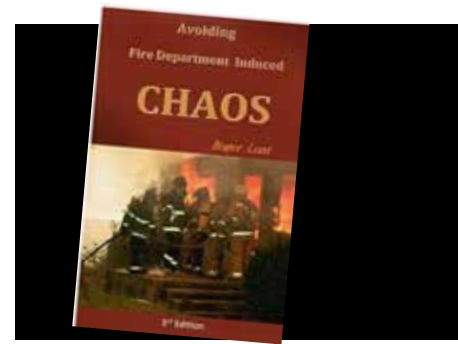
Pictured is a 35-year veteran to the Bourbonnais Fire Protection District, serving as Fire Chief since 2021, Jim Keener. His District has started the process using their current records management vendor to transition with plans to complete by the end of the year.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Michael Dillon, President
Braidwood FPD*

Thank you to everyone who attended the 80th Annual IAFFPD Conference in June and thank you to all the exhibitors and sponsors who were able to participate.

Several committees were necessary to organize and implement the Conference. Thanks to all our committee members for their work, devotion, and dedication to the Conference. Conference surveys and evaluation sheets are available for those wishing to provide feedback and/or suggestions on topics for next year's Conference.

The annual meeting of the Membership was held on Thursday afternoon. Director Tom Harnsberger has chosen to retire from our Board. Tom and his wife Penny were devoted and dedicated to the IAFFPD, and as friends and colleagues, I want to wish them the best in their future.

Ann Joyce, Interview and Nominating Committee Chairperson, provided the names for election or re-election as IAFFPD Board Directors. Area Representative Gary Mueller ran for Director, filling the vacancy of retiring Director Tom Harnsberger. Brett Kunkel, Ken Yeakley, and Paul Grzelak had terms for re-election as Directors. All four members voted unanimously to serve a 3-year term. I congratulate the Directors and look forward to continuing the work of the IAFFPD. These Directors, as part of the IAFFPD team, make my job as President very easy. Brett, Ken, Gary, and Paul have shown great dedication and devotion to the IAFFPD. No other or additional items were brought up during this meeting of the IAFFPD Membership.

During the IAFFPD quarterly Board of Directors Meeting, Area Representatives,

Don Loos, Dr. Richard George, and Brian Bernardoni were re-appointed to a one-year term. These individuals also have shown great dedication to our organization.

An upcoming volunteer opportunity is the IAFFPD day at the Illinois State Fair, Friday, August 8, 2025. If you join us for a day at the Fire Services tent, contact the IAFFPD office. If not, and you are attending the Fair, stop by, see the educational (fire safety) exhibits, and get a bag of Jim Sinclair's special popcorn.

On Friday, August 15, the IAFFPD Foundation Golf Outing will take place in St. Anne, IL. Please check the IAFFPD website for registration information. The IAFFPD Foundation's Scholarship Program is available to support programs that educate our future firefighters and emergency medical personnel on fire safety. Please consider taking part in a day of fun, golf, food, and beverages at the Foundation Golf outing or donating to the foundation to support the scholarships.

In the fall, we have the Legislative Committee meetings, preparing for the IAFFPD Winter Conference, and the

Continuing Trustee Education (CTE) sessions. Don't forget about the online programs that bring training to you and allow you to earn Continuing Education credits. Whether you need to brush up on material you have gained at previous training sessions, or you would like to earn additional CE, we hope that you will take advantage of this convenient and affordable platform. For more information on any of the topics available to all our members, please click on the Education tab on our website, IAFFPD.org.

As always, watch the IAFFPD website for updates on current fire service action, legislation, and upcoming events. If you need more information on ways your district can work with the IAFFPD or have questions on how the IAFFPD can assist your fire district, the Board of Directors, Staff, and I are interested in hearing from you.

Enjoy the remaining time of summer, be safe. ■

Michael Dillon, Braidwood FPD
IAFFPD, President



Honored to represent the IAFFPD at the 2025 Fire College Opening Ceremony

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ASSOCIATION UPDATE



*By Cheri Breneman
Association Administrator*

Educational Opportunities

It is my pleasure to share some recent developments and upcoming opportunities designed to support your professional growth and keep you at the forefront of the educational resources available to your fire protection district. As you will find throughout this issue of the publication, we just wrapped up the 80th Annual Conference held in June. Along with the exceptional networking events, the conference committee once again coordinated an outstanding line-up of well-received sessions. On behalf of the committee, we extend our sincere appreciation to the twenty-five speakers who took the time to prepare their presentations, travel to Champaign, and contribute to the educational objectives of the IAFPD.

In this issue and future issues, we feature a few of our professional speakers from the conference, who will provide the same topic in the form of a feature article. This issue (Summer 2025) covers programs presented by Chief Roger Lunt, Doc Patterson, and attorney Megan Lamb. Each of these articles is timely and valuable to those serving a fire protection district and working in the fire service. Equally important and relevant are the regular columns written by attorneys Carolyn Clifford, David Livingstone, and Jim Sinclair that trustees on your Board must read. Thank you to our contributing authors and to the membership for taking the time to read through the magazine! Looking ahead, we have a couple more programs that will be presented as a live webinar and made available in the online learning library.

We also have two valuable educational programs being offered in person this fall:

Essential Trustee Training 3-Part Program

October 24 & 25, 2025 at Plainfield Fire Protection District

This program is one of its own kind and highly recommended for newly elected or appointed trustees, but open to others who want to understand the roles and legal responsibility for fire protection district finance and administration. Presented in three parts, the 12-hour training covers governance, policies, budgeting, the levy process, procurement, personnel matters and much more. The IAFPD is pleased to partner with the Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts for this fall presentation of the ETT.

Managing the Mission - Continuing Trustee Education (CTE) **November 8, 2025 at Cherry Valley Fire Protection District**

A new time of year for this traditional trustee training presented by Shawn Flaherty & John Motylinski. The attorneys delve into the expanding responsibilities and challenges faced by fire protection district trustees in today's landscape, as well as recent legislative and regulatory changes from the General Assembly and regulatory agencies such as the IDPH and IL OSHA. Staying informed about the latest trends in the governance and management of

fire protection districts and departments is crucial to accomplish your mission as a fire protection district trustee, chief, or administrator.

Program details and registration are available on the website, IAFPD.org.

Lastly, but not least, I am pleased to share the official announcement for IAFPD's newest educational program, which is expected to launch this fall: The Illinois Public Pension Training. The IAFPD Board and its Education Committee have partnered with the Illinois Professional Firefighters Association to launch a 16-hour training program for Article 3 & 4 Pension Board trustees. Refer to page 9 for more information, and look out for additional details in the weeks ahead.

Thank you for supporting the IAFPD through your membership, as a program participant, a reader of The Fire Call magazine, a regular visitor to our website, and for taking the time to read our emails. Your engagement contributes to the Association's growth and stability. ■



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

IAFPD and the Illinois Professional Firefighters Association are pleased to announce an endeavor that has been in the making for well over a year!

The IAFPD and IPFA are partnering to bring NEW pension board trustee training to the downstate Fire and Police Pension Boards.

In 2020 Illinois Statutes changed. A new law consolidated long-term investments for almost 300 Article 4 fire funds and 350+ Article 3 police pension funds.

The law also changed the training requirements for newly elected Trustees of pension boards. New Trustees are required to have 16 hours of specific training within their first year of serving on their pension board plus an additional 8 hours of continuing education annually.

Our new training program will be provided online. The program is accredited and affiliated with Western Illinois University. The University is completing the review process of approving the course outline. There are 25 professional instructors from a variety of related fields speaking on subjects within their wheelhouse.

The planning process to provide this education has taken many hours of design, preparation, and meetings. Both organizations are pleased to be part of this process.

The program is based on the Illinois State Statute and is designed to be affordable, accessible, and easy to navigate.

Program Development Committee

IPFA:	Greg Knoll, Executive Director and Michael Mounts, IPFA President.
IAFPD:	Cheri Breneman, Association Administrator and Damon Schuldt, IAFPD Director
WIU:	Joseph Henning, Assistant Professor LEJA- Fire Science
Legal Support:	Carolyn Clifford, Senior Partner, Otteson DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. Brian LaBardi from Reimer, Dobrovolny & LaBardi

The 16 hours of training programs are expected to be available in late fall to help educate the newly elected trustees!

Details and other announcements will be distributed online at each agency's website and emailed to their respective members and quarterly publications, The Fire Call & The Size Up

If any of you would like more information or have any questions, just reach out to either Cheri or Greg.

FIRE COUNSEL NOTES



Check Your Tax Extension Report!

*By James S. Sinclair, IAFFD Counsel
Stobbs & Sinclair, LTD*

As experienced fire protection district trustees know (or should know), perhaps the most important date in the financial year of the fire protection district is the last Tuesday in December. This is the deadline date set by state law for the filing of tax levies for most units of local government in Illinois under Property Tax Code. (35 ILCS 200/18-15) Failure to meet this deadline can result in the district not receiving property tax revenues in the following year and missing an entire year's worth of tax money. Obviously, it therefore pays for all district trustees to pay heed to this important deadline and to verify that their district has complied by the timely filing of the district's tax levy and certificate of need. For years, trustees attending IAFFD training sessions have heard repeatedly that they need to pay attention to this deadline "or you won't get any money" and to remember that the deadline falls in the Christmas Eve/Christmas/New Year's Eve/New Year's Day holiday period requiring that attention be paid to the holiday hours of their County Clerk's or Clerks' offices. Consequently, most trustees, if they are properly monitoring the filing of their district's levy or levies give a big sigh of relief when they know the tax levy paperwork is filed on time.

BUT, in reality the job of worrying about the tax levy is not over. It is not enough to simply file the tax levy and wait for the check from the county treasurer to arrive. There are two very important

additional steps with which diligent trustees need to be concerned.

The first of these steps occurs in most (but not necessarily all) counties. It is the issuance by the county clerk's office of what is usually a nondescript, one page document called by various names such as "Levy Confirmation Report" or "Levy Certification." This report is similar to a receipt. It tells the district what the county clerk shows as having been filed by the district for its tax levy for the prior year. There are two points to note. Initially, note the use of the phrase "prior year." In Illinois property taxes are paid a year behind. The levy filed in November or December creates the levy for taxes for the year of filing, but the actual tax receipts will not come to the district until the following year. So, most districts are receiving their 2024 tax proceeds in 2025 based on the levy filed in 2024. Second, note that this report is coming to the district well after the levy filing deadline and the actual filing of the levy by the district. It is critically important that this report be opened and reviewed promptly by the district to verify that it is correct. What will be on this report? Generally speaking, there will be three important items of information. There will be a list of all of the levies of the district. This will include the "corporate" or "general fund" levy which for some districts and counties is traditionally referred to as the "fire tax" or fire levy." This is the general operating source of funds. Most districts

will have one or more other levies for such things as insurance (liability insurance, workers compensation, unemployment tax); rescue (rescue crew personnel and equipment); ambulance; or career firefighter pensions. It is very important to check the report to confirm that all of the tax levies adopted by the district are on that listing. If for any reason, one of the district's tax levy documents was misfiled or inadvertently omitted when the levies were processed, it could mean that the district would not receive the funds from that particular levy. Second, there will be a listing of the amount of each levy that the county clerk shows for each of the listed levies which is to be collected from the district's taxpayers for that levy. Again, it is important to verify that the levy numbers shown are correct because those numbers are the ones that will be used to process the levies for collection. Third, most reports will show what the rate limit, if any, is on each particular levy. Regardless of how much the district levies in dollars (remember that districts levy by dollars and not by rate), the rate limit, if there is one, on that levy will place a hard stop on going over the amount the rate limit would allow given the district's equalized assessed value (EAV) for the year. If the rate limit shown on the confirmation report is incorrect, the dollar levy of the district maybe incorrectly restricted resulting in lower tax revenue from that levy.

