

**Call/Volunteers Serving Today to Protect Your Tomorrow**

# ***Smoke Showin'***

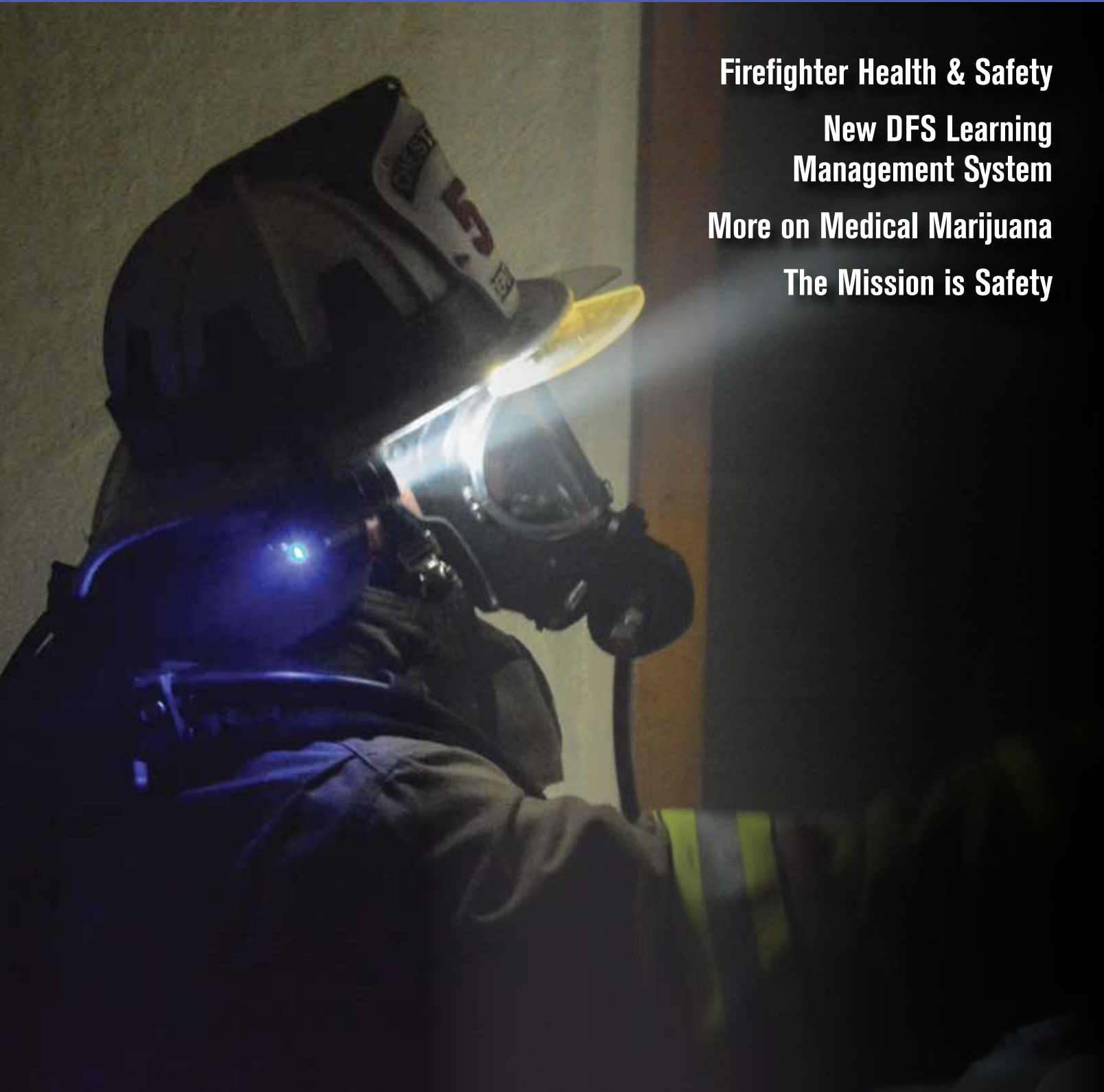
The Official Publication of the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association

**Firefighter Health & Safety**

**New DFS Learning  
Management System**

**More on Medical Marijuana**

**The Mission is Safety**



# New Fire Academy Director Appointed



The MCVFA congratulates MCVFA member and West Newbury Deputy Fire Chief Dave Evans on his appointment to be the next director of the Massachusetts Fire Academy.

