



Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit

April 2026

Critical Incident/Emergency Management Unit News Letter

If you have an article about your department such as a specialty you have that you would like included in the Newsletter please send it in to the Fire Coordinator's office



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R&R Car at Stop DWI Walk-a-thon

In this issue:

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Training



Albany County Sheriff's Office

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Fire Rescue 1 by Lexipol

Silence is safer: Making the case for an IC's sterile cockpit

We must create an environment that preserves the incident commander's cognitive bandwidth

July 28, 2025 12:30 PM •

Brian Schaeffer

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It's happened to most of us — even those who won't admit it. You're managing a complicated incident, people are congregating around you, wanting an assignment with their radios feeding back, media pushing for information, and you are cold. Someone runs up to you and asks, "Did you hear that traffic!?!". You didn't. Not because you weren't paying attention, not because you weren't competent, but because your brain simply did not process it. That's auditory exclusion. And if you're leading an incident from the front yard or outside of a vehicle, that radio traffic you didn't hear might be the difference between just losing the fire or losing a firefighter.



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We don't talk about this enough in our command training. Understanding auditory exclusion and, more importantly, building systems that account for it, isn't about perfection. It's about protecting your people. It's about managing the chaos that comes with complicated and complex incidents with the clarity that the job demands. For incident commanders, this starts with rethinking where and how we manage incidents.

What is auditory exclusion?

Auditory exclusion is a physiological stress response. When the sympathetic nervous system kicks in — the same system responsible for our fight-or-flight reaction — it can suppress non-essential sensory input, including hearing. You're not going deaf. Your brain is simply prioritizing what it thinks you need to survive. Tunnel vision, tactile input and time distortion all occur, and hearing takes a back seat ([van Winsum, 2019](#)).

For people in high-consequence jobs like public safety and aviation, this isn't theoretical. Studies show that under high stress, heart rates climb above 175 bpm, and at that threshold, auditory exclusion is common ([Grossman and Christensen, 2008](#)). The body shuts down "distractions" in favor of processing the immediate threat. It's an evolutionary design meant to keep you alive — but it doesn't help you hear a mayday on Ops 1 while you have incoming messages on the cell phone and Dispatch contacting you on another talk group.

And that's the catch: Stress narrows your focus exactly when your span of awareness should be widening.

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Why it matters for the IC

When we assign an incident commander, particularly at working structure fires, we're asking one person to maintain big-picture awareness over a fast-moving, high-risk environment. That means tracking resources, anticipating conditions, verifying accountability and making split-second decisions on tactical assignments. But suppose that IC is standing outside, exposed to flashing lights, radio chatter, emotional distractions, crew questions, media behind the tape, and physical hazards. How can we reasonably expect them to perform at their best?

I've seen seasoned ICs manage a fire from the gravel next to the A-side while distracted by yelling neighbors, falling glass and interior crews breaking windows. It's a badge of honor in our culture — the "tactical commander," close to the action, eating smoke and in touch with the troops. We have all made that mistake and some have even institutionalized it. But we have to ask ourselves, are we helping or hurting when we manage incidents that way?

Compare that to an IC seated inside a vehicle with the windows up, doors closed, two radios monitored through headsets, a mobile CAD terminal open, and a command aide seated beside them. Silent, focused on the situation, and professional — that's a sterile cockpit.

Multitasking is a myth

Let's be clear about something we often get wrong in the fire service: There's no such thing as multitasking. Not the way we think of it. Neuroscience has shown that the human brain doesn't actually perform

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multiple cognitive tasks at the same time. What we do is *task switch*, jumping rapidly from one thing to another ([Medina, 2014](#)) – and every switch carries a cost.

That cost is exceptionally high when you're listening for information. We don't process overlapping radio messages the way a computer does; we don't even process two different talk groups well if they're coming in through the same speaker. Our brain picks one and suppresses the other. Every time we shift attention – from the tactical channel, to a phone call, to face-to-face conversation – we introduce the opportunity to miss something critical.

Following the aviation industry's lead, building a cockpit that supports attention is mission-critical.

Building the cockpit – not just sitting in it

A sterile cockpit isn't just a quiet car. It's a command environment built to preserve the incident commander's cognitive bandwidth. And like everything in fireground operations, it takes thoughtful design and practice.

The good news is, we already have tools to help:

Headsets reduce ambient noise and help isolate simultaneous talk groups.

Command aides act as second sets of ears and eyes, logging assignments, monitoring comms and catching what the IC might miss.

Divisions and groups distribute control, reducing the volume and content of messages that must go directly to command.



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ICS sections (Operations, Planning and Logistics) command team to grow with the complexity of your incident that can allow correct focus and supervision where the work is getting done

These aren't just bureaucratic boxes on a form; they're human talent that can be leveraged to assist the IC in doing the impossible. They let each person manage five or fewer things well, instead of 15 things poorly.

But technology can just as easily work against us. We've seen incident command dashboards, mobile apps and CAD terminals that overwhelm rather than clarify. The answer isn't more screens, it's better filtering. Give the IC or Ops Section Chiefs what they need to see, hear and act on. Strip the rest.

From helmet to headset — where the IC belongs

This isn't an argument against knowing your people or being visible. But it is a call for professional discipline. Being outside the buggy might feel more "in the fight," but that's not where we need our IC. We don't need the IC directing hose streams; we need someone who can see the entire theater.