Continued on page 11

Fire Counsel Notes

Continued from page 10

It is critical that the district review the levy confirmation as soon as it is received since, in many cases, there will be a deadline stated in the confirmation report and if mistakes are not reported to the county clerk by the stated date, corrections of errors discovered later will likely be more difficult to address. Beyond this, many country clerks will request that the confirmation report be signed, dated, and returned to the country clerk by the district. Unfortunately, many districts simply sign the form and send it back without checking it. Avoid this mistake. If the district, by its the signature of its representative indicated that the statement is correct, it will be hard to argue later that a mistake in the levy is the fault of the county. The district may have to live with lower or missed revenues.

ALL GOOD? ALL DONE? NOT QUITE!

While the levy confirmation report is important, it is not as critical as a report which follows next, usually several weeks or even months later. This is the tax levy extension report. The tax levy extension report (usually referred to as the "extension report") is, in terms of the financial well being of the district, the most important document the district will receive during the year.

The extension report is generated by the county clerk after the tax assessment process has been completed by the county assessment officer for the levy year. Again, this will be for the year which precedes the year the tax is paid. As this article is being prepared, for example, most counties have completed or are very close to completing the assessment process for 2024. Once this process has been completed, the equalized assessed value of the district is computed for each taxing body based on its geographic jurisdiction boundaries. In theory, the assessment figures represent 1/3 of the fair market value of all of the real estate (land and structures built on the land) within the unit of government. (A full discussion of how assessments are determined is beyond

the scope of this article. There are special rules for the computation of assessments for different types of properties and in different areas of the state.) Once the assessment process is concluded, the equalized assessed value figure for the district will be provided to the county clerk. The county clerk will then use the EAV of each taxing unit along with the levy amounts submitted by the taxing bodies to generate the tax extension figures which will, in turn, be used to compute the actual tax rate or rates for each unit of government. Those rates will then be used to generate the tax bill for each parcel of taxable real estate in the district. The county clerk or more likely a vendor for the county clerk, using a computer processing program, will combine the district's EAV, its dollar levy or levies, the tax rate limits on its particular levies, and in the case of districts which are subject to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) its "limiting rate," all of which will be combined to generate the extension report for the district. That report will then be forwarded by the country clerk to taxing bodies before individual tax bills are issued. It is absolutely critical that the district carefully review the extension report from every county in which the district is located to ascertain that the is correct. In most cases, the district will be required to "sign off" on the extension and confirm to the county clerk that the extension is correct and that the unit of government agrees with its extension. Other county clerks issue the extension report and state that if the clerk is not notified of errors in the extension by a specified date, the report will be deemed to be correct and a mistake, whatever it is, will be the responsibility of the district and the district will have to live with the consequences. Consequently, it is of the greatest importance that the extension report be promptly reviewed and verified. If the district does not have the capability to check the extension, it should seek assistance from outside the district such as the district's attorney or accountant, to review the extension report. A relatively simple and quick initial check can be made by comparing the amount of the total dollar levy to the total dollar extension

shown on the report. **If there is any significant variance between these two numbers (levy and extension), it is a red flag which strongly indicates that a further review of the extension report is warranted.** Understand that there can be valid reasons for a variance between the levy and the extension. For example, in a PTELL jurisdiction, the restrictions of that law may cause the extension to be lower than the levy amount. Or, if a district anticipated a substantial increase in assessed value due to reassessments of existing properties in the district or the addition of newly constructed structures such as wind turbines, solar installations, or a large commercial or industrial development to the district's tax base which for some reason does occur as anticipated, the extension can turn out to be lower than the levy because of the rate limit or limits applicable to some or all of the district's levies. While these adjustments from the levy may be appropriate, it is prudent to verify that the adjustments are correct.

In any case, a call to the country clerk's tax deputy or department is a good first step because errors can occur and approval of an incorrect extension report or failure to notify the county clerk of an extension error or discrepancy can lead to serious revenue shortfalls for the district that may not be possible to correct. Most county clerks will appreciate the district's attention to its extension. If, however, by chance, the district does not receive an adequate explanation or correction when an inquiry is made, it is time to have a professional check the extension and assist in obtaining a correction.

In summary then, trustees are wise to always keep in mind the "last Tuesday in December," but they are even wiser to follow through with the tax extension of the district's levy! The key remains to act promptly and diligently. After all, it is your district's money! Good luck! ■



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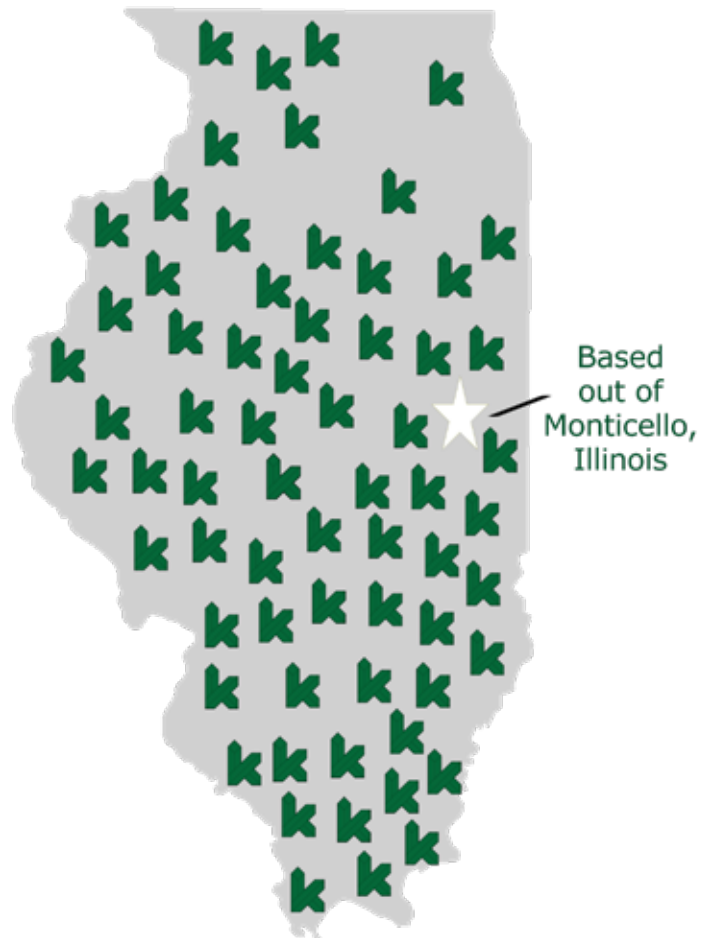


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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



*By Brittan Bolin
IAFPD Lobbyist*

Lawmakers Look to Address Lithium Battery Safety

One of the challenges of representing the fire service before legislative bodies is the impact of developing technologies on firefighting. One of those developments that is generating attention from lawmakers at all levels of government is battery-enabled technology powered by lithium-ion batteries, and the issues posed by these types of fires for first responders.

House Bill 1913, sponsored by State Representative Brad Fritts (R-Dixon) would require the Illinois Secretary of State to issue a decal that distinguishes electric vehicles from non-electric vehicles. The Amboy Fire Department's former chief brought this issue to Representative Fritts, highlighting the differences in extinguishing an electric vehicle fire caused by battery failure to a fire in a regular vehicle. Modeled on legislation that passed recently in Wisconsin, the requirement for a decal is intended to assist EMS and firefighters with the best approach to take.

The bill is Fritts' second attempt to address lithium-ion battery fires, following an identical bill he authored in the 103rd General Assembly as House Bill 4675. Previously, the Secretary of State required electric vehicles to have specific EL plates. They discontinued that policy, making it more difficult for first responders to know if they are dealing with a lithium-ion powered vehicle. The Wisconsin law passed in 2023 requires EVs to have a distinct orange and black "EV Hybrid" sticker on the license plate. Fritts said he

will continue to pursue the legislation, pointing out that State Representative Jaime Andrade (D-Chicago), chair of the House Transportation Vehicles and Safety Committee has signed on as a hyphenated co-sponsor and has shown strong support for the bill.

In Virginia, lawmakers passed legislation requiring first responders to receive specialized training on the fire risks associated with EVs. The training mandated by the legislation includes training on high-voltage batteries, potential for electrical arcing, and how to extricate occupants of EVs and extinguish battery fires. The mandated training applies to all firefighters, including volunteers, and must be completed by December 1, 2025. In promoting the legislation, the Virginia Professional Firefighters Association noted the differences in vehicle fires, including the potential for battery fires to re-ignite and the additional amount of water needed to extinguish a battery fire.

Some jurisdictions were early to address the issue of first responder safety and lithium batteries. New York City passed five bills, including measures to prohibit the sale, lease or rental of e-bikes not meeting safety standards. In addition to passing these bills, city leaders called on the federal government to act. Congress responded, passing House Resolution 973 in April 2025. HR 973 creates the Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-ion Batteries Act. The bill would require the Consumer Products Safety Commission to finalize standards for battery-enabled

devices within 180 days of passage and would establish ANSI/CAN/UL ratings for light electric vehicles, e-bikes and person e-mobility devices. HR 973 also requires the CPSC to submit a report to Congress of their findings within five years. The bill is supported by the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Much of the training and legislation to address safety is being driven by organizations including the National Fire Protection Association and supported by research by the Fire Safety Research Institute, a part of the UL Research Institutes. Their research addresses the issues posed by a lithium battery fires in a residential setting, and found that battery abuse, use of uncertified batteries, and modifications of devices sharply increased the potential for a battery failure resulting in an explosion.

Safety issues with lithium-ion batteries will continue to be of interest to lawmakers. IAFPD will continue to monitor these developments on both the state and national level and ensure that first responder safety and impact on fire protection districts are considered when crafting laws to address the hazards inherent with this technology. ■



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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 OSFM Awards \$5 Million in Grants for the Construction or Rehabilitation of Fire Stations in Illinois



The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has announced the inaugural Fire Station Construction and Rehabilitation Program awards totaling \$5 million to 17 grantees across the state. This funding will allow fire departments or fire protection districts to repair, upgrade, or construct new fire stations.

"I am proud to be celebrating inaugural Fire Station Construction and Rehabilitation Program awards, a crucial lifeline for fire departments across the state – particularly those in rural areas – to upgrade their facilities and equipment," said Governor JB Pritzker. "Our firefighters put their lives on the line every single day, and these investments can make all the difference in keeping our communities safe and protected."

"This was the inaugural year of the grant program, established as part of the OSFM's ongoing commitment to assist the Illinois Fire Service in identifying and securing funding for critical resources that might otherwise be out of reach," said Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele L. Pankow. "I want to thank my predecessors for their hard work and dedication in securing this funding, which now allows departments like those receiving these grants the opportunity to construct or rebuild stations—ultimately helping to keep their communities and firefighters safer."

2025 Fire Station Construction and Rehabilitation Grant Recipients:

Alexander:

Tamms FD\$71,011

Gallatin:

Equality FD\$300,000

Shawneetown FD\$350,000

Hamilton:

McLeansboro FD\$350,000

Jackson:

Ava Volunteer FD\$350,000

Village of Gorham Vol. FD\$350,000

Johnson:

Buncombe FD\$350,000

Vienna FD\$350,000

Marion:

Kell Community FPD.....\$348,000

Mason:

Bath FPD.....\$350,000

Montgomery:

Witt Volunteer FPD.....\$331,000

Morgan:

Village of Chapin FD\$28,415

Franklin FPD.....\$350,000

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Ware-Wolf Lake FPD.....\$349,789

White:

Norris City FPD.....\$71,785

The Fire Station Construction and Rehabilitation Program recipients were selected through a competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process that was opened to fire departments, fire protection districts, and township fire departments. The program was established to provide grants of up to \$350,000 for the construction or rehabilitation of fire stations across the state.

For more information about our programs, visit our [website](#).

James A. Rivera

Illinois State Fire Marshal

Illinois Fire Service Institute



The Illinois Fire Service Institute celebrated the 101st Annual Fire College in June. Over 350 first responders from across Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana participated in engaging classroom discussions, hands-on training, and live fire rotations. It was a great weekend. We are already planning for next year!