State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey announced on August 24th that David Evans had been named as the new director. "David will be a great addition to the DFS management team and a leader for the dedicated academy staff," said State Fire Marshal Ostroskey, "He comes with a unique skill set that matches the needs of the academy having worked for 30 years in education and over a decade in the fire service."

Mr. Evans is also a member of the Groveland Fire Department and was the assistant principal of the Pentucket Regional High School for nearly a decade. At Pentucket, he was able to combine his love of education and public safety through the school's *Safety and Public Service Innovation Academy*. It engages students in a unique sequence of courses and industry certifications that equips them to serve communities. Many have joined local fire departments and graduated from MFA.

Evans has a bachelor's in American history from Salem State College, a master's degree in liberal studies from the University of New Hampshire, completed a School Principal Certification program at Northeastern University, and is a certified Firefighter I/II and has completed fire training in numerous areas. He has worked for DFS in the Special Operations Unit since 2016. 🚒

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## DFS Special Ops provides Drone Capability to Local Departments

The Special Operations Unit at DFS is adding a small unmanned aircraft system (sUAS or drone) to the equipment we share with the public safety community. Marshal Ostroskey asked the Special Operations Group to investigate and develop a drone program in 2016. Today, DFS has two licensed sUAS pilots and will add more if the need arises.

The DFS drone is a DJI Inspire 1 that allows the pilot to control the aircraft and camera separately so that an incident commander can see what he or she needs for operations while the aircraft maintains a safe flight pattern. DFS also has an FLIR infrared camera for the drone that may be used to distinguish temperature gradients. This is helpful in missing person searches.

Local public safety can request drone service for large structure fires, CBRNE (chemical, biological, radiation, nuclear & explosive) incidents, photo and video documentation, storm damage review, missing person searches, and more. Please note that drone missions are weather and location dependent. Our missions will be in strict compliance with all FAA regulations, including but not limited to 14 CFR 107. After an agency requests the drone, we may contact you to determine the exact location and current weather conditions. 🚒



**Request emergency drone missions  
using normal Special Operations  
request procedures at 508-820-2000.**



# 2017

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Fall 2017

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Cover photo: Chesterfield Deputy Fire Chief Drew Morse during a Chesterfield, Goshen, and Williamsburg Fire Departments drill.

Photo courtesy of Captain Bob Labrie, Goshen Fire Department.

# Hindley Scholarship Recipients

The MCVFA congratulates the 2017 recipients of the Robert J. Hindley Memorial Scholarships.

- Callie Hoadley from Hanover and will be attending McKendree University, Lebanon, IL.
- Jasmine Dort from Essex and will be attending Saint Joseph's College of Maine, Standish, ME.
- Megan Rice from Leverett and will be attending Utica College, Utica, NY.
- Alan Torrey from Easthampton and will be attending Greenfield Community College, Greenfield, MA.
- Amanda Vallone from Clarksburg and will be attending Green Mountain College, Poultney, VT.

Good luck and best wishes for the coming year to all our recipients. 

## Application Period Opens

JANUARY 1  
2018



## Robert J. Hindley Memorial SCHOLARSHIP

The Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters' Association (MCVFA) will be awarding five (5) \$1,000 Robert J. Hindley Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship is available to an MCVFA member or immediate family member.



For eligibility information and requirements  
visit [www.mcvfa.org/awards](http://www.mcvfa.org/awards)

# Smoke Showin'

The Official Publication of the Massachusetts  
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MCVFA membership.





## President's Message

It's hard to believe that it has been almost two years since I was elected President of the MCVFA. I wish to thank the membership for their support and their confidence in my abilities to move their organization forward. I have truly enjoyed serving as President of this exceptional organization and have always had the best interest of the Association at heart. Over the last two years, I have met with a number of you around the state and have enjoyed our conversations.