Yes, there's value in walking the scene early or talking directly with the first-due company. But once command is established and the operation expands, the IC belongs in the cockpit, documenting assignments, tracking accountability and being 100% mentally available to receive a mayday call or make decisions on strategy, resources and risk.

And let's be honest — firegrounds are loud, chaotic and distracting. The outside world doesn't stop when you put on the vest. Kids scream, glass breaks, crews yell over each other on the radio. In that environment, auditory exclusion isn't just possible; it's probable.



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Final thoughts

The job of IC is one of the most cognitively demanding roles in the fire service. We have tools to help like ICS, headsets, aides, MDCs, preplans, etc. But none of that matters if the person in command can't hear the call for help, or worse, never realizes they missed it.

Auditory exclusion is real. Task switching isn't efficient. Cognitive bandwidth is finite and is easily overwhelmed. These aren't flaws, they're facts. We can't ignore them just because they make us uncomfortable or challenge tradition.

The sterile cockpit gives us a chance to manage an incident with focus and clarity. If we say that life safety is our number one priority, then we owe it to our people to give the IC the best shot at managing it — not from the front yard or back of the buggy but rather from the quiet, focused and protected space where life-and-death decisions deserve to be made.



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How to go to school while working a firefighter shift schedule

A firefighter's schedule can be very demanding, but here are some ways you can get an education while juggling your responsibilities

December 08, 2010 05:54 AM •

FireRescue1 Contributors

Photo/Getty Images

By Matthew McNabb

While working as a firefighter, you may decide you want to pursue a college degree, for myriad reasons. This could include the possibility of promotion or incentive pay, setting an example for your children or simply the pride in the accomplishment of earning a college degree.

Once you decide to head back to class, there are a number of things to consider. What school should you attend? How will your schedule line up with the class requirements? What about online education — is it respectable? What are the cost considerations, and are there any scholarships or tuition waivers available for firefighters? These are many of the questions faced by those who want to get their degree and oftentimes these obstacles are enough to frustrate and eventually terminate the process.

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Firefighter schedules pose unique obstacles to receiving an education

A typical firefighter shift schedule is very difficult to maintain alongside a traditional college or university course schedule. Taking time off to attend class is dependent upon personnel availability and can quickly deplete the firefighter's leave balance.

Firefighters typically work using the 24/48 shift schedule, also known as the ABC shift pattern. Though the shifts can be very demanding, many have some down time within their day.

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My experience has shown that after dinner most of the work in the station is complete. Other than responding to emergencies, a firefighter can put in several hours during the evening with a laptop and internet card to work toward their degree.

Consider a college or university that offers classes online. Many schools have realized the importance of online education and are now offering classes and entire degree programs over the computer.

What kind of schools should firefighters seek to attend?

Armed with information and a plan to succeed, where do you go from here? Start by visiting the **U.S. Fire Administration** (USFA) website, which can give you an idea of what you should look for in your university of choice.

When deciding on a college or university to attend, be smart. Many online schools have been criticized as “diploma mills,” that are **not properly accredited** as an institution of higher learning. Check out local options first, and then venture out to other insitutions that may be able to offer degree plans online.

As you search for the school that is right for you, consider a few factors:

Schools differ in the length of semesters and course schedules. Make sure any option you choose works for you and your schedule.

Online classes are often taught by professors who are full-time professionals in their field, giving you the unique opportunity to

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learn from someone who has hands-on experience and wisdom to pass on.

In-class and online courses offer the ability to network with other students who are at various stages in their career and provide the perfect opportunity to network with others who have the same passion as you.

By doing the research and finding an accredited school with a schedule that works with your firefighter shifts, and using downtime at the fire station to work on any homework you may have, you can accomplish your dream of earning your degree while maintaining your already-established career.

The time is now, so get started. The fire service is advancing and you can be at the tip of the spear and lead the way within your organization!

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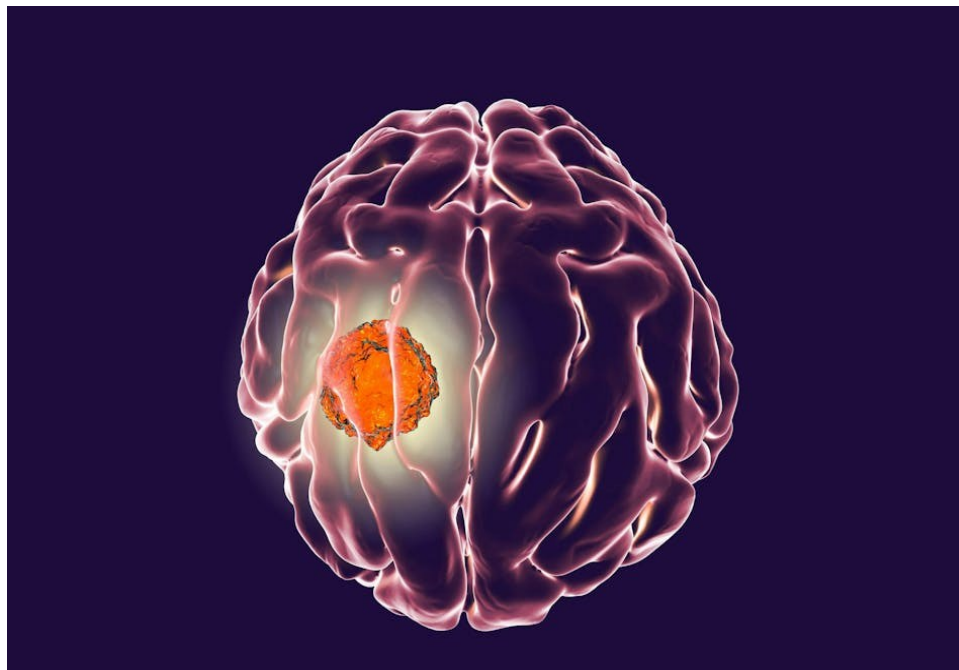
· **SAFETY & HEALTH**

Heads Up! Raising Awareness of Occupational Brain Cancer

John Haseney shares data from firefighter-focused brain cancer studies and symptoms that members who have brain cancer experience, all in effort to turn complacency into awareness.