RECENT CHANGES TO THE IFSI BASIC OPERATIONS FIREFIGHTER ACADEMY AND BLENDED PROGRAMS:

Effective June 2025, IFSI has packaged the traditional Academy and BOF programs to include supplemental courses needed for state and national certification. This includes the integration of Basic Operations Firefighter (Firefighter I) and Advanced Technician Firefighter (Firefighter II) into one cohesive training program. The new names of the courses are:

- **Basic Operations and Advanced Technician Firefighter Academy – 7-week resident training program**
- **Basic Operations and Advanced Technician Firefighter Blended – 20-week blended training program**

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While these changes have altered the course names and enrollment process, the quality of IFSI training programs remains. We are proud to serve as the statutory fire academy for Illinois and are committed to offering premier training that meets and exceeds national training standards.

Upon successful completion of all required Basic Operations and Advanced Technician program components, students will earn certification with the Pro Board and IFSAC. After Illinois students complete the Fire Service Vehicle Operator required driving practical components through their fire department, they are eligible to apply for OSFM certification.

This program update impacts future students only. Students who have successfully completed Basic Operations Firefighter (NFPA Firefighter I) may still register for a stand-alone Advanced Technician Firefighter class. For more information, visit: go.fsi.illinois.edu/BasicOperations_AdvancedTechnicianFirefighter

VETERANS IN THE FIRE SERVICE ANNUAL TRAINING EVENT:



There is no time like the present to reserve your spot for the 2025 Veterans in the Fire Service event. This one-of-a-kind training opportunity is scheduled for November 22-23 in Champaign.

The Veterans in the Fire Service event is a no-cost program exclusively for

members of US Armed Forces Veterans. Two training tracks are available for current members of the fire service or veterans interested in joining the fire service. The entire weekend is full of quality training, fellowship, and camaraderie.

Free meals and hotel accommodations are included in the event. Loaner firefighting personal protective equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) is also available with advance reservation. No fire service experience is needed to attend! **Share this information with a veteran! Help us spread the word about this unique personal and professional development opportunity.**

SAVE THE DATE:

As we move into the second half of the year, mark your calendars for the 2026 Winter Fire School. The event will be held January 17-18, 2026, in Champaign. Complete event details will be posted in early fall.

Thank you for your continued support of the Illinois Fire Service Institute.

#WeAreIFSI

Jim Keiken
Director

Illinois Fire Chiefs Association

On behalf of the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association Executive Board, I would like to thank the IAFPD for the opportunity to provide a quick update on how the IFCA is supporting our members and the Illinois fire Service.

The focus of the IFCA is helping the chief fire officers in Illinois protect their communities. We do this through educating fire officers, driving legislative change, providing important services and many other efforts that are designed to not only prepare the chief for his job, be to be there when help is needed.

Providing education for our members is vital. In October, we will host our annual conference in Peoria. This is a great educational opportunity with nationally recognized speakers providing important insight. This year we have introduced a tract specific to EMS providers. The trade show is among the largest in the State and the opportunities for networking abound. Our educational efforts continue

throughout the year. In conjunction with the Illinois Fire Chiefs Educational and Research Foundation, we provide a full range of fire officer classes. Many fall classes are filling up and the deadline to apply for the 2026 Chief Fire Officer Certification Program is September 15th. Consider signing up for these classes soon to ensure we have space for you.

The IFCA is also very active in Springfield. In 2025, we have advocated for a number of changes that impact the fire service. We have worked with the Illinois Fire Services Association and the IAFPD to help not only our members, but the Illinois fire service. The IFCA works on legislative issues year-round, not only when the legislature is in session. We are always looking to learn more about what is important to our members, please do not hesitate to reach out.

The services provided by the IFCA are an incredibly important part of what we do. The IFCA Funeral Committee is there in a Fire Districts worst moments, but can also help before a death. The Assessment and Consulting Services (ACS) are there to provide expert guidance for promotions and other fire service projects. Through ACS, we are committed to providing the very best services at the most reasonable costs possible. Our Volunteer and Combination Officers Committee is active in recognizing the needs and providing solutions to those organizations that are not fully career Districts. For 2026, we have moved our annual VCOC conference to Fairview Heights on January 16th and 17th. Save the dates and watch for more information.

If your Fire District is not a member of the IFCA, I would encourage you to consider joining. Each organizational membership includes active memberships for three chief officers (or equivalent officers). I encourage you to check our website at www.illinoisfirechiefs.org for more information on membership, classes and services. If you have questions, do not hesitate to reach out to our office at info@illinoisfirechiefs.org or 847-966-0732, or contact me directly. The Illinois Fire Chiefs Association is here to help!

John Buckley
Executive Director, IFCA
execdir@illinoisfirechiefs.org

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IL Fire Inspectors Association



We are beginning to put together the annual Fire and Life Safety Conference for 2026. If anyone has a topic worth considering, or knows of a good speaker, contact a Board member or our office. We have a number of good ideas now, but would always look at other classes for code enforcers or public educators.

The dates for the 2026 Fire and Life Safety Conference in East Peoria are March 25-27, 2026 with a pre-conference session the 24th. Par a Dice hotel room reservations can be made now by calling 1-800-547-0711 or at their website of www.paradice.doydgame.com/groups-and-wedding/group-reservations. Use the group code of FIRC26C.

Are you a member of the IFIA? If not, 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 and click on membership.

Would you help us clean up our email list? If you are a member of the IFIA, we would like you to email the office at ifafire@IllinoisFireInspectors.org and list your current people, with their email address, in your organization that you would like regular emails to be sent. Additionally, we would like the current Fire Chief's name and email address. If you are not a member, but would like to receive weekly emails on classes and events, just contact our office with your name, email, and department.

If you would like to take the Fire Inspector 1 class, but find the Monday through Friday classes difficult to do, we are running a class in the south suburbs. On the weekends of Sept 6-7, 13-14, & 20, we will be presenting a Fire Inspector 1 class in Richton Park. This will be taught by several instructors with many years of experience in the field of code enforcement. The member cost of this class is only \$350. Registration is available on our website.

At the end of this article are a series of upcoming classes that we will be offering this year. Several of them are OSFM Fire Inspector certifications or Public Fire and Life Safety classes. Go to our website and sign up for these now. If you need a **scholarship** to cover the registration fees for our OSFM certification class, that application is available on our website.

Many departments are doing open houses. If you use a bedroom "burn door" to show the benefits of keeping bedroom doors closed, you can add some visuals to make it more of an educational prop. They can be obtained at GZ Designs in Roselle. Their phone number is (630) 307-7446, and the cost is reasonable. Should you elect, your department can be added in place of Illinois Fire Services. When you call, just ask for the fire door stickers.



Upcoming events:

- Sept 4, 11, 18, 25, Oct 2 – Inspector 2 Romeoville
- Sept 6-7, 13-14, 20 – Inspector 1 Richton Park
- Sept. 26 – OSFM Regulations Related to Aboveground Storage Tanks
- Nov. 10 – 12, 17 & 18 – PFLSE Countryside
- Nov. 21 – VIRTUAL Did You Know?
- Dec. 4 – Holiday Party

Robert Morris
Executive Director, IFIA

Camp I am Me Nominations Being Accepted for Fire Safety & Prevention Awards

Each year Camp I Am Me presents awards for corporate responsibility, life safety, special recognition, as well as the coveted Wayne Luecht Memorial Award at the annual Fire Prevention Week Luncheon in October. If you know of an individual or



group at your department or within your community deserving of this recognition at one of the largest fire service gatherings in the state, please consider submitting a nomination. Nominations may be received at any time but must be submitted no later than August 15th to be considered for this year. The nomination form can be found at www.IFSA.org/fpwl. This year's luncheon will take place on Thursday, October 9th in Woodridge.

84th Fire Prevention Week Luncheon Takes Place October 9th in Woodridge

Join hundreds of members from the fire service and beyond at the annual Fire Prevention Week Luncheon, presented by Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board. This premiere event includes lunch, networking opportunities, and a keynote presentation. The program also highlights and honors those across Illinois who have gone above and beyond in their fire safety and burn prevention efforts, as each year Camp I Am Me receives nominations and presents awards in various categories.

This year's keynote address will be provided by Hanover Fire & EMS (Richmond, VA) Assistant Chief Eddie Buchanan (ret.). His presentation will be on marketing your department to win community support. Eddie will explore how firefighters, officers, and chiefs can strategically market their departments to strengthen public trust, increase engagement, and secure vital support. To learn more about the presenter, submit a nomination for a fire prevention award, or to register, visit www.ifsa.org/fpwl.

Statewide Smoke Alarm Installation Blitz Scheduled for October 19-25

Illinois fire service, join Camp I Am Me, Office of the IL State Fire Marshal, and IL Community Risk Reduction Coalition Taskforce for the second annual Be Alarmed! Smoke Alarm Installation Statewide Blitz. Join hundreds of departments from across the state to educate residents on the dangers of fire in the home and to ensure there are working smoke alarms properly installed within your community – and what better time than during National Fire Prevention Month.

Active Be Alarmed! departments simply need to acknowledge they will

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participate in installing alarms the week of October 19th. Departments not currently enrolled in the Be Alarmed! Program can also participate, but will need to register to become an active member of the program before alarms can be distributed.

Bulk amounts of alarms will be delivered to participating departments based on the size and scope of the department's blitz. Camp I Am Me staff will work with departments to ensure appropriate amounts of supplies are received prior to October 19th. Alarms received through this specific request are expected to be installed during the October 19-25, 2025 timeframe to the best of the department's abilities. Statewide data will be provided to participating departments upon the conclusion of the blitz week. Learn more about this great community program by visiting www.ifsai.org/prevention-resources/blitz.

Philip Zaleski

Executive Director

Illinois OSHA

Online course: Defenses for Firefighters

Thanks to some fantastic cooperation with IFSI, our Defenses for Firefighters course has transitioned from a PowerPoint course to an on-demand course through IFSI's Online Classroom (online.fsi.illinois.edu). Is it free? Yes. Does the entire course take less than 20 minutes to complete? Yes. Does the course provide actionable information to reduce the risk of firefighter injury or death? Yes. IL OSHA encourages every fire department to add this short course to their training schedule, so lessons identified during IL OSHA investigations are applied on the fireground.

The concept for the course focuses on assessing risks and then defending against them with a goal of striking a balance between firefighter safety and operational effectiveness. Each of the 13 defenses are presented in a "bullet" point format that promotes the ability for a department to easily integrate the defenses across their training and operating policies. While the

title is Defenses for Firefighters, the course is for all ranks and levels of experience.

Erik Kambarian, Chief

Div. of Occupational Safety and Health (IL OSHA) - IL Dept of Labor

Firefighters Pension Investment Fund Update



When Firefighter Pension Investment Fund's (FPIF) was established in 2020, it held no assets. At the conclusion of the Board's Statutory Transition Period on July 14, 2022, the portfolio value as of July 31, 2022, stood at \$7,441,705,726.

The FPIF fiscal year ended on June 30, 2025 (FY25). As of fiscal year-end, the preliminary unaudited value of the FPIF portfolio exceeds \$10.2 billion. The Board of Trustees and its staff is proud of its work done to date and is committed to providing above market return at below market costs to the benefit of our firefighters and the communities they serve.

Investment Performance

The portfolio performed strongly in FY25. As of May 31, 2025, the portfolio delivered a fiscal year-to-date return of 9.5%, outperforming the policy benchmark of 9.2%. The one-year trailing return was 11.0%, exceeding the benchmark return of 10.7%. All returns are reported net of fees.

Private Markets Portfolio

The Board continues to build out FPIF's long-term asset allocation, with significant progress made in developing the private markets portfolio since its inception in 2024.