I wish to continue this experience and therefore I'm asking for your continued support as I seek reelection as President of the MCVFA for another 2-year term.

Elections for President and State Secretary will be held at the State Meeting on October 7, 2017, in Marlborough at the Holiday Inn and Suites. Information is available on the web page. We hope you will make an effort to attend.

Like any organization, the MCVFA is dynamic but especially so because we are a volunteer organization from bottom to top. Our members face many constraints on their time; family, careers, avocations, etc., which compete for precious minutes and sometimes things have got to give. Both Region 3 Vice President Bob Silver and Region 4 Vice President Jeff Simmons recently resigned from their positions because of changing priorities. This leaves vacancies in two very important locations critical to the call/volunteer fire service and to the MCVFA. We are looking for at least two candidates to fill these slots. If you are interested, please contact me at [president@mcvfa.org](mailto:president@mcvfa.org).

Our web page continues to evolve with additional changes and information. If you have any comments, please use the "Contact Us" tab.

The association is ready, willing and able to assist you and your department and we will meet with your department to explain what the MCVFA has to offer.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. 🌸

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Kevin Connolly". The signature is fluid and cursive.

*Kevin Connolly*  
MCVFA President

# *Thank you all...and be safe!*

# Firefighter



# Health & Safety

Firefighter Health & Safety has come a long way since I started in the fire service. We now focus on the whole firefighter from physical wellness to mental wellness after years of losing firefighters to cardiac disease, cancer and suicide. While great strides have been made in these areas we still have a long way to go.

Things we take for granted today didn't even enter our minds at the scene as recent as 20 years ago. If you wanted a drink of water you cracked a nozzle, if you needed to warm up you stood by the exhaust of the engine for a minute or two. If you needed to eat you just grabbed a fast food burger in your dirty glove or hand and shoveled it in then washed it down with coffee or soda. You would never consider washing your coat or helmet because that dirty, soot stained gear was a "badge of experience". If you even wore a hood it went right back into your coat pocket for the next call. After the fire, all the dirty equipment went back in the cab of the truck or into your personal vehicle. How many of you remember that one call from your career that still wakes you from a sound sleep sweating bullets?


We did not make the smartest of choices but we really didn't know any better. The education and research are right in front of us now to make smarter and healthier choices so go out and find them. Much has been done to educate the members of the fire service on every aspect of fire ground operations. I think the vast improvements in firefighter rehab are going to pay big dividends to firefighters over the span of their time in the fire service. The recent push on educating firefighters to the dangers we face from cancer is also opening some eyes and changing how some departments operate.

We have endless resources available to us to reduce the risks we face and help us live long happy lives. The simplest place to start is right on the MCVFA website. Under the resources tab there is an entire page of resources available right at your fingertips. I applaud the leadership of MCVFA in providing such a comprehensive list of topics to help their members. The Summer 2017 issue of this magazine had an article on firefighter cancer and a survey of Massachusetts call/volunteer firefighters. Cancer does not care if you are a career firefighter or a call/volunteer; we are all exposed to cancer causing toxins and must take the same precautions to reduce our exposure.

The Boston Fire Department has done some amazing work lately to reduce cancer and improve firefighter health. I strongly urge you to look at what they have done and start to implement the easy things right away. There are many simple, inexpensive things each department can do to reduce their firefighters exposure to carcinogens. Things like; carrying baby wipes to do a quick decon of your face and hands; not allowing dirty fire gear into the cabs of apparatus, fire station living areas or personal vehicles. A simple box of large trash bags allows dirty gear to be bagged up thus reducing the potential for contamination.

There are many organizations out there to help deal with the stress and emotional trauma we all face day in and day out. They only work if you reach out to them before you need their help. Knowing the members of your local CISM team before they are needed builds relationships that will help a firefighter have trust in them to open up. Another great tool that all too often remains hidden in the toolbox is a Department Chaplain. The Massachusetts Corps of Fire Chaplains is a great resource in helping a department, or a member, in dealing with the day to day things in life that can slowly build up in us. The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy offers many classes designed to help firefighters stay safe and healthy. I strongly urge you to take advantage of this great resource.

