



Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit

August 2025

Critical Incident/Emergency Management Unit

This is the monthly newsletter for the Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit. **If you have events that you would like posted in this newsletter please email them to the Fire Coordinator's office.**



Wildland Firefighting class

Office of Emergency
Management

P.O. Box A
58 Verda Ave.
Clarksville, NY
12041

In this issue:

Punkintown Fair

Wildland Firefighting class

Lift assist fees

Haz-Mat Corner

Training

Ph: (518) 720-8025
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Punkintown Fair New Salem



Office of Emergency
Management

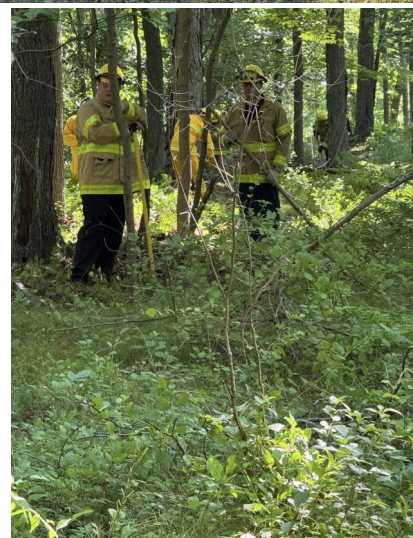
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Wildland Firefighting class

This class is eligible for a \$250 Stipend

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A \$500 fee and a 60% drop: How one department tackled its lift assist crisis

The Decatur (Illinois) Fire Department's new permanent lift assist fee for calls to skilled nursing facilities or nursing homes is resonating with responders around the country

April 19, 2025 01:45 PM •

Rachel Engel

Toa55/Getty Images

In 2014, the Decatur (Illinois) Fire Department responded to 430 calls for lift assist services. By 2023, the number had risen to more than 1,000.

Even with the large Baby Boomer generation moving into their twilight years, city officials did not believe the increase in lift assist requests was related to the aging population.

"We had facilities that were – I hate to use the word abuse, but they were utilizing our resources rather than the people that are paid to do that," DFD Chief Neil Elder said. "They were taking liability off themselves and putting it on our taxpayers and our resources."

The department was responding daily to multiple requests to "just go out and lift an uninjured person off the floor," Elder said. He recalled several occasions where crews were delayed responding to a first alarm because they were in the middle of a lift assist call.



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Something had to give.

Lift assist fees: A one-year trial

Concern for the increasing volume of lift assist calls was not new for the city of Decatur; one city council member acknowledged the problem had existed for years: “We’ve been talking about this since I’ve been here – nine years.”

In February 2024, the city council unanimously approved a one-year trial run implementing a \$500 lift assist fee for any skilled nursing facility or nursing home in which the patient was only moved and not medically cared for by fire department personnel.

The amount of the fee was determined by averaging how much time and department resources are used during a non-medical lift assist call.

“We did our research,” Elder said. “If our engine company goes, there’s a certain amount per hour. We took the apparatus charge into consideration, and of course we have a minimum of three firefighters on every rig.”

Rounding up to \$500 made sense, Elder said, both to fully cover the use of taxpayer funds and to act as a deterrent for facilities who may have paid a lower fee to avoid the liability of picking up a patient.

The fee was also waived for nursing home residents who required any medical attention during the call, and residential calls for lift assists were also exempt from the fee.

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Lift assists: One year later

Over the next 12 months, the DFD generated \$13,500 from nursing homes that chose to pay the new \$500 fee. However, the big revelation was not the revenue generated, but the decrease in requests – the department saw a **60% drop in the number of lift assist calls** “compared to the previous two-year average at commercial facilities.”

Despite Abbot’s earlier prediction that the fee would not be the final solution, Elder saw the trial as a clear success, which he conveyed to the city council ahead of their near-unanimous vote to make the fee permanent.

“This change has effectively achieved its intended goal, as fewer lift assist calls have been placed, and commercial facilities are now more responsible for the care of their residents,” he said in a memo with City Manager Tim Gleason.