As of July 10, 2025, total private market commitments are as follows:

- Private Equity: \$387.7 million committed, with \$15.2 million contributed
- Private Debt: \$375.0 million committed, with \$130.6 million contributed
- Real Estate: \$685.7 million committed, with \$367.9 million contributed
- Infrastructure: \$230.0 million committed, with \$158.3 million contributed

Total commitments to the private markets portfolio now exceed \$1.7 billion.

Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

The Board adopted its Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 26) budget at its meeting on May 9, 2025. The budgeted total operating expenses for FY 26 are \$4,136,446 as compared to \$4,298,389 approved for FY 25 representing a decrease of 3.8%.

Projected Investment Management Fees for FY 26 are \$16,000,000. This is an estimate based on a \$9,500,000,000 investment portfolio, existing investment allocations, and new allocations anticipated for the coming fiscal year. The amount budgeted for FY2025 was \$9,600,000. The increase in anticipated investment management fees is attributable to the increased allocations to active managers and allocations to private markets.

Based on a \$9,500,000,000 portfolio, the total expenses of FPIF would constitute an expense ratio of 21.2 basis points.

FPIF Actuarial Statements

A reminder that FPIF prepared actuarial statements are issued to Article 4 pension funds on an ongoing basis, based on their respective fiscal year-ends. Article 4 pension funds must submit their annual statements to the Illinois Department of Insurance (DOI) within six months of their fiscal year-end. Assuming there are no discrepancies in the annual statement, FPIF aims to issue the actuarial statement within 30 days after the DOI has received and accepted it.

Pension funds that wish to receive their actuarial statements prior to the adoption of property tax levies by their Fire Protection District should ensure timely submission of their annual statements to DOI.

Meeting Schedule

The Board of Trustees meeting originally scheduled for July 11, 2025, was cancelled and may be rescheduled prior to the next regularly scheduled Board meeting on October 10, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

The Investments & Operations Committee and the Audit & Compliance Committee are scheduled to meet on September 25, 2025. ■



IAFPD FOUNDATION Annual Golf Outing

Supporting the Next Generation of
the Illinois Fire Service

August 15, 2025

Oak Springs Golf Course

6740 E 3500 S Rd.

St. Anne, IL 60954

Registration 9:30 am

Shotgun Start 11:00 am Rain or Shine

**Foursomes and
Sponsorships Welcome!**

SIGN UP TODAY!



32nd Annual Illinois Fallen Firefighter Memorial & Firefighting Medal of Honor Awards Ceremony May 13, 2025



Firefighter Unit Citation Award recipients BC McKenna, LT McWilliams, LT Nunez, FF Schmidt, FF Burnell, FF Blonsky, FF Haltman, FF Hellinger, FF Kazeos, FF Jack and FF Jacks. The LRFPD members were called to a residential structure fire with high heating and heavy smoke on April 4th. Crews found and quickly removed the two missing residents. Both residents were transported to area hospitals. The same crew extinguished and overhauled the fire building.

Congratulations to Lincolnshire Riverwoods

Fire Protection District members on receiving a Unit Citation award at the Illinois Fallen Firefighters Memorial and Firefighting Medal of Honor Award Ceremony on May 13th in Springfield.

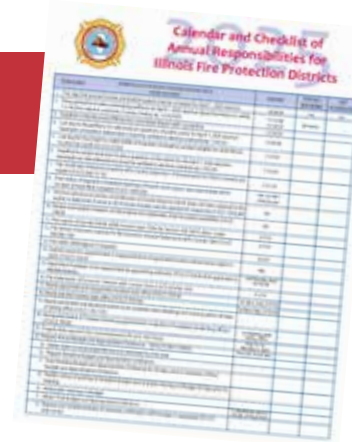


Captain Derek Strohl from Buffalo Fire Protection District was one of 14 in the State who received the Firefighter Excellence Award from the Office of the State Fire Marshal for a rescue he made during a house fire last year. The individual did succumb to his injuries. Captain, we are all very proud of you. Thank you for your dedication and selflessness.

COMPLIANCE CORNER

Calendar / Checklist Reminders

- ❖ For most districts, completion of the annual budget and appropriation process occurs in the summer months. Districts need to pay attention to the time limits of the Municipal Budget Law (50 ILCS 305/3).
- ❖ For districts with a fiscal year ending in March, April, or May, planning for completion of the District's Annual Financial Report; Treasurer's Statement of Receipts & Disbursements; and CPA Audit need to be in process to meet applicable deadlines (six months [Statement] or 180 [AFR & Audit] days after the end of the fiscal year.)
- ❖ Tax levy planning for the 2025 tax levy should commence when the district has received its 2024 tax extension report which will provide the latest equalized assessed value information available to most to district for use in planning the 2025 levy.
- ❖ Verification that the district's fire department is in process to transition from the NFIRS incident reporting system to the NERIS system which will occur at the end of this year and into the beginning of 2026. This includes opening a NERIS account and becoming familiar with the new system and arranging to retrieve and store NFIRS reports maintained by OSFM if the district does not currently save and store its NFIRS report. The OSFM system is to be shutdown in mid-January 2026 and reports with OSFM will no longer be retrievable



from OSFM. Since these reports are covered by the Local Record Act (50 ILCS 205/1) maintaining access under the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1) will be required.

- ❖ Tax extension reports for some districts may still be forthcoming for 2024 tax levies (tax payable in 2025) in the late summer and early fall months. Districts which have not already received a report on their 2024 extension should look for it and verify that it is correct. (See *Fire Counsel Notes* article in this issue of the *Fire Call*.) ■

When having the right equipment matters,
so does having the funds to purchase it.



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- Overcome budget restrictions
- Make necessary building and equipment purchases now, then pay them back over time

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- ✓ **Quick application and closing**

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PENSION POINTERS



The Ethical Obligations of Pension Trustees

By Carolyn Welch Clifford
Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.

When pension trustees think about their obligations and duties to the pension fund and its members, the focus is often on the fiduciary underpinnings of those responsibilities. However, in addition to the fiduciary duties set forth in the Illinois Pension Code, pension trustees are obligated to follow several statutory provisions directed at their ethical obligations in their role as a board member, as well. Under state law, there are several specific statutory obligations and prohibitions that provide the framework for the ethical conduct of pension trustees. Many of these statutory provisions focus on transparency and the avoidance of conflicts of interest in the performance of pension trustees' duties.

The basic ethical expectations of pension trustees

At its most basic definition, "ethical" means to be truthful, fair and honest. For pension trustees, this means committing to a system of moral values that govern their behavior in engaging in their fiduciary obligations to the pension fund. In all aspects of governing the pension fund, pension trustees must seek to maintain integrity and accountability. In meeting their ethical responsibilities, pension trustees should seek to manage the pension board's processes with appropriate oversight, accountability, transparency, and efficiency.

The ethical expectations of a pension trustee can be distilled into the following seven commitments:

- Trustees will represent the fund's members honestly and equally and

About the Authors: Carolyn Welch Clifford is a senior partner with Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. in Naperville, Illinois. Ms. Clifford concentrates her practice in the representation of Illinois firefighter and police pension funds, as well as fire and police commissions and fire protection districts. She currently serves as the Chair of the Public Safety Affinity Group for the National Association of Public Pension Attorneys (NAPPA). She is a frequent speaker at fire service and public pension conferences in Illinois and nationally and contributes regularly to several publications. Ms. Clifford earned her B.S. and J.D. degrees from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. You can contact her at cclifford@ottosenlaw.com.

refuse to surrender their responsibilities to special interest or partisan political groups.

- Trustees will avoid any conflict of interest or any appearance of impropriety which could result from their position and shall not use their board membership for personal gain or publicity.
- Trustees will recognize a board member has no legal authority as an individual and that decisions can be made only by a majority vote at a board of trustees' meeting.
- Trustees will take no private action which might compromise the board or administration of the fund and will respect the confidentiality of privileged information.
- Trustees will abide by majority decisions of the board while retaining the right to seek changes through ethical and constructive channels.
- Trustees will encourage and respect the free expression of opinion of fellow board members and others who seek to be heard before the board of trustees.
- Trustees shall faithfully and diligently perform the duties of the board of trustees, including attendance at all

board meetings and other functions where trustee attendance is required.

Pension trustees shall not be employed by the pension fund nor receive compensation for services performed as a board member

Section 1-109.5 of the Illinois Pension Code prohibits pension board members from being employed by the pension fund. Furthermore, this provision prohibits an individual who has served as a pension trustee from being employed by the pension fund for period of 12 months after they cease serving as a trustee. (40 ILCS 5/1-109.5) Similarly, Sections 3-128 and 4-121 of the Illinois Pension Code prohibits board members from receiving any salary or compensation for services performed as board members. (40 ILCS 5/3-128 and 4-121)

Pension trustees must annually file a Statement of Economic Interests

Like other elected and appointed officials, pension trustees must annually fill out a verified written Statement of Economic Interest with the county clerk of the county in which the principal office

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Pension Pointers

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of the pension fund is located by May 1st. (5 ILCS 240/4A-101.5, 4A-106.5 and 4A-107) This requirement is part of the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act and the statement requires individuals to disclose a variety of specific financial interests, such as assets valued over \$10,000, employment or contractual services with any unit of government in Illinois, and gifts in excess of \$500 received in the prior calendar year.

This financial disclosure law is not unique to Illinois; many states have similar financial disclosure forms that public officials and candidates must file to make their financial interest public and help prevent conflicts of interest in government. The key purpose of these statements is to promote transparency and accountability in government by revealing potential sources of conflicts between public officials' duties and their personal finances.

Pension trustees are limited in accepting gifts from prohibited sources.

In a separate section of the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act, pension trustees – like other elected and appointed officials in Illinois – are generally prohibited from accepting gifts from “prohibited sources.” (5 ILCS 430/1-5, 10-1 through 10-40, and 50-5; 40 ILCS 5/1-125) “Gifts” are defined by the law and include a broad variety of tangible and intangible items having monetary value. They include any gratuity, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, cash, food, drink, and honoraria for speaking engagements.

A “prohibited source” under the law means a person or entity who:

- Seeks official action by the board or the board member
- Does business with or seeks to do business with the board or the board member
- Has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of a board member's official duties
- Is a registered lobbyist

There are a multitude of exceptions and limitations to the general gift ban, and they include:

- Educational materials
- Opportunities or benefits available on the same condition as to the general public
- Anything for which the board member pays market value
- Political contributions paid under the Illinois Election Code
- Gift from a “relative” (broadly defined; includes in-laws and fiancés)
- Anything provided by an individual on the basis of a personal friendship unless the trustee has reason to believe that, under the circumstances, the gift was provided because of the official position or employment of the trustee and not the personal friendship
- Food and refreshments not exceeding \$75 per person in value on a single calendar day, as long as the food and refreshments are consumed on the premises from which they were purchased or catered
- Food, refreshments, lodging, or transportation resulting from outside business or employment activities of trustee or their spouse and customarily provided to others in same business (not enhanced due to one's status on a pension board)
- Intra governmental and intergovernmental gifts: gifts from other pension funds, governmental entity or state agency
- Bequests, inheritance and transfers at death
- Any item or items from any one prohibited source during the calendar year having a cumulative total value of less than \$100

There are a few more provisions regarding gift bans of which pension trustees should be aware:

- There is no violation if the pension trustee takes reasonable action to

return the prohibited gift to the source or gives the gift or an amount equal to its value to an appropriate charity.

- The underlying municipality or fire protection district may adopt or maintain policies that are more restrictive on gifts, in which case pension trustees will be subject to the more restrictive policy.
- Intentional violation of the gift ban constitutes a business offense and is subject to a fine of at least \$1,001 and up to \$5000. Furthermore, the violator may be subject to discipline or discharge.