The first crucial step in firefighter health and wellness starts with you. Change those bad habits on the fire ground by wearing all of your PPE all of the time, make sure you follow your departments fire ground rehab policy even if it means sitting out for a few minutes and clean everything including yourself after every fire. Lead an active lifestyle and make smarter food choices when you eat, I for one do not always follow the healthiest of diets but I try and limit the amount of unhealthy items I consume. Don't be afraid to talk to someone, anyone, if you are having a hard time dealing with a particular call or life event. If you see someone in your department struggling with health & wellness issues be a leader and offer to help them or get them help. Remember the fire service is a family and when one member struggles we all struggle until we get them help.

Most importantly, always remember Everyone Goes Home. 



# New DFS Learning Management System

This summer, the Department of Fire Services (DFS) replaced the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy (MFA) Course Management System with the new Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS will improve the user experience for nearly every aspect of training from searching for courses to obtaining training records. Students will be able to login from a computer, tablet, or smart phone at any time of day or night. DFS staff has been working hard with our vendor for nearly two years to create this system and to make the transition as smooth as possible.



**Department of Fire Services**  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts



## Learning to use the LMS

Our team has created tools to help everyone learn to use this new system. Online guidance is available for every task and an online help menu is available at the bottom of every page of the LMS. Trained staff are also available for assistance during business hours.

## Electronic Calendars Alerts on Personal Devices

The LMS allows students to add training to their personal device calendars and to request email and text reminders about programs. Notifications include upcoming training, class enrollment and any changes to training schedules.

## View the Entire Course Catalog

Our entire course catalog is on the new LMS. It is searchable by activity type, category, or keyword. This is helpful to students looking for training and also for chiefs and training officers requesting training for departments.

## Student Profiles

Students will use an online profile in the LMS to register for courses. DFS has created a profile for everyone who has taken a course since 1999. If we have your current email address, you received an email notification prior to the transition to check and update your online profile. This ensured that the LMS had correct information and also allowed students to set up preferred contact information and to select notification options. If you did not get this email but have taken a course, please contact DFS to access your account. Please note: If you create a duplicate account or profile you won't be able to access your training history.

## Immediate Online Training

In the LMS, students will receive immediate notification of enrollment in online courses and can begin training right away. When students complete an online program successfully, it is added to their training history immediately. This feature will be available in the second phase of the launch.

## Access to Training History, Transcripts and Certificates

Another benefit of the LMS will be online access to your training history, including transcripts, dating back to 1999. Students will also be able to print training certificates from the system. This feature will also be available in the second phase of the launch. If you need a transcript, please call MFA staff at 978-567-3200 for assistance.

## Did you Enroll in a Course Before the LMS Launch?

All existing registrations were transferred to the new system by DFS staff. You do not have to re-register for any program.

## Changes

Every student will be required to pre-register online by the published deadline date of the course which may vary by course type, and paper registrations will no longer be accepted.

Late registrants will have to provide proof to the instructor they have duly registered online in order to participate and to receive credit for the class.

## No Excused Absences Except for Extended Duration Classes

There will be no excused absences unless a student is enrolled in an extended duration class (Career Recruit, Call/Volunteer Recruit or Hazmat Tech).

## MFTC No-Show Policy

The Massachusetts Fire Training Council (MFTC) has a longstanding policy that three no-shows in a calendar year will lead to a ban on registering for training for one year. This is a matter of courtesy to others who wanted to take the class. The online registration system allows staff to easily track no-shows and we will be strictly enforcing the no-show policy.

## E-Payment

Students taking certification exams and out-of-state students attending courses must pay online with a credit card or an automated clearing house (ACH) transfer payment only. When a student chooses ACH, they are authorizing a debit to their checking or savings account.