[John Haseney](#)

Dec. 17, 2024



Firefighters are 1.31 times more likely to develop brain cancer than the general population is. Complacency is members' worst enemy.

Note: This article is part of the Firehouse 2024 Cancer Awareness and Prevention Supplement.

“Heads up!” is a shout by a firefighter on the fireground to warn another firefighter about an impending danger. However, this verbal warning isn’t constrained to the

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operations on the fireground. With his death, Firefighter Jimmy Lanza shouted a warning to me.

Lanza joined FDNY on Jan. 13, 1979. He was a U.S. Navy Vietnam veteran. He assisted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. He was a board member of the FDNY Fire Family Transport Foundation and a commander of American Legion Post 1836. He was a volunteer for the American Red Cross as well as for the Wounded Warrior Project.

Lanza was my senior firefighter at Ladder 43 in the Spanish Harlem neighborhood of New York City. He welcomed me into the firehouse in 2005 as a new probationary firefighter.

One of my original fire service mentors, Lanza showed me how to become a great firefighter. His death struck close to my heart. He had been retired for only a few years when he was diagnosed with a rare form of brain cancer. He succumbed to his battle at the age of 71.

To the firehouse and the members who served there, Lanza was known affectionately as the overbearing good Samaritan. If an elderly person was standing on a corner, he would help that person to cross the street whether help was needed or not.

Lanza's battle with brain cancer and his unfortunate death in 2017 have inspired me to learn and to write multiple articles and a thesis about firefighter occupational cancer. They also inspired me to join FDNY's contamination reduction workgroup; to help to bring a cancer screening program to my department; and to work with national firefighter organizations to create standards to reduce firefighter contamination.

In Lanza's memory, I write this article to give my fellow brothers and sisters the heads up about brain cancer and to remind them that we can take steps to prevent this terrible disease.

Identifying the enemy

Many firefighters are inadequately aware of the dangers of chemical exposure, the threat that's posed by occupational brain cancer, symptoms of the disease and the best practices to avoid exposure. Without a clear understanding of these important subjects, firefighters place themselves at an increased risk of developing cancer.

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Brain cancer is an abnormal growth of tissue in the brain. There are more than 125 different types of brain cancer.

Brain tumors fall into two categories: high grade (rapidly growing) and low grade (slow growing).

Multiple studies concluded that firefighters are at an increased risk of developing occupational brain cancer.

Grace LeMasters and her fellow authors revealed in "[Cancer Risk Among Firefighters: A Review and Meta-analysis of 32 Studies](#)" (Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, November 2006) that firefighters are 1.31 times more likely to develop brain cancer than the general population is.

"[Cancer incidence among male Massachusetts firefighters, 1987–2003](#)" (Dongmung Kang et al., American Journal of Industrial Medicine, April 2008) compared Massachusetts police officers and firefighters and found that firefighters had a 90 percent higher risk for brain cancer than police officers.

In "[Cancer Incidence and Mortality among Firefighters: An Overview of Epidemiologic Systematic Reviews](#)" (International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, March 2021), Elena Laroche and Sylvain L'Esperance noted Tee Guidotti's studies, which suggested that firefighting might be associated with elevated risk for brain cancer, particularly gliomas. Gliomas are the most common type of primary brain tumor. They develop in the glial cells, which are involved in several brain functions.

Why firefighters?

Firefighters are exposed to many contaminants during the course of their daily tasks and firefighting duties. These contaminants include carcinogens that result from combustion that's incidental to structural firefighting or from work as a firefighter (for example, diesel exhaust). "[Occupational and environmental risk factors of adult primary brain cancers: a systematic review](#)" (J. Gomes et al., International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, April 2011) found that firefighters might have a higher risk of developing brain neoplasm, because they are exposed to numerous harmful chemicals, many of which are neurotoxic and carcinogenic. Furthermore, the International Agency for Research on Cancer deems the occupation of firefighters to be carcinogenic.

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Identifying symptoms

According to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK), the signs and symptoms of brain cancer often relate to where in the brain that the tumor developed. Depending on where a brain tumor is located, MSK reports that it can cause temporary problems in consciousness, movement or speech. Other symptoms include seizures, headaches, speech problems, physical weakness (often on one side of the body), imbalance or difficulty walking, and impaired vision or a restricted field of vision, MSK indicates.

While I conducted research for this article, I discovered multiple news stories and articles about firefighters who battled/are battling brain cancer. Within these stories, firefighters listed the symptoms that they encountered.

Spencer, MA, Fire Department Firefighter Pat Murray described his symptoms as an extreme headache, with excruciating pain near his right temple. Albuquerque, NM, Fire Rescue Firefighter Vincent Cordova described his symptoms as a ringing in an ear, which led to deafness in that ear. Laurel, MT, Volunteer Fire Department Firefighter Sean McCleary noticed that he was having speech problems. Philadelphia Fire Department Firefighter Linda Long's symptoms included dizziness, balance issues, headaches and unexplained fatigue.