Pension trustees are prohibited from engaging in certain transactions

While Section 1-110 of the Illinois Pension Code – which prohibits certain transactions by pension trustees – has less applicability since police and firefighter investment assets were consolidated in 2020, it is still important for board members to understand the limitations set forth in this provision as they apply to their duties and responsibilities at the local board level. (40 ILCS 5/1-110)

Section 1-110(a) prohibits a fiduciary of a pension fund from causing the fund to engage in a transaction if they know or should have known that such transaction constitutes a direct or indirect:

- Sale, exchange or lease of pension fund property to a “party in interest”¹ for less than adequate consideration.
- Purchase, exchange or lease of property from a “party in interest” to the pension fund for more than adequate consideration.
- Lending money or extending credit to a “party in interest” without receipt of adequate consideration and a reasonable rate of interest.
- Borrowing from a “party in interest” at an unreasonably high rate or with the provision of excessive security.

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¹Section 1-101.3 of the Illinois Pension Code defines “party in interest” to a pension fund as:

- A fiduciary, counsel or employee of the pension fund, or a relative of such person
- A person providing services to the pension fund, or a relative of such person
- An employer whose employees are covered by the pension fund
- An employee organization (union) whose members are covered by the pension fund
- An employee, officer or trustee of the pension fund (40 ILCS 5/1-101.3)

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- Furnishing goods, services or facilities to a “party in interest” for less than adequate consideration.
- Receiving goods, services or facilities from a “party in interest” for more than adequate consideration.
- Transfer of assets to a “party in interest” for less than adequate consideration. (40 ILCS 5/1-110(a))

Section 1-110(b) prohibits fiduciaries from:

- Dealing with pension fund assets in their own interest or for their own account.
- Acting in any transaction involving the pension fund on behalf of a party whose interest are adverse to the pension fund or its participants and beneficiaries.
- Receiving any consideration for their own personal account from any party dealing with the pension fund in connection with a transaction involving pension fund assets. (40 ILCS 5/1-110(b))

In Section 1-110(c), there are exceptions to prohibited transactions. Specifically, this subsection provides:

- Pension trustees may receive a benefit to which they may be entitled as a participant or beneficiary in the pension fund.
- Pension trustees may receive any reimbursement of expenses properly and actually incurred in performance of duties of the pension fund.
- Pension trustees may serve as a trustee in addition to being an officer, employee, agent or other representative of a “party in interest.” (40 ILCS 5/1-110(c))

Finally, Section 1-110(d) sets forth a specific prohibition for Article 3 (police) and Article 4 (fire) trustees. This subsection provides:

A fiduciary of a pension fund established under Article 3 or 4 shall not knowingly cause or advise the pension fund to engage in an investment transaction when the fiduciary (i) has any direct interest in the income, gains, or profits of the

investment adviser through which the investment transaction is made or (ii) has a business relationship with that investment adviser that would result in a pecuniary benefit to the fiduciary as a result of the investment transaction. (40 ILCS 5/1-110(d))

Notably, violation of Section 1-110(d) is a Class 4 felony.

Pension trustees shall not provide contingent or placement fees

Since consolidation of the investment assets of Article 3 and 4 pensions funds, Illinois Pension Code Section 1-145’s prohibition on contingent and placement fees is unlikely to arise for a police of fire pension trustee. However, it is important for pension trustees to understand that they are prohibited from attempting to influence the outcome of an investment decision of or the procurement of investment advice or services of a pension fund for compensation, contingent in whole or in part upon the decision of the procurement. (40 ILCS 5/1-145) Violations of Section 1-145 are considered a business offense with fines up to \$10,000; violators

are also barred from investment in public funds for a period of three years.

Pension trustees are prohibited from monetary gains on pension fund investments

Section 1-130 of the Illinois Pension Code prohibits any member or employee of the board of trustees of a pension fund or their spouses from:

- Knowingly having any direct interest in the income, gains, or profits of any investments made on behalf of a pension fund for which that person is a member
- Receiving any pay or emolument for services in connection with any investment
- Becoming an endorser or surety, or in any manner an obligor for money loaned or borrowed from a pension fund (40 ILCS 5/1-130)

An annuity or any income, gains or profits relating to a non-controlling interest in any public securities, mutual fund or other passive investment is not considered “monetary gain on investments” under this provision. However, violation of this statute is a Class 3 felony. ■

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HONEST & OPEN GOVERNMENT



FOIA & OMA Updates

By David Livingstone

Assistant Madison County State's Attorney serving as Chief of the Civil Division

Since our last update on the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) (5 ILCS 120/) and the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 ILCS 140/), there have been at least five binding opinions from the Public Access Counselor (PAC): four of which concern FOIA and one the Open Meetings Act. Should you endeavor to read any of the binding PAC opinions, the new Public Access Counselor website address is: <https://foiapac.ilag.gov/>.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

DUTY TO RESPOND TO FOIA REQUESTS

PAC Opinions **25-003** and **25-005** relate to the most common misstep of public bodies concerning FOIA requests: they must respond to FOIA requests within five (5) business days of the request with a disclosure, whole or partial denial, or a proper extension.

A RECORD THAT DOES NOT RELATE TO AN ADJUDICATION WILL NOT BE EXEMPT FROM DISCLOSURE UNDER SECTION 7(1)(n) OF FOIA

In **25-004**, an individual submitted a FOIA request to the Village of Burr Ridge Police Department seeking a copy of a video from a former Deputy Chief's DUI arrest. The Department denied the request in its entirety pursuant to Section

About the Author: David Livingstone received his undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice, Political Science, and Public Administration from Lindenwood University. He is a 2016 graduate of St. Louis University School of Law, concentrating in Civil Litigation. Formerly a principal in the law firm Stobbs, Sinclair & Livingstone, Ltd., in Alton, Illinois, where he represented a number of individuals, entities, and various local units of government, including fire protection districts. He is now Chief of the Civil Division of the Madison County State's Attorney's Office.

7(1)(n) of FOIA arguing that the video relates to a public body's adjudication of employee grievances or disciplinary cases. Section 7(1)(n) of FOIA exempts from disclosure "records relating to a public body's adjudication of employee grievances or disciplinary cases; however, this exemption shall not extend to the final outcome of cases in which discipline is imposed." The PAC found that the withheld video recording was created well before any disciplinary proceedings took place and existed independently of any such adjudication. (Note: *Kalven v. City of Chicago*, 2014 IL App (1st) 121846, the appellate court concluded that "complaint register files documenting investigations of citizen complaints filed against Chicago Police Department officers do not involve any formalized legal proceedings and are part of an investigatory process that is separate and distinct from disciplinary adjudications."). Therefore, for a record to be exempt under Section 7(1)(n) of FOIA, the record must "relate to" an adjudication and any records that pre-date or exist independently of an adjudication are not generally exempt under Section 7(1)(n).

COMMUNICATIONS THAT ARE NOT DISCOVERABLE IN LITIGATION OR ARE PROTECTED BY ATTORNEY-CLIENT PRIVILEGE ARE EXEMPT UNDER SECTION 7(1)(m) OF FOIA

In **25-006**, a class action lawsuit was filed by a FOIA requestor and other plaintiffs against the City of Chicago and an Alderman. It was reported that the case was subsequently settled and the city contributed to the settlement, even though claims against the city were dismissed by the court. Thereafter, the requestor submitted a FOIA request to the City of Chicago Department of Finance seeking a copy of a payment made to the Alderman and documents that show the nature and extent of the settlement agreement reached. The Department granted the request in part and denied it in part. One denial was based upon attorney-client privilege pursuant to Section 7(1)(m) of FOIA. The PAC found that there was no indication that the document was protected from disclosure under attorney-client privilege because, based on its confidential review, no legal advice was sought or provided from the city attorney

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Honest & Open Government

Continued from page 24

to the alderman about the settlement or the litigation and, because the alderman was represented by private counsel, there was nothing to suggest the city attorney was acting as legal counsel to the alderman in the correspondence. The takeaway here is that for communications to be exempt under Section 7(1)(m) of FOIA, the communications must not be discoverable in litigation or the communications must be protected by attorney-client privilege.

OPEN MEETINGS ACT

A COMMITTEE THAT IS A SUBSIDIARY BODY MUST COMPLY WITH THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT

In **25-007**, an individual submitted a Request for Review with the Public Access Bureau alleging that a City's Committee violated the Open Meetings Act by

improperly holding private meetings. The individual contended that the Committee was under the city's control, thereby making the Committee a subsidiary body of a public body that must comply with the Open Meetings Act. The City argued that the committee is an "informal advisory committee" that does not qualify as a subsidiary or advisory body. The PAC examined four primary factors that courts consider in determining whether an entity is a "subsidiary body" of a public body: "(1) the extent to which the entity has a legal existence independent of government resolution, (2) the degree of government control exerted over the entity, (3) the extent to which the entity is publicly funded, and (4) the nature of the functions performed by the entity." *Better Government Ass'n v. Illinois High School Ass'n*, 2017 IL 121124, 26. After applying these four factors, the PAC found that the Pool Committee is a subsidiary body of the city, noting (1) that the city created

the committee to assist in the planning of a new city pool, (2) the mayor appointed the members and the committee was formed to make recommendations for expenditures of public money to the city council, (3) although the committee members were purely volunteer, city resources in the form of city employee and officials' time and effort were used to assist the committee, and (4) the committee performed a function of government by evaluating proposals regarding the pool and recommending decisions to the City council. Bottom line: most public body committees will fall under OMA, so the safest thing to do is follow OMA. ■



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NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



By: Karrie Beneky
IAFPD Administrative Assistant

Welcome New Associate Member: Kings Financial Consulting, Inc.



IAFPD is pleased to welcome **Kings Financial Consulting, Inc.** as one of our newest associate members!

Based in Monticello, IL, Kings Financial has become a trusted name in municipal finance, specializing in helping public agencies including fire protection districts plan and finance critical capital improvements. From new stations and major renovations to equipment and vehicle purchases, their team offers tailored financial guidance and debt structuring expertise to meet each district's unique needs.

Founded by Tim King, and now led by second-generation president **Kendall King**, the firm has worked with nearly 200 Illinois public entities and helped issue over \$1.5 billion in municipal debt across more than 500 transactions. Their approach combines sophisticated financial tools with personal, hands-on service. Kings' advisors frequently attend board and committee meetings in person, no matter how small or remote the district, to help leaders make informed decisions with confidence.

Kings Financial is a registered municipal advisor, operating with full fiduciary responsibility under federal law. They assist with capital planning, tax rate modeling, bond structuring, rating agency preparation, compliance, and even public outreach during referendums—all with a focus on transparency and client-first service.

Kings is excited to have recently joined the Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts (IAFPD) and looks forward to becoming an active participant in conferences, training events, and initiatives that support the financial health of Illinois Fire Protection Districts. As the firm looks to the future under

new leadership, it remains grounded in the principles that defined its founding: independence, service, and a deep understanding of the public sector.

Please join us in welcoming Kings Financial Consulting, Inc. to the IAFPD community! ■

NEW 2025 EDITIONS AVAILABLE NOW!

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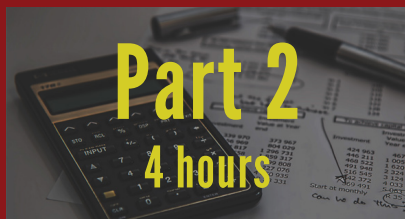
The next presentation will be held **in partnership** with NIAFPD
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Part 1 4 hours

Fire District Organization & Administration

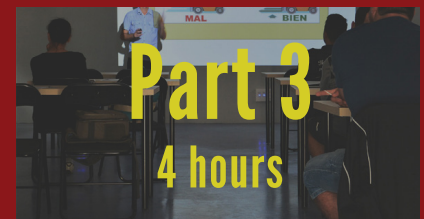
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By Roger Lunt
Fire Chief ret.

Fire Department Leadership: *Just knowing your position duties is not enough*

Part 1 of 2 parts from 80th Annual Conference
Keynote Address

I want to thank the IAFFD Board for the opportunity to address two groups at the 80th Annual Conference. I enjoyed sharing ideas as I met with old friends and made new ones. It was certainly an honor to be included in your conference.