The LMS is already improving processes and activities in MFA course registration and training and we look forward to the many efficiencies and conveniences the system will provide to all students and staff. 🚒

# UNITED to Face the Future



[www.fcam.org](http://www.fcam.org)



# What's Your Training Budget?

BY CHIEF JOE MARUCA



On a recent Saturday, I was on the Main Street in a Berkshire County town and I overheard three call/volunteer firefighters talking about training. One of the firefighters said, “When I was with the XYZ Fire Department, we didn’t do a lick of training all year”. It pains me to hear this.

Training is the key to success in the call/volunteer fire service. If we don’t have good training we fail. Without a good training program your department is gambling with your life and the lives of your community. My fear is that there are many fire departments that don’t train enough or lack a meaningful training or drill program. So, I challenge each and every firefighter to raise the bar at their fire department by training more and training better.

This means reviewing and revising your training budget and I’m not necessarily talking about how much money you spend on training. I’m mostly talking about how much time and energy your department and its firefighters invest in training

each year. There is a lot of valuable training that can be done without hiring instructors or buying books.

Every fire department has a time budget for training. What’s yours? If you train two hours once per month your training budget is 24 hours per year. If you train for two and half hours once per month your training budget is 30 hours per year. Using two hours per drill or training night for the rest of this article, training twice per month results in 48 per year training budget, three nights per month is a 60 hour per year training budget training every week (or four times per month) gets you to a 72 hour per year training budget.

Keep in mind that to get full credit for training from the Insurance Services Office (ISO) a fire department should provide 192 hours of fire training per year. This sounds so impossible as to make you simply throw up your hands and say “to hell with trying”. But don’t give in to your emotions. If you can get to weekly drills, or 72 hours per year of training, you’ve reached 38% of the ISO goal. That’s real achievement for a small town fire department.

There are additional ISO goals that you can easily reach. For instance, the ISO looks for you to provide 12 hours of officer training each year and 12 hours per year of driver training. ISO only requires 6 hours of HAZMAT training, but federal law requires 8 hours. Focus on these goals and you can accomplish a great deal of focused and relevant training.

Sit down and make a list of the types of emergency calls you respond to in a typical year — building fire, car fire, brush fire, CO Alarm, EMS, motor vehicle crash, fuel spill, storm damage, missing persons, ice rescue, and on and on and on. Next, decide which of these are high-risk, low frequency events. These high-risk, low frequency events are the most dangerous calls you respond to, and they are the types of calls that require the most training. Because these are infrequent events, firefighters don’t get much field experience with them. This means that repetitive training is critical to preparing for these events and to making sure you are ready to deal them safely.

For instance, in my own community we experience a building fire about once every three years. Building fires are complex and dangerous to civilians and firefighters. In order to deal with them, without putting firefighters into unnecessary danger, we use frequent repetitive building fire training to compensate for the lack of actual building fires. Frequent repetitive training means we practice the same tactic or skills over and over in the same year.

In my community, we also get one or two car fires each year. But, car fires are not as complex as building fires and they don’t carry all of the same risks to civilians and firefighters that building fires do. This means that car fires are (for us) moderate frequency, low risk events, so we don’t need to do as much training for car fires as we do for building fires. And, much of

*Continues on page 13*



# EXAMPLE: Fire Department Training Budget

Department Trains Twice Per Month, Two Hours Per Drill  
48 Hours of Training Per Year