Elder believes the high cost of the fee was a major factor in reducing the amount of calls.

“We wanted to have nursing home administrative staff say, ‘Let’s think of other ways outside the box to fulfill those needs,’” he said. “If [the fee] was \$100, I don’t think we would’ve seen the change we saw. It’s not enough of an impact on their budget.”

For nursing homes who rely on the fire department or EMS agencies to pick uninjured residents off the ground, Elder suggested investing in products that allow the facility’s staff to safely assist their own patients who do not need medical attention, such as a **Hoyer lift**.

“[These types of devices] will not cause injuries to their staff, and yet get their patients off the floor,” he said, “The bonus of having these devices on hand is their patients aren’t laying on the floor for an extended period of time, because by the



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time they call us out, that patient's going to lay on the floor for probably 10-15 minutes."

He also recommended that nursing homes encourage and train employees on how to properly lift patients, as fear of injuries to the nursing home employee was one of the common reasons given for calling in a lift assist.

"Well, we have injuries to our employees as well, from lifting and back injuries," Elder said, "so I think just teaching proper ways to lift and the best ways to get patients off the floor would be helpful."

The future of lift assist fees

Following the vote to approve the fee's one-year trial run, Jeff Abbott, who was serving as fire chief at the time, did not believe the fee would be the magic solution, but was optimistic it would, at the very least, lower the amount of requests.

"I'm definitely not suggesting that this ordinance tonight is going to change our lift assist problem, because it's not," he said following the vote. "Hopefully, it will help reduce the number of calls to these care facilities."

In hindsight, Elder believes it actually *did* solve the problem they were hoping it would.

"I think [it solved the problem] with commercial facilities," he said. "We still have a problem residentially, but the numbers show that it definitely reduced the number of times we go [to those types of elder care homes]."

For fire/EMS agencies wondering how to tackle their growing lift assist call volume, Elder suggests learning from his department's approach.



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"If [the lift assist call volume] is impacting the services they provide to citizens, they really should pursue [a fee]," he said. "However they want to structure that fees is up to them, but they need to make it significant enough that it's impactful to the nursing homes."

Elder knows other departments are considering similar fees ... because they're contacting him with questions and requests for advice.

"I can tell you by my emails that [concerns with lift assist volume] are happening everywhere," he said. "I've received emails from Texas, California, Wisconsin."

The city of Decatur, however, now has a handle on the call volume and processes in place to deter abuse of the system and the available time of fire department personnel.

Elder: "I think it's a win."

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Calif. FD begins charging nearly \$500 for lift assists

The Redding Fire Department is retroactively charging residents for non-emergency lift assist calls, with plans to expand the fee to all EMS responses

August 07, 2025 11:11 AM •

Bill Carey

REDDING, Calif. — The Redding Fire Department has begun retroactive billing of residents \$489 for non-emergency 911 lift assist calls, the fire department reminded the public on Aug. 4.

Bills have been issued for applicable calls retroactive to Jan. 1, 2025

The city council approved the fee in 2023 and is currently applying it to lift assist calls, but will eventually extend it to all EMS calls handled by the fire department, **KRCR** reported.

Lift assists are calls for help when someone has fallen and can't get up, but isn't facing a life-threatening emergency. The Redding Fire Department says it responds to about 1,200 of these calls each year — more than three per day on average.

Though low in acuity, these incidents are still important to the people involved. However, due to insurance restrictions and staffing models, local ambulance services typically do not respond to them, leaving the responsibility to fire crews.

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| Read next: **A \$500 fee and a 60% drop: How one department tackled its lift assist crisis**

Officials say the new fees for lift assists will help recoup costs, with the revenue reinvested into the department's budget.

Fee waiver requests are welcome, and the fire chief may waive or reduce the fee in special cases. Community members can submit a written request for review.

"We're not here to penalize anyone," Fire Chief Jerrod Vanlandingham said. "We're here to protect lives, and we need the community's help to make sure we can keep doing that as effectively as possible."