With the following, I will briefly address the leadership topic that I covered as the Keynote speaker. In the IAFFD Fire Call, 2025 Fall Issue I will address a second topic from the Keynote, Avoiding Fire Department Induced Chaos.

I appreciate this two-part opportunity to briefly review Leadership, and Training to Avoid Fire Scene Chaos. My personal goal is to challenge the leader in you and your department. No different from your community, I hold you accountable for your department's leadership. With this writing I ask that you conduct a self-assessment as well as a leadership assessment of your department.

I will focus on the character of a leader, and the values held by the members. Those attending the keynote address were exposed to several supportive examples of what is discussed.

I am not sure where or when I first copied (seldom is there a fully new idea in the fire service) the following. I am certain that I have added to it. I have respected this list as my Leadership Timeless Truths List. I honestly do not believe that I ever made a leadership decision that was not influenced by the practice of these general rules.

1. Make your expectations clear from the beginning.
2. Listen to your people.
3. Watch your people.
4. Look after your people.
5. Don't make assumptions!

About the Author: Roger Lunt is author of *Avoiding Fire Department Induced CHAOS* with 40+ years in the fire service. Early on, Roger served as Firefighter with Urbana, Operations Officer with Macomb and Fire Chief with Taylorville. During his career, Lunt served as Deputy Director Illinois Fire Service Institute (retired) as well as a Field Instructor and Regional Rep for Central Illinois. Roger was a co-developer of the training session; Fire Ground Management for Small Career and Rural Fire Departments and founding member of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Law Enforcement Administration and an Associates in Fire Science.

6. Train frequently.
7. Set the example!
8. Don't be afraid to laugh at yourself.
9. Don't forget to have fun!!
10. A Leader will recognize that the duties are greater than self.
11. Encourage and Share Ownership.
12. Remember the delegation is a part of leadership.
13. Today's fire house is the good ole days referenced tomorrow. So don't blow it!!!

Timeless Truths will always have similar and differing meanings, values and relevancy to the individuals. However, the root values of this list are constant for the leader who understands that their role is much more than a position, requiring active attention.

For those attending the keynote address you may recall the three experience-based stories that I shared. Those were labeled Chief's Office Coffee, Department Sick Leave Abuse, and Taking Rigs Home For Lunch. Obviously, there were varied department views with each of these matters. I defined these situations as creepers. The fire service creeper is something such as an act, activity, or expression within the department that is explained away. Even though it is not good for the department or service it provides. Yes, adults can justify anything. The problem is these all fall into the category of creepers. The risks are that they will take a permanent seat in how the department operates. Eventually, they will be justified

with the common statement, "Well we have always been able to do it".

The practice of the Timeless Truths will always have the leadership radar tuned in for quick intervention of creepers. The next challenge for the leader is what is to be done and are you going to do it?

Here are a few fire service creepers that I have seen over recent years. We all quickly state that we are our brother and sister's keeper. We look out for the safety of our firefighters.

My current disappointing observations;

1. Firefighters with facial hair that breaches the face piece seal.
2. Firefighters not wearing PPE properly, (not using the helmet chin strap, tightening the SCBA straps, or wearing gloves). Wow this seems to be timeless.
3. The aging or over weight department member who should not be driving a rig, or doing aggressive, strenuous on scene activities.

These creep in overtime and with countless fire house excuses.

But wait a second! Don't we have an overwhelming concern for the care of our brothers and sisters? Isn't safety a paramount duty of all members?

If you cannot find a safety standard or agency that endorses any of the habits I just listed, then you should review, and question your department leadership.

Continued on page 37

Leadership

Continued from page 36

You should also review and update your department policies. I also suggest that you consider this as part of your recruitment and retention problem.

A leader should realize that he/she needs to unite personnel toward a common purpose. But challenges holding opposing views will likely always exist. Do any of the following exist in your department?

1. No Facial Hair safety standard
2. No Department photography control
3. Low Department participation
4. No Promotional process that is fair, and respected
5. No Helmet chin strap safety standard
6. No SCBA straps safety standard
7. Poor accountability of self and for others
8. Abusive officer
9. Low retention/recruitment
10. FS Trained drivers
11. Excuses over solutions
12. No job descriptions
13. Funding
14. Low Dept. participation in mutual aid training
15. No Code of Ethics
16. No Official performance standards

If these exist, are they being excused or are you taking serious leadership actions that will be supported by the timeless truth. Any of these can develop into a department problem, and the leadership response can make it an even bigger problem.

Why do your personnel decide to follow the directives of their department leadership?

1. Is it because they respect the Officer and the position?
2. Is it that they hold no respect for the Officer but respect the position or rank?
3. Is it that they do not respect the officer or the position, but hold a great concern for potential repercussions to include the temper tantrum?

How is your department leadership impacting the three options just listed?

During an interview for a significant leadership position I was asked to describe

my leadership style. My response,

1. **Provide the goal.** *It has buy-in and is measurable and meaningful with a target or end date.*
2. **Provide support.** *Give direction, show interest, provide equipment, provide education and training that is needed.*
3. **Get out of the way.** *Let the troops think, problem solve, and do their work but expect updates.*

I was then asked the follow-up question, "When do you evaluate?" My response was, "From the beginning to the end". If you cannot delegate there is a leadership problem that must be recognized and fixed.

Much too often, even with daily challenges, people begin their respective argument and approach to problem solving from what they only know. This is often somewhere after the beginning or root cause of the issue and the current status of the issue. If this is the leadership style to problem solving or planning within the department, it is likely that the solution will be a greater issue than the current concerns. Everything, including good leadership skills begin at the beginning. The personnel you lead and manage can make or break a department's service obligations. You must know where leadership begins to best lead these personnel. I have had many discussions with leaders who express that you can not lead if your personnel do not trust you. This philosophy certainly held true for my career.

While trust is necessary to lead effectively, it is not the beginning of leadership. The root of good leadership rests with Ethical and Moral Standards.

Ethical Standards are codes of behavior for the group. Ethical decision making will impact who we are and how we as a group are perceived and respected within the fire service community and the community we serve.

Moral Standards will define the personal character of a department member. When the leader makes a moral decision, they should be aware of the very personal question of, "Who am I?"

In my view, and it may not fit with the detailed writings and studies of moral and ethical decisions, a person's moral code is

usually unchanging. A person's ethics are department dependent. I believe your moral code will determine if you join or wish to continue as a member of a fire department, based largely on the group's ethical values.

What are the moral and ethical codes for your department? Do they impact how personnel behave in the station, in training, on the scene and when off duty in the public? Do you and your department leaders set the example and flawlessly live up to the moral and ethical standards of your department? An example taken from my department List of FF Code of Ethics.

1] I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the fire service.

Do you have a documented Firefighter and Officer Code of Ethics? Do you have a documented department mission statement that is understood by all members? The mission statement will greatly assist in determining direction and priorities. Plus, it will always be very supportive of department decisions and judgement standards.

The root of fire service leadership begins with the moral and ethical standards of the department and of each member. If you lead by example and require your members to do the same, you may not know all that you should in order to do your specific job, but you will become a trusted and respected leader by your members. They will respect you and want to help you as a loyal team member.

There exist several great leadership educational and training resources for your firefighters and officers. It is my firm view that most of them devote attention on a job or position. Of course, your fire service position may change, so this training and education is important. However, you will do well to remember that you may have an immoral person, in a leadership position who may know the duties of the job, (via training and education) but is ineffective. In closing remember this. Leadership will always require active attention. If your absence doesn't bother them, your presence didn't mean anything. ■



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Embracing Change: The Transition to NERIS for Incident Reporting

By Dustin McDonald, Battalion Chief and NERIS Advisor, UL's Fire Safety Research Institute

In the fire academy, I doubt any candidate firefighter is excited or intrigued about incident reporting. However, in a data-driven world, it is imperative that fire and EMS organizations have timely and accurate information at their fingertips. This information allows fire departments to properly allocate resources, understand their community's risk, and assess the performance of response units. Many firefighters see incident reports as nothing more than a chore, a first cousin to taking out the fire station trash.

A Shift in Culture

It is time for our attitude and cultures to change. "American Burning," published over fifty years ago, highlighted the need for information to combat public apathy and governmental rigidity in allocating resources to fire and other emergency needs. While our existing incident reporting system tries to collect information relevant to emergency risk, the demands and risk of our industry mandate change and adaptation.

The Advent of NERIS

In May of 2024, the United States Fire Administration, Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate, and Fire Safety Research Institute entered a contract to develop a new emergency response information system for our country. This system, the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS), will replace the existing reporting system and be the premier source of information for our nation's emergency responders.

Obtaining incident information will always rely on a firefighter who understands the need and takes the time to properly input what situation was



encountered and what firefighters did to solve the specific problem.

NERIS is designed with the firefighter as the top priority

Through augmentation and automation of data, leveraging geospatial technology, NERIS is being developed to reduce data entry burdens on firefighters. The variables that are entered by firefighters also reflect a more robust set of modern values. Incident types, actions taken, and other information have been systematically refreshed to ensure the questions we're asking of firefighters have "real-world" value. That data collected will continually evolve match the current climate of the fire service. This will allow everyone to see nationwide trends in current and relevant data so departments will be able to react to those trends faster.

Entering your data has never been easier. Departments that choose to utilize the **free app** will be able to enter that data from anywhere. Records can be entered via cell phone, tablets, laptops, or any other machine capable of connecting to the internet.

Implementation and Benefits

NERIS will require a major update to the current records management system software, or alternatively, the use of a **free app** for collecting incident data. Once the new system is in place, it will also be able to integrate information from the computer-aided dispatch system (CADS). This integration will enable a comprehensive "story" of each incident, from the moment the call is received to when the last fire company departs from the scene.

The primary beneficiary of this transformational project is the local fire department. The new system will provide basic analytics and reports to local fire departments, an offering that is likely to grow over time. This information and analytics will be the first time that some of our country's 27,000+ fire departments have seen a dividend from any of the data they've submitted. The ability to visualize your data on a central dashboard will help truly tell your departments story. Furthermore, the design of the system

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NERIS

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will make information available much quicker – in “near real-time” – for the state, regional, and federal agencies also using it to understand the character of risk and response.

Preparing for the Transition

NERIS isn't a pipe dream, or a project slated for completion a decade from now. Instead, this new system is charging full steam ahead to replace NFIRS in late 2025. In your fire department, the time is now to start asking questions and considering how you'll want to transition to the incident reporting process. Throughout the year departments will begin their onboarding process by their FEMA region. Illinois and the rest of Region 5 are scheduled to begin their onboarding in December. This gives your departments valuable time to work with your vendors, gather the necessary information required for onboarding, as well as educate and train your personnel in the importance of quality data collection.

Some important steps to take include:

Designate a Point of Contact:

Preferably someone who is very familiar with the existing software(s) you're using and who isn't planning on retiring in the near future.

Evaluate Current Software:

Determine what software you currently use and whether that company, if appropriate, is preparing to transition to the new NERIS setup. Not all records management vendors are ready to make

About the Author: Dustin McDonald is currently a Battalion Chief with the Springdale, Arkansas Fire Department and has been there for almost 20 years. He also served as a volunteer firefighter for 10 years. He currently functions as a NERIS Advisor and CPSE Peer Assessor while overseeing departmental accreditation, compliance, and strategic planning initiatives. Under his guidance, the department has achieved an ISO 1 ranking and secured accreditation through both the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) and the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) twice each. Battalion Chief McDonald participated in the NERIS early adopter program as one of six initial departments and continues to contribute to the development of the current and future NERIS data dictionary systems.

the transition. Once a vendor's software is capable of data exchange with NERIS, that vendor is awarded a NERIS Data Exchange Compatible badge.

Understand Your Geography:

Gather information regarding your department's geography. Your response boundaries and other special geospatial elements are important to NERIS since it can help determine your performance and risk.