*For a Fire Department that does NOT operate an Ambulance*

JAN	DRILL 1	EMS:	CPR & AED
	DRILL 2	Hazmat:	Emergency Response Guidebook Practice Massachusetts Right to Know (Hazcom)
FEB	DRILL 1	Fire/Hazmat:	SCBA Confidence Drills
	DRILL 2	Fire/Officer:	Tactics & Strategy Review
MAR	DRILL 1	Hazmat/EMS:	Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, CO Alarms, Gas Meter
	DRILL 2	Fire/Officer:	Pre-Plan & Target Hazard Review
APR	DRILL 1	Fire:	Drafting (or Hydrants) & Pumping
	DRILL 2	Fire:	Brush/Wildland Fire Operations
MAY	DRILL 1	Fire:	Basic Skills Practice – Hoisting & Ladders & Portable Equipment & Thermal Imager, etc.
	DRILL 2	Fire:	MCVFA Engine Company Evolution #1
JUN	DRILL 1	EMS/Rescue:	Auto Extrication Practice with Junk Car
	DRILL 2	Fire:	MCVFA Engine Company Evolution #2
JUL	DRILL 1	Hazmat:	Fuel Spill Control Field Exercise
	DRILL 2	Fire:	MCVFA Engine Company Evolution #3
AUG	DRILL 1	Fire:	Drafting (or Hydrants) & Pumping
	DRILL 2	Fire:	MCVFA Engine Company Evolution #4
SEP	DRILL 1	EMS:	Fire Ground Rehab (or MCI Practice – alternate)
	DRILL 2	Fire:	MCVFA Engine Company Evolution #1
OCT	DRILL 1	EMS:	Bandaging & Splinting
	DRILL 2	Fire:	MCVFA Engine Company Evolution #3
NOV	DRILL 1	Fire/Officer:	Pre-Plan Inspection – High Hazard Property
	DRILL 2	Fire/Hazmat/Officer:	Incident Command
DEC	DRILL 1	Fire:	Basic Skills Practice – Knots, Ladders, Portable Pumps, Generators, etc.
	DRILL 2	EMS/Rescue:	Ice/Cold Water Rescue Ops – Hypothermia & Frost Bite – Patient Care

...continued from page 11

our building fire training (hose handling, SCBA and pumping) is adaptable to car fires. As a result, we typically do only one car fire drill each year, compared to at least two-dozen building fire drills or trainings.

Who decides what is high, moderate or low frequency? Your department does. What is a high, moderate or low frequency event for you is different than for other departments. You might decide that everything you do is low frequency, or that EMS is high frequency and everything else is low frequency. Look at your call volume and make your own informed decision based upon your department's data. Don't worry about what others might say or do.

The same is true for determining what is high, moderate and low risk. You need to look at your community risks (call types & frequencies, building types, geography, target hazards), your department capabilities (personnel, turnout, training, equipment, experience, and response times), and modern fire behavior science. While a busy urban fire department might not rate the type of fires you get in the typical single family homes present in most of our communities as a high risk fire, you might do so because your staff lacks experience with these fires, or maybe because long response times result in advanced fires, or low staffing means you can't use urban tactics.

Take the time to look at what you are called upon to respond to in a typical year or over a typical five-year period, and this will give you a pretty good picture of what you need to train for. Then match your training to your community needs, and train for operations that are realistic when it comes to the staffing, response times and equipment you can bring to bare on the problem. Create a list of training that you believe you should do every month or every other month. List the annual trainings you think you need. List training you should do every other year or every three years.

The next step is to allocate your annual training hours across the topics you've identified you need to train for. There's no formula for this. There are a few legally required trainings you need to insert up front, but legally required fire training in Massachusetts is pretty thin. It is at this point; that I believe many departments will discover they need a bigger training budget. I suggest that once per month training, or 24 hours of training per year, isn't adequate in even the smallest communities. Even twice per month training or 48 hours of training per year is thin for many topics.

Among the most important legally required trainings to conduct is eight hours of hazmat operational training annually. You should also try to conduct at least six hours of first aid/EMS training to meet the state's 18 hours per every three year first responder training requirement. A complete list of legally required training for Massachusetts firefighters can be found on the MCVFA website.



Each year make an annual or semi-annual training plan or budget. Make a spreadsheet or use a calendar. It doesn't have to be complex. I like to do the training plan at six month intervals and the document simply states the date/time, drill topic and who's in charge of the planning and delivery of the drill. If it's not written down it's not a real plan and the likelihood of your training being successfully completed drops dramatically. An example of an annual drill plan for a department that trains twice per month is included in this edition of Smoke Showing.

If your department operates an ambulance, then your training needs and training budget get more complex. EMTs need 20 hours of continuing education biannually, as well as a 20 hour National Continued Competency Curriculum (formerly known as the "EMT Refresher"). The National Continued Competency is typically done as single program over a weekend or a series of evenings. The 20 hours of continuing education can be inserted into your drill plan or budget as a 2-hour drill (or two one hour topics) every other month. The challenge is to do this without cutting out fire, HAZMAT, command and other important training topics.