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Hazmat Corner



Hazmat Equipment Spotlight Rigaku CQL-Max-ID

These units are used to identify unknown substances including solids, liquids and powders. They use Raman technology which involves a laser. The hazmat units at Albany FD, W. Albany FD and the Albany County Sheriff's Office are equipped with these units thanks to a grant provided by NYS DHSES. The units cost over \$54,000 each. The hazmat unit at the Watervliet Arsenal has a

slightly older version of this unit with the same capabilities.

The Rigaku CQL Max-ID handheld 1064 nm Raman analyzer offers features and benefits that maximize chemical threat analysis in safety and security applications. With an on-board library of over 13,000 items, the CQL Max-ID provides first responders, border security, and the military with a device that can identify narcotics, explosives, toxic chemical industrial chemicals, chemical warfare agents (CWAs), and more - without the concerns of fluorescence interference.

Members of the hazmat units attended training on the units provided by the manufacturer. The hazmat teams have the equipment and supplies to safely secure a sample to be analyzed using these units. These are handheld units.

Analysis of the sample is done in 1 to 2 minutes. If you have a substance that needs to be identified, contact the Albany County 9-1-1 center and request a hazmat response giving them the details of your request. The nearest available unit will respond. If there is a potential criminal element to the substance be sure to advise the 9-1-1 center and a member of the Capital Region Forensic Hazmat team will respond to identify the substance and to gather evidence samples for police purposes.



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NYS AFC REGIONAL HANDS-ON TRAINING



Open Enrollment is Available for These Courses:

FIRE BEHAVIOR ON THE INSIDE

Fulton County (September 13-14)

Host: Fulton County EMO

Monroe County (May 3-4)

Host: West Webster F.D.

Orange County (October 4-5)

Host: Orange Lake F.D.

Orange County (October 25-26)

Host: Slate Hill F.D.

Schenectady County (October 18-19)

Host: East Glenville F.D. #3

Sullivan County (November 1-2)

Host: Monticello F.D.

Ulster County (March 22-23)

Host: Kingston F.D.

Ulster County (April 12-13)

Host: Highland F.D.

FLASHOVER

Erie County (September 27-28)

Host: Harris Hill Volunteer Fire Co.

Monroe County (October 11-12)

Host: West Webster F.D.

Onondaga County (April 26-27)

Host: East Syracuse F.D.

Saratoga County (March 29-30)

Host: Rexford F.D.

Steuben County (April 5-6)

Hosts: Steuben Co. & Painted Post F.D.

[Register](https://www.nysfirechiefs.com/)

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Be sure to visit the NYS DHSES OFPC website for additional public education resources!

<https://www.dhses.ny.gov/general-public-resources>

ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #12-2025 is attached

<https://www.albanycountyny.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/53153>

There is now a link on our website with instructions on how to get an LMS sign-on ID . We recommend that all new members should register as soon as they join so they have access to training opportunities.

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ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #12 2025

Pre-Registration Required: Students may register by clicking on the Learning Management System link on the NYS OPFC Home Page ([NYS Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services - OPFC](#))

Registration opens 45 days before the first class

COURSE	LOCATION	DATE	INSTRUCTOR	PREREQUISITES
Please Note that a <u>training authorization letter</u> is now required for all courses offered by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control				
Firefighter I Combined Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations & SCBA Interior Firefighting Operations- Firefighter I – Blended Learning (Internet Based Course) Firefighter Survival: Self Rescue: <u>Certification included in training program</u> <u>(Additional Dates to be added for training)</u> Class Schedule Dates: June 17, July 1 (1800-2200), July 7, 14 (0800-1400), July 15, 18 (0800-1700), July 19 (0800-1500), July 21, 22 (0800-1700), July 25 (0700-1400), July 26, (0700-1500), July 29 (1800-2200)		June 12th Orientation 1830-2130 GUILDERLAND Note: Chief Officer from student's department must attend orientation. Instructor: Kerr IN PROGRESS.		Completion of Approved CPR Course, physically capable of wearing an SCBA and Training Authorization Letter. Student must have access to a computer with high-speed internet. ICS100, ICS700, Home Skills – Due Date will be announced at orientation First Aid /CPR- Due Date will be announced at orientation <u>\$40 enrollment fee</u> required at orientation for blended learning program