Two firefighters who served in the FDNY recently succumbed to brain cancer. With the permission of their respective families, I provide their symptoms.

While building a deck in his backyard, Frank Portelle experienced tingling and numbness in his fingers, which made it difficult for him to hold a drill. During his last tour in the firehouse, a firefighter who was working with him noticed that he wasn't walking correctly and was slurring his words. Portelle lost his battle to grade IV glioblastoma brain cancer in March 2021.

Steven Reisman experienced a headache that lasted for weeks. No over-the-counter medication was effective at relieving it. Reisman lost his battle to grade IV glioblastoma brain cancer in June 2014 after fighting for 2½ years.

If you or your fellow firefighters are experiencing any of these symptoms or a combination of these symptoms, immediately consult a physician. If deemed appropriate, a physician might recommend seeing a specialist.

Diagnosis, prognosis and treatment

When doctors suspect that a patient might have brain cancer, they most likely will



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recommend that the patient have some type of diagnostic imaging done. This imaging will be accomplished by either a computerized tomography (CT) scan, a positron emission tomography (PET) scan and/or a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan. These scans help doctors to identify a brain tumor as well as determine the tumor's size, location and grade— in other words, how quickly that the tumor is growing.

A biopsy of the tumor also will occur. This knowledge helps doctors tailor a treatment plan that best suits the patient's condition. A treatment plan might include a combination of either surgery, radiation or chemotherapy.

Best practices to prevent

Researchers don't recommend specific best practices for brain cancer. However, firefighters should utilize best practices that prevent deadly chemicals from entering or coming in contact with their body. These include cleaning their helmet, hood, SCBA and firefighting gear and showering as soon as possible after returning from a fire.

Failure to create and maintain a sense of urgency allows firefighters to remain complacent. Firefighters can be particularly vulnerable to complacent attitudes, because they are exposed to hazardous situations repeatedly and, over time, can become less concerned and cautious about the risks that they face. This complacency can lead firefighters to consciously or unconsciously opt to not wear their PPE, which exposes them to hazards and places them at increased risk for cancer.

No excuses

Lanza, my senior firefighter, continues to inspire me to make changes within my department and to educate my fellow firefighters about occupational cancer. I am sure that many of you know of a colleague who you lost to cancer. Use this person's memory to change your actions and department.

Change can begin today and can start at any level or rank. There are no excuses. Even if we only save one life, it will be worth it all.

Heads up!

Questions Following a Brain Cancer Diagnosis



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Meetings with a doctor(s)/specialist(s) are a great opportunity to ask questions about diagnosis, prognosis and treatments.

Questions can include:

- What does my diagnosis mean?
 - To what does “type” and “stage” refer?
 - What are the treatment options for my type of brain cancer?
 - Is there a specific order or combination of treatments that might be best?
 - Are you the oncologist who will provide my treatment, or must I meet with other specialists? Do you specifically recommend any?
 - What are clinical trials? Would you recommend that I consider one, either now or in the future?
 - How long will treatment take? How will we know whether it’s working?
 - What are the most common side effects of treatment? Are there any for which I would need to seek immediate treatment?
 - What about complications that might develop after my treatment is complete?
- What are the typical outcomes for patients with my type and stage of brain cancer?

Because this can be a very stressful conversation, it’s advisable to bring either a friend or a family member for both support and to take notes.

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AARs, SIT reports and the leadership test that follows

The hardest part of any major incident review is being candid about failures and disciplined enough to make changes that stick

April 13, 2026 10:22 AM •

Fire Chief Marc Bashoor, FOIV



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While California's statewide residential sprinkler requirement will likely require sprinklers in all the homes rebuilt in the Pacific Palisades, I was surprised by the sight of wood construction going back up — house after house, acre after acre.

Photo/Courtesy of Marc Bashoor

The **revelations recently confirmed** by Los Angeles Fire Chief Jaime Moore should provide pause for fire chiefs and fire departments nationally. I spoke with Chief Moore while I visited the Pacific Palisades burn area in December 2025. At the time — approaching the one-year anniversary of the January 2025 firestorm — Chief Moore confirmed that the after-action review (AAR) was proving to be a challenging management dilemma.

While I have personally (and peripherally) been involved in significant AARs and Safety Investigation Team (SIT) reports, I suspect that my experience — and that of my colleagues on those reports —pales in comparison to the sprawling devastation of the **Palisades Fire**. Fortunately, experience is not the measure I'm looking at today — leadership is.

Before we address the lessons learned from the AAR debacle, let's review the similarities and differences between AARs and SIT reports, both part of standard follow-ups to significant fire/EMS incidents in the United States.

| **Watch next: On demand: Before, during and after action — command and control of large-scale fire incidents**

After-action reviews (AARs)

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The authors of an AAR must use a critical eye to analyze and report on incident response, conditions and outcomes, identifying specific pre-event conditions and on-scene actions and activities. While the look and feel of AAR templates may differ, they should all include documentation of what went well and what could have gone better, then provide some level of recommendation to sustain or improve systemic operations.