Of all of the challenges faced by the call/volunteer and small combination fire departments in Massachusetts, training is near the top of the list. After recruitment and retention, I'd suggest that training is our number two challenge. However, I think that training is among the easiest of our challenges to overcome. It mostly requires our willingness to solve. 🔧



# Governor fills Fire Service Commission PFFM Seat & updates Length of Service Award Criteria

by Captain Mike McCullough  
Fire Service Commission Representative of MCVFA

In recent months Governor Charles Baker has appointed PFFM President Rich MacKinnon to the Fire Service Commission as the Representative of the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts. The commission now has all of its statutory seats filled.

In other recent action, the commission has reviewed and updated criteria for nominations to the Massachusetts Firefighter Service Award program. This is the first review and update of the rules since the award's inception in 1999. Prior service may now include tenure in a Department of Defense fire department or the DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control. In addition, prior service in any department as a call or volunteer firefighter is now included in the Career Firefighter Service award where previously it was limited to service in the current department only. This aligns the Career Service award with the Call and Volunteer Service awards which always included prior service in any fire department. The current criteria is as follows:

All nominees must have 20 or more years of service in Massachusetts or out-of-state (given in five-year increments) and be a member in good standing as a call, career or volunteer firefighter.

## **Massachusetts Call Firefighter Award**

*Service shall include:*

Call firefighter service in one or more departments.

Prior service as a call, career, or volunteer or career firefighter in the same or any other department.

## **Massachusetts Career Firefighter Award**

*Service shall include:*

Career firefighter service in one or more department.

Prior service as a call, career, or volunteer firefighter in the same or any other fire department.


## **Massachusetts Volunteer Firefighter Award**

*Service shall include:*

Volunteer firefighter service in one or more department(s).

Prior service as a call, career, or volunteer firefighter in the same or any other department.

This length of service award may include any years served as a career member (military or civilian) of a Department of Defense fire department, or DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control, and is applicable only to active Massachusetts firefighters. All information used in applying the above criteria is subject to verification and approval by the current head of the fire department. No person convicted of any felony crime in any state or under the laws of any country shall be eligible for the Massachusetts Firefighter Service Award.

The Fire Service Commission encourages all fire departments to participate in this recognition program. Information and forms can be found on the DFS website at [www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/dfs/exec-office/ff-service-awards/](http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/dfs/exec-office/ff-service-awards/). 





# More on Medical Marijuana

**T**he Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) has ruled<sup>1</sup> that employers in Massachusetts cannot prohibit off-duty medical marijuana use when the employee's doctor has decided that marijuana is the most effective treatment for the employee's medical condition." So how does this effect the call/volunteer fire service in Massachusetts?

This is a case about a private industry employee who used properly prescribed medical marijuana (under state law), under a doctor's supervision, off-duty, off-site and who never reported to work intoxicated or under the influence of marijuana.

The court is essentially saying that employers (the city, town or fire district for our purposes) should treat off-duty medical marijuana use the same as they would treat the use of any other prescription medication by off-duty employees. The SJC put the burden on the employer of proving that the employee's use of medical marijuana (off-duty) is a hardship to the employer. And, remember that call and volunteer firefighters (even volunteers who are completely unpaid and don't get stipends) are treated as employees under most state and federal labor, ethics, and tax laws. The SJC and the Massachusetts medical marijuana law do not require the fire department (or any other employer) to allow onsite or on-duty use of medical marijuana.

The SJC went further to suggest that if the employee's off-duty medical marijuana use would result in a risk to public safety or would pose a risk to other employees; the employer may be able to prohibit it.