Firefighter I Certification (BEFO/SCBA Interior Firefighter Operations) IN PROGRESS IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting 7th Edition Curriculum July 1st: Orientation: 6:30 pm Chief Officer Must Attend with Student EAST BERNE <i>BEFO (W/Hazardous Materials Operations)</i> July 21, 22, August 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 28, September 3, 6, 8, 9 <i>SCBA/IFO:</i> September 15, 20, 22, 23, 29, October 1, 4, 6 (8, 13, Dates subject to change) 14, 16, 18 Weeknights 1830-2130 Saturdays 0800-1400 Instructor – K. Molesky At Orientation: Training Authorization Letter Start of SCBA/IFO: Medical Clearance to wear SCBA,				
Basic Wildland Fire Suppression	Slingerlands	July 17, 18 1800-2100 July 19 0800-1400	DEC (Allwine)	None
Fire Service Cancer Reduction	East Berne	July 24 1830-2030	Boomhower	None
Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Planning & Emergency Response NEW TO SCHEDULE	Elsmere	August 21: 1830-2130 23: 0830-1430	Kerr	Firefighter I or Equivalent

Fire and Emergency Service Instructor II	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington Ave, Albany	August 18, 19, 20 ,21, 22 0800-1700	OFPC	Fire Instructor I or National Certification If you have any questions, Contact OFPC at: OFPC.FireServices@dhSES.ny.gov
Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Firefighter Health & Safety NEW TO SCHEDULE	Elsmere	September 6, 20 0830-1430	Kerr	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Fire and Emergency Service Instructor I	Saratoga Public Safety Building- 6010 County Farm Rd. Ballston Spa	September 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 0800-1700	OFPC	None If you have any questions, Contact OFPC at: OFPC.FireServices@dhSES.ny.gov
Apparatus Aerial Operator	Coeymans	September 10, 11, 17, 18, 25, October 1, 8, 9, 15, 23 1830-2130	Santabarbara	BEFO or Equivalent
Engine Company Operations REVISED DATES	Slingerlands	September 13, 27, 28, October 4 0800-1400	Flensted	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response - Classroom (I-200)	Rensselaer County Emergency Services Training Complex 25 Macha Lane Wynantskill, NY 12198	September 29 & 30 0800-1700	OEM	Introduction to the Incident Command System (IS-100) Note: When registering filter under Program: Basic Incident Command System for Initial Response - Classroom (I-200) (28-22-0200) – 041. Add Rensselaer County to location filter.

Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Fireground Strategy and Tactics for First Arriving Companies NEW TO SCHEDULE	Elsmere	September 29, October 6, 9 1830-2130, October 11 0830-1430	Kerr	Firefighter I or Equivalent
FFS: Conducting Em. Escape Sys. Training for Co. Officer NEW TO SCHEDULE	Selkirk #1	October 24: 1830-2130 October 25: 0800-1400	Santabarbara	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Fire and Emergency Service Instructor I	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington Ave, Albany	November 14, 15, 16, 21, 22 0800-1700	OFPC	None If you have any questions, Contact OFPC at: OFPC.FireServices@dhses.ny.gov
Fire and Emergency Services Instructor II	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington Ave, Albany	November 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 0800-1700	OFPC	Fire and Emergency Instructor I If you have any questions, Contact OFPC at: OFPC.FireServices@dhses.ny.gov
Hazardous Materials First Responder Annual Refresher	Coeymans Hollow	November 18 1830-2230	K. Molesky	Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations
Fire Officer II	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington Ave, Albany	December 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 0800-1700	OFPC	Fire Officer I or National Certification If you have any questions, Contact OFPC at: OFPC.FireServices@dhses.ny.gov

Unless changed by instructor or noted above:
All evening classes will be held from 19:00-22:00 hours.
All Saturday and Sunday classes will be held from 09:00-12:00
hours and 13:00-16:00 hours



Fire Coordinator Gerald Paris