Prepare to Set Up Your Department's Profile and Add Station and Resource Information:

- Department contact information and headquarters address
- Jurisdiction, services provided, shift schedules, and staffing information
- Technical details about your dispatch center, their protocols, and any software they may use for dispatching
- Your ISO rating

- Station and apparatus information. This includes addresses, staffing, as well as FEMA and NWGG standards for consistency

The transition to NERIS represents a significant leap forward in the way we approach incident reporting. By embracing this change, we can ensure that our fire departments are equipped with the tools they need to effectively respond to emergencies and protect our communities.

If you have questions or would like to learn more about NERIS, visit the [NERIS program page](https://neris.org/program-page) or email at NERIS@ul.org. There is also a full series of short [NERIS data videos](https://neris.org/neris-data-videos) that break down the entire process of onboarding your department. ■

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CASE LAW UPDATE: Some Recent Cases Affecting Fire Protection Districts

By Megan Lamb
Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd.

Fire protection districts in Illinois operate within a complex legal framework that continues to evolve through court decisions and legislative changes. The following case law developments from 2024 and early 2025 highlight key areas of concern for fire protection districts. Understanding these legal precedents is essential for districts to maintain compliance, protect their interests, and effectively serve their communities while managing personnel and governance challenges.

Public Safety Employee Benefits Act (PSEBA)

PSEBA provides health insurance benefits to public safety employees who suffer injuries while responding to emergencies or performing their duties. Because these benefits are expensive, PSEBA is a frequently litigated topic. There are two new decisions to note:

Ford v. Village of Northbrook, 2025 IL App (1st) 231952-U

Ford was injured while transferring a patient after responding to an emergency call. The Village of Northbrook denied Ford PSEBA benefits, arguing that Ford was not injured while responding to an emergency. The court found that Ford reasonably believed he was responding to an emergency. The patient had concerning symptoms (needed oxygen in the ambulance), and Ford had no diagnosis at the time of injury. Therefore, the Village's denial was deemed clearly erroneous.

Key Takeaway: Courts will defer to the first responder's reasonable belief at the time of injury. The presence of lights and sirens, dispatch priority, and conditions at the scene are all factors to consider when analyzing whether an individual is entitled to PSEBA benefits.

Ceyer v. City of Berwyn, 2024 IL App (1st) 231538

Ceyer, a firefighter for the City of Berwyn, suffered a knee injury while responding to an emergency call in 2005. His initial application for a line-of-duty disability pension was denied in 2008. After years of litigation, Ceyer was finally awarded a line-of-duty disability pension in 2015, retroactive to October 11, 2008. Following this award, Ceyer filed a claim under the Public Safety Employee Benefits Act (PSEBA) seeking reimbursement for health insurance premiums he had paid out-of-pocket for himself and his spouse from the time he left the City's payroll in 2008 through the date of the pension award and beyond.

The court determined that Ceyer's claim for PSEBA benefits was not time-barred because it accrued when he was awarded his line-of-duty disability pension in 2015—not when he was removed from the City's payroll in 2008. The delay in awarding the pension was due to procedural flaws, including a biased hearing officer. The court also found that Ceyer's self-funded insurance through his business did not constitute "access to benefits from another source" under the statute.

Key Takeaway: Under PSEBA, the clock for filing a claim starts when a pension is awarded, not when the injury occurs, and self-funded insurance does not disqualify a claimant from receiving PSEBA benefits.

Public Employee Disability Act (PEDA)

PEDA provides that public employees who are injured in the line of duty must be fully paid for one year as if they were

working. This area saw significant litigation in 2024, including:

Bitner v. City of Pekin, 2024 IL App (4th) 230718

Bitner and another firefighter sued the City for withholding taxes and deducting leave time from PEDA benefits. The court held that PEDA does not prohibit tax withholdings but does prohibit deductions from sick, vacation, or compensatory time. However, federal laws and regulations might—the court did not pass judgment on those issues. Also, this case has been appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court, which is currently poised to issue its ruling.

Worker's Compensation *Helping Hands Center v. Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission, 2024 IL App (1st) 240057WC-U*

A medical assistant fell off a desk and injured herself while decorating for her supervisor's birthday. She was awarded benefits under the Workers' Compensation Act. The employee's activity, while not typical for a medical assistant, was a routine task for her to perform in the office where she worked, and therefore employment-related.

Key Takeaway: Routine workplace activities—even if celebratory—may be compensable if they are part of an employee's expected duties.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities and engage in a good-faith interactive process to identify suitable alternatives. However,

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Case Law Update

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employers are not obligated to create new positions, waive essential job functions, or provide promotions as accommodations. The law balances the needs of disabled employees with the practical limitations and legitimate business requirements of the employer. The following decision highlights this dynamic.

***Jeziar v. City of Chicago*, No. 22 C 6907, 2025 WL 744030 (N.D. Ill. Mar. 7, 2025)**

Jeziar, a Chicago firefighter who suffered a stroke, was assigned a non-firefighting role working for the City at O'Hare Airport as a reasonable accommodation for his disability. When he was subsequently eligible for a promotion to lieutenant, the City offered him a choice between staying at O'Hare Airport or accepting the promotion and being assigned a different position he could perform with his physical limitations. He chose to remain at the airport and sued under the ADA, claiming the City's refusal to let him stay at his O'Hare Airport position and be promoted to lieutenant was discriminatory and a failure to reasonably accommodate his disability under the ADA.

The court found the City engaged in a good-faith interactive process, as required by the ADA. Further, Jeziar declined to explore alternative accommodations that were offered by the City. The ADA does not require employers to promote employees as an accommodation, and the City's reason for denying the promotion were consistent and not pretextual, as they were based on budgetary constraints and Jeziar's inability to meet the physical requirements of a Lieutenant.

Key Takeaway: Employers must engage in reasonable accommodation efforts but are not obligated to create new roles or waive essential job functions.

Wrongful Termination

***Cwik v. Manteno Cmty. Fire Prot. Dist.*, 2024 IL App (3d) 230036-U**

Cwik, a probationary firefighter, had made complaints to the fire chief about other firefighters not following District procedures. He was later terminated during his probationary period due to

About the Author: *Megan Lamb* is an associate attorney at Ottosen DiNolfo Hasenbalg & Castaldo, Ltd. in Naperville, Illinois. Megan graduated from Chicago-Kent College of Law in December of 2021 and holds an undergraduate degree from Lewis University. Megan works with both public and private sector clients, and focuses her practice on municipalities, fire protection districts, and civil litigation

his conduct on an unrelated call. He subsequently sued the Fire Protection District, claiming the District violated the CBA, the Firemen's Disciplinary Act, and the Whistleblower Act.

On appeal, the Third District Appellate Court found in favor of the District. The court found the CBA allowed termination of probationary employees without cause. Further, the Disciplinary Act did not apply since the Firemen's Disciplinary Act specifically states that the provisions of a CBA that is in conflict with the Act controls, and in the instant case, the CBA had provisions related to the discipline and termination of probationary employees.

Key Takeaway: Probationary employees have limited protections, but doubly so when a CBA allows for instant termination without resorting to a formal dismissal process.

First Amendment

***Inendino v. Nance-Holt*, 753 F. Supp. 3d 641 (N.D. Ill. 2024)**

Michael Inendino, a firefighter/EMT with the Chicago Fire Department (CFD) from 2005 to 2021, was terminated after making a series of offensive and inflammatory public Facebook posts. His profile was publicly accessible and clearly identified him as a CFD firefighter, including a profile photo of him in CFD gear. The posts included derogatory remarks about racial minorities and statements advocating violence against protestors. These comments triggered multiple complaints from the public.

After an investigation, CFD fired Inendino, who subsequently filed a lawsuit claiming that his termination violated his First Amendment rights. The court ruled that Inendino's termination did not violate the First Amendment. His speech was not constitutionally protected in this context, and the City acted within its rights to discipline him. This is especially because Inendino's posts did not address matters of public concern. Instead, they were "primarily offensive and derogatory" and lacked any meaningful contribution to public discourse. And even if the speech

had touched on public issues, the court held that CFD's interest in maintaining public trust, especially in a diverse city where Inendino served a largely minority community, outweighed his interest in making the posts. Finally, there was a tangible adverse impact on the City, which had to use its resources to investigate and respond.

Key Takeaway: Public employees, especially those in uniformed services like fire departments, are held to high standards of conduct. Speech that is offensive, discriminatory, or disruptive—even if made on personal social media—may not be protected under the First Amendment if it undermines public trust or the mission of the agency.

Open Meetings Act

***Eberhardt v. Vill. Of Tinley Park*, 2024 IL App (1st) 230139**

The dispute centered on an ordinance adopted by the Village that limited public comment at *special* Village board meetings to topics that were germane to items on the *special* meeting's agenda. Eberhardt argued that this restriction was a content-based limitation on speech and therefore unconstitutional. The court upheld the ordinance because:

- The restriction applied only to *special* meetings, not regular meetings, where public comment remained unrestricted.
- The ordinance was viewpoint-neutral and reasonable in scope, serving the legitimate governmental interest of maintaining orderly and efficient meetings.
- Limiting comments to agenda items during special meetings did not amount to unconstitutional censorship, as it did not discriminate based on the speaker's viewpoint.

Key Takeaway: Municipalities may impose reasonable, content-neutral restrictions on public comment during special meetings to ensure orderly proceedings. However, such restrictions must be clearly defined, consistently applied, and not used to suppress dissent or manipulate public participation. ■



Building Success Through Education

by Doc Patterson

Knowledge is Power for the human mind and personal success in all we do. Whether it's a fire service career or a hobby. The mind is truly amazing, like a walking supercomputer with mad skills.

Education is a cornerstone of building success. It provides individuals with knowledge, skills, and opportunities to achieve personal and professional goals. A well-rounded education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and a growth mindset, all of which are crucial for navigating challenges and achieving success in various aspects of life.

Here's how education contributes to building success:

- 1. Knowledge and Skills:** Education equips individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in their chosen fields. It provides a foundation for understanding complex topics, developing specialized expertise, and adapting to new technologies and challenges.
- 2. Career Advancement:** A solid education is often a prerequisite for many career paths, particularly those requiring higher levels of education and specialized training. It can also lead to increased earning potential, job satisfaction, and access to leadership roles.
- 3. Personal Growth:** Education fosters personal growth by encouraging continuous learning, developing critical thinking skills, and promoting self-confidence. It can also help individuals develop a sense of purpose and contribute meaningfully to society.
- 4. Social and Emotional Development:** Education provides opportunities for social interaction, collaboration,

About the Author: Doc Patterson is a retired firefighter, motivational coach and Kahuna Warrior who works with individuals and organizations to increase the potential of successful people.

and the development of emotional intelligence. These skills are crucial for building strong relationships, navigating complex social situations, and contributing to a positive and inclusive community.

- 5. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Education emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills, which are essential for analyzing information, evaluating evidence, and making sound decisions. It also fosters problem-solving abilities, which are crucial for overcoming challenges and achieving goals.

- 6. Lifelong Learning:** Education encourages a lifelong commitment to learning and self-improvement. This mindset allows individuals to adapt to changing circumstances, embrace new opportunities, and remain competitive in the workforce.

In conclusion, education is not just about acquiring knowledge and skills; it's also about fostering personal growth, developing critical thinking, and building a foundation for a successful and fulfilling life. ■



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IAFPD Fire Service Memorial

Saturday, June 21, 2025

Remembering friends, honoring those we have lost and supporting the families and fire departments for their losses over the past year. IAFPD dedicates today's program to you and the people who have devoted their lives to serving their communities and the Illinois Fire Service.