The depth of an AAR will be generally dependent on two factors:

- The scope and scale of the incident (multiple alarms, citizen fatalities, etc.)
- Your fire department's guidelines for AAR development

It is important to recognize that AARs may not necessarily need to be long-term formal reports. An AAR should be documented, although it could take many forms:

- Instantaneous on-scene tailboard critiques
- Kitchen table/engine bay discussions
- Station-level reviews/exercises
- Battalion/district-wide reviews

Training academy bulletins or advisory

An AAR without firefighter injury or equipment damage may or may not also have a full SIT process conducted. In those non-injury/damage incidents, the need for a SIT report will largely be determined by your organization's rules and procedures. My experience has shown that an AAR without a SIT report is typically much shorter and less organizationally controversial than a full SIT report.

| Read next: After-action reviews: Because the 'perfect fire' doesn't exist

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Safety investigation team (SIT) reports

Many people equate a SIT report with “something went wrong” or even worse a line-of-duty-death. AARs and SIT reports should be viewed as tools to help a department determine where successes and failures occurred. Further, the SIT report should identify recommendations to avoid recurrences or at least to improve the conditions that may have contributed to the issue. Among many other things, recommendations may include difficult and not-so-difficult calls for:

Organizational and/or operational change

- Disciplinary/remedial actions
- Targeted or widespread training or retraining
- Legal referral and/or involvement
- Further systemic review

Community focused education and/or infrastructure change

In the Palisades Fire report revelations, you will read that the section labeled “failures” was re-titled to “primary challenges.” Call them what you want to call them, identifying what went wrong and how to keep it from happening again is a critical component of both an AAR and a SIT. The label or section title should merely be a footnote to the whole story.

The next level: Lessons learned

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Something only becomes a true lesson learned if one of two things occur:

The event analyzed validates or confirms an existing policy or procedure worked as it should or

Recommendations are implemented and change occurs.

That's it! Otherwise, the "lesson learned" is just a **problem identified**.

The Palisades Fire draft report — the one that the **report's author would not endorse** — was reportedly edited to provide a watered-down look at problems identified. It has been alleged that the staffing policy failure text was changed to give the impression their staffing policy was actually validated. The absence of leadership and integrity in that decision is deafening. I applaud Chief Moore's fortitude in laying the organization out in admission of prior administrative mistakes and steps being taken to ensure they do not happen again.

In far too many other cases, an AAR or a SIT is completed, submitted and shelved with all the other incident reports, none of which will likely see the light of day. The AAR/SIT has been relegated to a perfunctory management requirement.

There is another consideration that many may not be aware of. There have been situations where participants on a SIT or AAR team try to "solve all the departments ills" on the heels of a major event. In these situations, some of the recommendations may have nothing to do with the event or its outcomes. Allowing extraneous recommendations in one of these reports distracts from the issues at hand and contributes to a **normalization of deviance** within the organization. Worse yet, some of these recommendations are driven by personal or political agendas. I liken this type of recommendation to the "political pork" we see in Congressional spending bills. Fortunately, it should not take an act of Congress for chiefs to do the right thing and focus the AAR or SIT report on the specific incident.

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[MORE: How to get the most out of your AAR

Contributing to recovery

During my Pacific Palisades visit, I spoke with a couple homeowners who spoke about the recovery efforts. Their home survived while many around them lost everything. Still, the family had to evacuate for 40 days while the cleanup and infrastructure restoration began. It was an eye-opening discussion about the depth of urgency and despair these homeowners felt during this incident. We generally discussed building and sprinkler codes along with the reconstruction decisions being made at the residential level.

While California's statewide residential sprinkler requirement will likely require sprinklers in all the rebuilt homes, I was somewhat dumbfounded by the prevalence of wood construction going back up — house after house, acre after acre. I am not trying to place blame, but I do believe strongly that fire-resistant construction should be the primary consideration for this rebuild. I should note that after talking with both Chief Moore and this resident, it is clear that interior sprinklers would likely have done little to stop the soffit-to-soffit fire spread created by the hurricane-force winds pushing the blaze.

We have to be honest with ourselves and with our communities. Sure, legal considerations are important when we're talking about liabilities. More important to me is that we fulfill our responsibility as public stewards sworn to uphold the public trust. If we screwed up, we need to admit it and move on. If we did great, let's sing it from the rooftops and move on. Getting these people back into their homes and restoring a broader sense of community belonging is far more important than the legal mumbo-jumbo.

Learning from the past



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Two examples from my past prove my “problems identified” theory. In the Prince George’s County 57th Avenue incident, a single-family house fire resulted in 11 injured firefighters, two critically. This was the first SIT report completed during my tenure as chief of department.

While the AAR was completed in-house, it was important to me that the SIT report be completed by an independent group. I asked three fire chiefs from Maryland, Virginia and Ohio to serve on the committee, along with NIST, ATF and our internal representatives.

The **final SIT report** took 14 months to produce. While there are many salient points within the report, the most impactful portion for me was the comparison to previous SIT reports. Specifically, when the SIT team provided me this report, many of the recommendations sounded familiar. I asked staff to make the comparison and asked the committee to include that in the final report.

The results shocked me: 20 of the 46 57th Avenue recommendations were found on previous SIT reports going back more than two decades (see the matrix below). We had identified the problems long ago but failed to learn from them. So, I set out our management team to fully implement the 57th Avenue recommendations. The reality was that implementation would take many years to achieve, particularly for several high-dollar changes.

The Baltimore City Fire Departments’ **South Stricker Street report** conducted a similar comparison (p. 113). Their findings were equally shocking, albeit now predictable.

It was embarrassing for me, and frankly for the organization, to see the results of the SIT report recommendation comparisons. Although the scope and scale is not the same, I believe I know exactly how Chief Moore feels in the fallout from the Palisades editing.