Illinois Line of Duty Firefighter Fatalities:



David Meyer (54)
Captain
Chicago Fire Department
4/23/2025



Honoring our friends and members who served the Illinois Fire Service

James Barger (77)
Trustee Treasurer
Allendale Rural FPD
7/12/2024



William "Bill" Johnson (78)
Trustee
Central Adams County FPD
5/10/2025



William (Bill) Osborne (67)
Trustee
Manhattan/Peotone FPD
1/1/2025



Roger "RJ" Boone (65)
Assistant Chief
Payson Fall Creek FPD
3/7/2024



Roger Lange (48)
Firefighter/Paramedic
Catlin FPD
4/22/2025



George Petecki, Jr. (55)
Trustee
East Joliet FPD
3/23/2025



Sharon Bortell (75)
Administrative Assistant
Forman FPD
11/12/2024



Robert (Bob) Langguth (79)
Founder
Eagle Engraving
2/2/2025



Robert Trevarthen (94)
Founder
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4/23/2025



Robert Coleman (86)
Fire Chief
Morris FPD
1/15/2025



Daryl Mesch, Sr. (85)
Firefighter
West Suburban FPD
6/06/25



James Ray "Blackie" Schultz (92)
Trustee
Martinton FPD
5/14/ 2025



John "Jack" Fitzgerald (85)
Fire Chief, Ret.
Manhattan/Peotone FPD
1/27/2025



Brian Lee Mitchell (73)
Trustee
Carlinville FPD
2/25/2025



David Webster (73)
Trustee
Martinton FPD
4/11/2025



Todd Fitzpatrick (63)
Fire Chief
Blackhawk FPD
5/4/2025



Jeremy Norris (55)
Fire Chief
Williamson County FPD
3/23/2025



Bill Zimmer (86)
Trustee
San Jose FPD
5/5/2024





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Honor & Recognition Award Presentations

2025 Outstanding Service Awards

Awards a nominated fire protection district trustee (past or present) for outstanding service to the IAFPD, a particular fire protection district or districts, or the Illinois Fire Service.



*Don Fontana, Administrator
Roberts Park FPD*



*Chief Danny Gordon and
Firefighter Vinny Kolves
Ridge Lake FPD*



*James McCarthy, President
Bartlett FPD*



*Randy Burge, President
Sherman FPD*

Trustee's Years of Service Award

The IAFPD Honor & Recognition invites our fire protection district members an opportunity to recognize their Trustees who have served multiple terms of office with the Board of Trustees. Every six years, the trustee can receive a new "YEARS OF SERVICE" lapel pin and special certificate from the Association and be recognized.

Name	FPD	Years as trustee	Years with Dept
Jeff Carstens	Warrenville FPD	8	8
Craig DiMascio	Steger Estates FPD	10	10
Antonio Passaro	Bartlett FPD	6	6
Kate Perkins	Warrenville FPD	9	9
Steve Schultz	Limestone Two FPD	12	47
Randy Burge	Sherman FPD	15	35
Rod Fitzpatrick	Dunlap FPD	12	12
Jim Hoscheid	Cherry FPD	12	45
Tom Otake	York Center FPD	12	39
Larry Garlish	Forman FPD	18	18
Steve Gustofson	Hampshire FPD	18	48
James McCarthy	Bartlett FPD	18	20
Judith Herrman	Forman FPD	18	22
Julie Moore	Forman FPD	18	22
Randall Olinski	Leyden FPD	20	20
Rick VanVleet	Hammond FPD	18	18
Ken Yeakley	Hammond FPD	18	38
Thomas Long	Barrington Countryside FPD	29	29
Doug Oram	East Joliet FPD	24	50
Allan Miller	McHenry FPD	36	36
Harold O'Mara	East Joliet FPD	44	73



*Years 6, 12, 18 & 24 – Bronze Pin
Years 30, 36, 42 & 48 – Silver Pin
After 50 Years of Service – Gold Pin*

2025 Distinguished Member Metro Paramedics



Distinguished Member - Recognizes an Associate Member of the IAFPD, and who has demonstrated dedication and loyalty to the Association through multi-year top-level sponsorship and active participation at the Annual Conference and ongoing support of the organization's mission.

Receiving the award are Heidi Hermes and Kevin Hunter

2025 Member Appreciation Robert Brady, VFIS



Member Appreciation - Recognizes an individual member, often one who represents an Associate Member of the IAFPD, and who has demonstrated dedication and loyalty to the Association through active participation with special events and regular conference support and involvement.

2025 Kenny Long Award Recipients: Carolyn Clifford & Tom Harnsberger

Established in 1996 and named after a leader, strong visionary and someone truly devoted to the mission of the IAFPD with a passion for helping small districts. Recipients are selected by the IAFPD Board of Directors and often follow the same philosophy and possess the same leadership vision as did Kenny Long. The award is given to a person who has made a significant difference to the fire service as a whole and their work will be seen for years to come. This year's recipient surely fits the criteria...



This year, IAFPD presented two deserving members with the Kenny Long Award.

Carolyn Clifford was recognized for her professionalism and true dedication for 30+ years and representing countless fire pension board clients. Carolyn's long-standing commitment to education and support has been evident through her tireless involvement with the IAFPD Annual Conference and numerous training programs. She has generously shared her expertise—answering questions, writing articles, and guiding the Education Committee on pension-related topics. Her work has helped others navigate pension codes and played a vital role in securing IAFPD a permanent seat on the state pension board. Most recently, she has been a driving force and visionary behind IAFPD's newest educational initiative. We are truly grateful for her unwavering service, leadership, and loyalty to the Association.

Tom Harnsberger was honored with the Kenny Long award for his years of service to the 27 years of service to the IAFPD Board of Directors, serving as Board Secretary from 2003 to 2025, beginning as an Area Rep from 1996 to 1998. Tom has demonstrated strong leadership and support for the Association's mission and he has been an active participant and continuously involved at meetings. Tom has always shown a desire to make a difference to those we serve. It is with sincere appreciation that we acknowledge his unwavering commitment to effective leadership and a organizational growth and success.





IN THE NEWS



Line of Duty Death



it was

David John Meyer (54) passed away April 23, 2025. He was the beloved husband of Kristen and devoted father of four children and loving Papa to a grandson. Dave was a proud Chicago Fire Department Captain who served the City of Chicago for 28 years. Dave enjoyed spending his time with his lifelong friends, cheering on the Cubs, Bears, and Blackhawks. He was known for entertaining at his homes whether throwing people in the pool, driving around in his boat, fishing or creating monster bonfires. An avid carpenter, he was the proprietor of Meyer Builders and performed quality work to the point of being featured on Windy City Rehab.



Brian Lee Mitchell (73) of Carlinville, IL, passed away on February 28, 2025. He spent two years at Memphis state, before being called to service his country. He married Norma Jean Wiese on December 31, 1971, she survives. Brian was an electrical contractor and co-owner of Mitchell Brother's Electric, until retirement in April, 2024. Brian proudly served on the Board of Trustees for the Carlinville Fire Protection District. He was an active member of St. Paul's United Church of Christ serving on church council and several committees. He was most proud of his role as Financial Secretary for over 30 years.



Daryl D. Mesch Sr. (85) long serving firefighter/EMR with the West Suburban Fire Protection District passed away on June 6, 2025 surrounded by loved ones. He started his volunteer service to West Suburban Fire Department on October 6, 1999. Daryl was an active member in the community and paved the way for a family long legacy of firefighters that included: 4 children, 10 grandchildren, and 3 great grandchildren.



Todd Eugene Fitzpatrick (63) of Rock Island, passed away Sunday, May 4, 2025. Todd graduated from Rockridge High School in 1980. Todd devoted his career to the Blackhawk Fire Protection District, serving 33 years as a first responder. During his time, he served as assistant chief and chief of the district. Todd also owned a landscaping business, worked as an EMT for Advanced Medical Transport, and worked at Bonnet Wholesale Florist. Todd enjoyed spending time outdoors, gardening and doing yardwork. He also enjoyed fishing. Above all, Todd cherished the time spent with his family, friends, and beloved Dalmatians, Chief and Chloe.



William R. "Bill" Johnson (78) of Coatsburg, IL, passed away May 10, 2025. He married Bonnie J. On June 21, 1969. Bill proudly served in the United States Air Force and was honorably discharged in 1967. A lifelong servant to his community, he was an active member of the Lions Club and a dedicated volunteer with the Central Adams County Fire Protection District. He served as an EMT and first responder for Adams County, covering Coatsburg and the surrounding area, and spent over 20 years providing emergency medical services at Quincy Raceways. Bill served on the Coatsburg town board for over 40 years, helping to guide and support the community he called home. He began his healthcare career as an LPN in the ICU at Blessing Hospital for 19 years, later working at QMG Urology for 6 years until his retirement in 2012.



Congratulations!

Governor JB Pritzker recently appointed **Michele L. Pankow**, public safety expert and seasoned fire chief, to serve as the Illinois State Fire Marshal upon the recent resignation of Marshal James Rivera. Chief Pankow has spent over 32 years in the Illinois fire service and will be the first

woman to serve as the Illinois State Fire Marshal beginning in mid-July.

Beginning as a Firefighter/Paramedic/EMT in 1992, Pankow was promoted to a Training Officer where she implemented state and federal regulations, and she then served as EMS Operations Chief, coordinating with agencies on education and recruitment. By 2010, she had been assigned Captain, and by 2016, was promoted to District Chief. She supervised day-to-day firefighting and emergency services, managed staffing for response operations, and conducted response functions to include operations, planning, logistics, safety, and public information. From 2017-2021, Pankow served as Division Chief of Operations, which included being the Emergency Services Disaster Agency Coordinator for the City of Rockford. In this role, she was tasked with planning and organizing fire suppression and emergency medical operations, as well as overseeing the Emergency Operations Center.

In 2021, Pankow was sworn in as the 11th Fire Chief of the Rockford Fire Department, becoming the first woman chief in the history of the department. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, she was also awarded the American Red Cross Disaster Services Hero Award, which honors individuals for great acts of bravery, dedication, and community service. Pankow holds a Bachelor of Science in Fire Service Management from Southern Illinois University, and a Master of Public Administration from Northern Illinois University.



Congratulations **Michael Bolash** on your recent retirement and 50 years of service to the Divernon Fire Protection District 24 years as Trustee. As a leader with your community, you have made a true difference to those you serve.



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IAFPD 81st ANNUAL CONFERENCE

New Location, Same High-Quality Program
June 11-13, 2026

*Embassy Suites Riverfront Hotel & Conference
Center - East Peoria, IL*



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 8

IAFPD Day at the Illinois State Fair
Springfield

August 15

IAFPD Foundation Golf Outing
The Oaks Golf Course, St. Anne

September 5 – 6

IAFPD Board of Directors (Assn & Foundation)
East Peoria

September 16

IL Community Risk Reduction Conference
Renaissance Center, Joliet

October 9

Camp I Am Me Fire Prevention Week Luncheon
Bobak's Signature Events

October 14-16, 28-30

Illinois General Assembly Veto Session

September 19-21

Illinois Firefighters Down & Dirty Conference
IFSI, Champaign

September 24-25

ISFSI Annual Training & Leadership Conference
Par-a-dice, East Peoria

October 10

The Fire Call Copy Deadline

October 12 -14

IFCA Conference/Tradeshow
Peoria Civic Center

October 24 – 25

IAFPD and NIAFPD Present Essential Trustee Training
Plainfield Fire Protection District

November 8

Continue Trustee Education Session
Cherry Valley FPD
(New Time of Year, Same Quality Program)

**IAFPD Offices will be closed in observance
of the following holidays:**

September 1 - Labor Day

October 13 - Indigenous Peoples Day

November 11 - Veterans' 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

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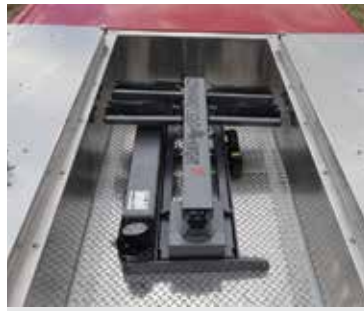
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