Office of Emergency
Management

P.O. Box A
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Clarksville, NY
12041

Ph: (518) 720-8025
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Albany County Sheriff's Office

Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit

April 2026

Difficult conversations

Just as an AAR or SIT is not intended to place blame, I will not attempt to do that with the Palisades report or with the two Maryland comparisons. I provide them as important talking points in our efforts to stay on the right track.

Take the necessary time to do the right thing. Have the difficult conversations when they're needed, and make the difficult decisions sooner rather than later. This is the only way we'll ensure our lessons learned are more than just problems identified.

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April 2026

2026 SEMINAR SERIES

NYS AFC's annual Seminar Series provides educational opportunities for fire service personnel of all ranks at sites across New York state. Three-hour seminars are conducted by some of the nation's leading fire service instructors at the local level on a variety of timely topics.

NYS AFC 2026 Seminar Series

"Dangerous Spaces: Challenges and Tactics When Dealing with Garage and Basement Fires"

With Chief/Commissioner Michael Lombardo (Buffalo Fire Department)



Three-Hour Seminar:

Some of the most dangerous fires we deal with are often looked at as routine: the basement fire and the garage fire. Basement fires are probably the most overlooked killer of firefighters engaged in combat firefighting in much of the U.S. The construction, layout, fire load, and access present difficult and dangerous challenges at below grade fires. From the incident commander to the firefighter on the nozzle, we must all recognize and be able to deal with these challenges. Huge migration to the suburbs starting with the arrival of the Baby Boomer generation saw the explosion of the attached garage. Many older cities never had the available space for homes to feature an attached garage or have any garage at all. The tremendous fuel load that is constantly evolving presents danger for occupants and firefighters alike. This class will address these challenges and alternative strategies and tactics that can be deployed to deal with these dangerous spaces.

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Instructor Michael Lombardo:

Mike Lombardo is a 47-year veteran of the fire service and was the commissioner/chief of department of the Buffalo Fire Department from 2006-2010. He currently operates with the Christiana (DE) and East Amherst (NY) Fire Departments. Lombardo was a member of the development team for the New York State Firefighter Survival and Rapid Intervention programs. He serves on the board of directors of the Fire Department Training Network, where he developed and presents the Fire Command program. Lombardo spent two years as the North America emergency response coordinator for the DuPont Corp. Recently, he completed near-miss investigations in Scranton, PA and Claymont DE, and also completed a review of the San Francisco (CA) Fire Department leadership and a safety audit of the Boston (MA) Fire Department. Lombardo is a two-time Firehouse Magazine Heroism Award recipient (1988 and 1994) and the 1999 recipient of the FDIC Tom Brennan Training Achievement Award. In 2024, he was a contributor to two book projects, *30 Fires You Must Know* and *The Book of Search*. In 2015, Lombardo participated in the NFFF documentary "Giving Courage: LODD Chiefs Speak."

Registration Fee:

\$35 per person – NYSAFC Individual and Department Members

\$50 per person – Non-Members

Pre-registration is encouraged. On-site registration will be accepted if space permits.

Note: A 3% service fee will be applied if paying by credit card.

2026 Dates and Locations:

Seminar begins at 7:00 p.m. at all sites. Registration area opens at 6:30 p.m.

September 16 – Saratoga County

Saratoga County Public Safety Building • 6012 County Farm Road • Ballston Spa, NY 12020

October 26 – Greene County

New Baltimore Fire District • 77 Gill Road • New Baltimore, NY 12124

November 3 – Rensselaer County

East Greenbush Fire District No. 3 • 68 Phillips Road • Rensselaer, NY 12144

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REGIONAL HANDS-ON TRAINING – FLASHOVER

Three-Hour Program Overview

It is said that if you're more than five feet from the doorway, your chance of survival in a flashover is minimal. Working in this program, you'll experience fire development from the incipient stage all the way to flashover. You'll be able to identify the signs of the event before you're part of the flashover. If you've never been in a flashover container, this program – staffed by America's most seasoned instructors with years of experience teaching with a simulator – is a must. The program includes a one-hour classroom lecture, followed by two hours of intense live fire hands-on training evolutions in NYSAFC's mobile flashover simulator.

Course Prerequisites (or Equivalents)

Firefighter I OR Basic Firefighter and Intermediate Firefighter OR Firefighting Essentials and Initial Fire Attack. Each student must also provide a signed authorization letter from the chief of his/her department (sample letter will be provided with student registration confirmation). All students must be interior qualified under New York state requirements to participate in live fire training programs.

PPE Requirements

Turnout coats and helmets will be provided to avoid heat and smoke damage to students' department gear. Each student must bring bunker pants, hood, gloves, SCBA, and one spare cylinder.

How to Host a Program in Your Region

Complete and submit a [Regional Hands-On Training – Flashover Host Request Form](#), which outlines all host responsibilities. Training will be provided in New York state only. Programs will be scheduled throughout the year based on availability of the association's flashover unit. [Email](#) NYSAFC with questions regarding Hands-On Training.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS OPEN FOR REGISTRATION:

September 26-27, 2026

Albany County

Host: East Berne Volunteer Fire Company

[Program details and registration form](#) (PD

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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 #6-2026 is attached.

<https://www.albanycountyny.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/56487/639111447433930000>

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.

Train the Trainer On the Train

CSX Railroad will be bringing their Training Train to the Albany Area this Spring.

This is a unique training experience. If you have railroad tracks in your area, be sure to attend one



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ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #6 2026

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
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Please Note that a training authorization letter is now required for all courses offered by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control

Firefighter I Certification (BEFO/SCBA Interior Firefighter Operations)	Westmere FD/Guilderland Training Tower	December 11th: Orientation: 6:30 pm Westmere FD, Chief Officer Must Attend with Student <i>BEFO (W/Hazardous Materials Operations)</i> January 6, 8, 15, 19, 20, 22, February 5, 12, 13, 17, 19, 24, 26, 28, March 3, 5, 12, 14, 17, 19, 23, 26 <i>SCBA/IFO:</i> March 31, April 2, 9, 14, 16, 23, 28, 30, May 7, 9, 12, 14, 21, 23 Weeknights 1830-2130 (5/12, 14:1800-2200) Saturday 2/28, 3/14, 5/9, 23 0800-1400 Instructor – M. DeGroff	At Orientation: Training Authorization Letter Start of SCBA/IFO: Medical Clearance to wear SCBA,
IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting 7th Edition Curriculum IN PROGRESS			
Firefighter I Certification	Colonie Village FD/Guilderland Training Tower	December 22nd: Orientation: 6:30 pm Colonie Village FD, Chief Officer Must Attend with Student	At Orientation: Training Authorization Letter

(BEFO/SCBA Interior Firefighter Operations) <i>BEFO (W/Hazardous Materials Operations)</i> January 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28, February 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, March 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 21 <i>SCBA/IFO:</i> March 23, 25, 30, April 1, 6, 8, 13, 15, 20, 22, 27, 29, May 4, 6, 11, 13 Weeknights 1830-2130 (3/18, 3/21, 4/29, 5/4 1800-2200) Saturday 3/21 0800-1400 Instructor – A. Molesky Start of SCBA/IFO: Medical Clearance to wear SCBA, IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting7th Edition Curriculum IN PROGRESS				
Truck Company Operations IN PROGRESS	Latham FD Station #1	March 31, April 2, 11, 18, 28, May 2 Weeknights 1830- 2130 Saturday 0800-1400	K. Molesky	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Apparatus Operator Emergency Vehicle Operations	Guilderland Center	April 7, 9, 21, 1830- 2130 April 25, May 2: 0830-1430	Paiko	Valid Driver's License
Basic Structural Collapse Operations	Slingerlands	April 11: 0900-1500	Gill	None
NERIS	Slingerlands	April 7 1800-2200	OFPC	None
Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Planning & Emergency Response	Slingerlands LOCATION CHANGE	April 14, 16, 21 1830-2130	S. DeGross	BEFO or Equivalent

4 Hour Refresher Hose Line Advancement	East Berne	April 18: 0800-1200 REVISED DATES	C. VanBuskirk	BEFO or Equivalent
3 Hour Refresher Ladders	East Berne	April 21: 1900-2200 REVISED DATES	C. VanBuskirk	BEFO or Equivalent
NERIS	Ravena	April 21 st 1800-2200	OFPC	None
ICS for Complex Incidents (I-400)	Colonie MTB	April 21 & 22: 0800-1700	OEM	IS 100c, 200c, 700b, 800d. 300 (Completed after April 2019), Register using link below ICS For Complex Incidents (I-400)
Apparatus Operator Emergency Vehicle Operations	Rensselaerville	April 22, 23, 28, 29, 30 1830-2130 May 2: 0830-1430	Neidnig	Valid Driver's License
Fire Service Cancer Reduction DECON	Coeymans Hollow	April 28 1830-2030	Boomhower	None
Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Company Training & Community Risk Reduction	Slingerlands LOCATION CHANGE	April 28, 30 May 5, 7 1830-2130	S. DeGross	BEFO or Equivalent
Fire Officer II (NFPA 1021- 2020 Ed)	Saratoga Public Safety Building - 6010 County Farm Road, Ballston Spa	April 25th thru 26th and May 1st thru 3rd 8am - 5pm	OFPC	Officer I Nat Cert: FFII Nat Cert and Inst I Nat Cert and FOI course completion OR; FFI course completion and FFII course completion and Inst I course completion All registrations are done through our learning management system which can be found at: https://lmsportal-dhses.ny.gov/

Truck Company Operations NEW TO SCHEDULE	Fuller Road FD	May 7, 16, 21, June 2, 4, 6 Weeknights 1830-2130 Saturday 0800-1400	C. VanBuskirk	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Rescue Technician Basic	Westmere LOCATION CHANGE	May 12, 14, 21, 26, 28, 30, June 2 Weeknights 1830-2130 May 30: 0800-1400	S. DeGroff	None
Standpipe Operations	North Bethlehem	May 13, 27 1830-2230 27 th at Guilderland Tower	Gill	Firefighter I or Equivalent
FFS: Self Rescue	Colonie Village	May 18, 27: 1830-2130 May 30: 0800-1700	T. VanBuskirk	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Fire and Emergency Service Instructor I (2019 Ed.)	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington	May 29th thru 31st and June 6th thru 7th 8am - 5pm	OFPC	All registrations are done through our learning management system which can be found at: https://lmsportal-dhSES.ny.gov/
Hazardous Materials Incident Command	Westmere	June 1, 3, 8, 10 1830-2230	Lattanzio	Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations
FFS: Self Rescue	Westmere	June 2, 11: 1830-2130 June 13: 0800-1700	T. VanBuskirk	Firefighter I or Equivalent

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> Three-week program: Monday - Friday 8:00-1700 July 6th -10th July 13th – 17th July 20th – 24th NEW TO SCHEDULE		June 2nd Orientation 1830-2130 Colonie MTB Note: Chief Officer from student's department must attend orientation. Instructor: Paiko		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
Decontamination	Guilderland FD	June 6: 0800-1200	Lattanzio	Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations
Basic Passenger Vehicle Rescue	Slingerlands	June 6: 0800-1400, June 9,10, 18 1830-2130	M. DeGroff	None
Personal Protective Equipment for the HAZ MAT Operations Level Responder Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations	Guilderland FD	June 6: 1300-1700	Lattanzio	Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations

Apparatus Aerial Operator	Guilderland FD	July 7, 9, 16, 21,23, 28, 30, August 4, 6, 13 1830-2130	Paiko	BEFO or Equivalent
Firefighter 2 Module 2 Risk Reduction	Slingerlands	August 18, 19, 20 1830-2130	M. DeGroff	Firefighter I r Equivalent
Firefighter 2 - Module 4 IMAT	Slingerlands	September 1, 2, 3 1830-2130	M. DeGroff	Firefighter I or Equivalent
IMAT Subject matter based on Chapter 5 of NFPA 1001, Standard for Firefighting Professional Qualifications. Educational Topics include investigation, maintenance, assisting technical rescue. Skills training include documenting evidence of fire origin and cause, inspecting and maintaining tools and equipment and assisting technical rescue operations.				
Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Firefighter Health & Safety	Verdoy	September 8, 10, 15, 17 1830-2130	S. DeGroff	BEFO or Equivalent
Firefighter 2 Module 1A - Crew Leadership w/Structural Live Fire	Elsmere/ Colonie & Guilderland Towers	September 10, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24 1830-2130 9/19: 0800-1500	M. DeGroff	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Apparatus Aerial Operator NEW TO SCHEDULE	Fuller Road	September 10, 15, 22, 24 October 3, 17, 24 Weeknights1830-2130 Saturdays 0800-1400	C. VanBuskirk	BEFO or Equivalent
Apparatus Operator- Pump NEW TO SCHEDULE	North Bethlehem	September 14, 28, October 5, 12, 19, 24, 26	S. DeGroff	BEFO or Equivalent

		Weeknights 1830-2130 Saturday 0800-1400		
Fire and Emergency Service Instructor I (2019 Ed.)	Saratoga Public Safety Building - 6010 County Farm Road, Ballston Spa	September 18th thru 20th and 26th thru 27th 8am - 5pm	OFPC	All registrations are done through our learning management system which can be found at: https://lmsportal-dhSES.ny.gov/
Firefighter 2 Module 3- Foam & Flammable Gas	Elsmere/ Colonie MTB	September 29, 30, October 1 1830-2130	M. DeGroff	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Fire and Emergency Service Instructor I (2019 Ed.)	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington Ave, Albany	October 16th thru 20th 8am - 5pm	OFPC	All registrations are done through our learning management system which can be found at: https://lmsportal-dhSES.ny.gov/
Fire Officer II (NFPA 1021- 2020 Ed)	Harriman Campus - 1220 Washington Ave, Albany	October 19th thru 23rd 8am - 5pm	OFPC	Officer I Nat Cert: FFII Nat Cert and Inst I Nat Cert and FOI course completion OR; FFI course completion and FFII course completion and Inst I course completion All registrations are done through our learning management system which can be found at: https://lmsportal-dhSES.ny.gov/
Principals of Instruction NEW TO SCHEDULE	Shaker Road	October 22, 29, November 5, 12, 18 1830-2130	Clawson	None
Fire Officer 1 Module Series: Fireground Strategies and Tactics for First Arriving Companies	Verdoy	October 27, 29, November 5 1830-2130 November 7: 0800-1400	S. DeGroff	BEFO or Equivalent

Water Supply Operations NEW TO SCHEDULE	North Bethlehem	November 2, 9, 12, 14, 16, 19, 21 Weeknights 1830-2130 Saturdays 0800-1400	S. DeGroff	Scene Support Operations/Basic Exterior Firefighter Operations or Equivalent
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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 
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Railroad Emergency Operations

SESSIONS

Tuesday, May 26 – 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM

Wednesday, May 27 – 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Wednesday, May 27 – 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM

Thursday, May 28 – 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Register
TODAY
CLICK OR SCAN



LOCATION

Port of Albany

106 Smith Blvd.

Albany, NY 12202

CPKC

CSX

RESPONSE TO RAILROAD INCIDENTS/UNIFIED COMMAND

*Augmented Reality Derailment
Tabletop Exercise*



**WEDNESDAY, MAY 27
12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM**

**PORT OF ALBANY
106 SMITH BLVD.
ALBANY, NY 12202**

Register
TODAY
CLICK OR SCAN



RESPONSE TO RAILROAD INCIDENTS/UNIFIED COMMAND

*Augmented Reality Derailment
Tabletop Exercise*



**WEDNESDAY, MAY 27
12:30 PM TO 4:30 PM**

**PORT OF ALBANY
106 SMITH BLVD.
ALBANY, NY 12202**

Register
TODAY
CLICK OR SCAN





Railroad & Maritime Emergency Response Training

Thursday, May 28

12:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Port of Albany

106 Smith Blvd.

Albany, NY 12202

Register
TODAY
CLICK OR SCAN



GALLAGHER
MARINE SYSTEMS