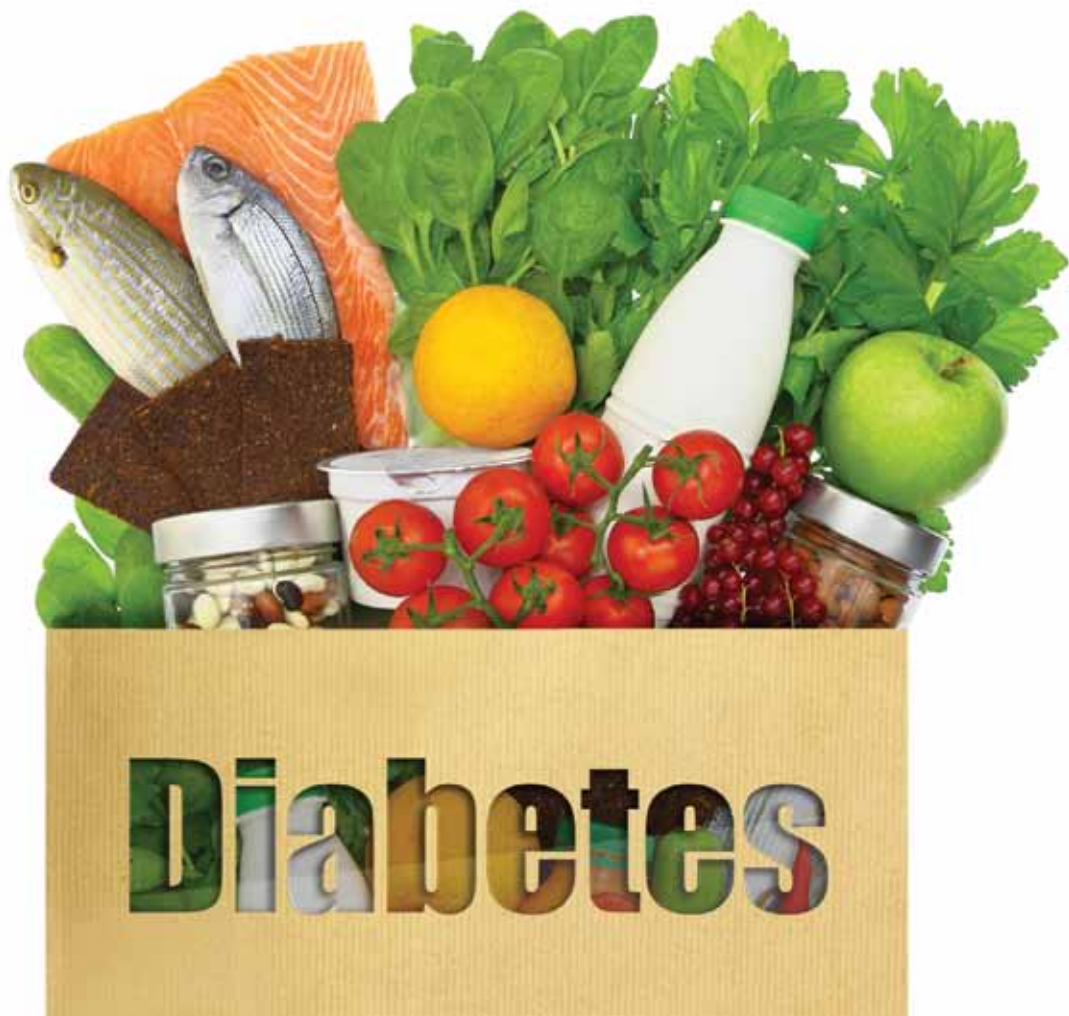
So what about federal law? Federal law still prohibits the use of medical marijuana, so doesn't this matter? It does, to a point

(and employers are caught balancing on this point between Federal and State Law). If you get federal grant money, as many fire departments and their cities, towns or districts do, you are contractually and statutorily required to abide by the federal Drug Free Workplace Act. This law prohibits marijuana use, both medical and recreational. The SJC wiggles around this conflict of state and federal law by implying that requiring an employer to allow medical marijuana use in conflict with contractual and statutory federal grant requirements would be an undue hardship and a possible exception to its ruling.

The SJC also pointed out that the employee's off-duty and off-site use of medical marijuana only put the employee at risk of federal criminal charges, not the employer, so the employer's concern about federal law isn't particularly important. However, in the typical call/volunteer firefighter deployment model, fire chiefs and towns should think about how call/volunteer firefighters responding to emergency calls from off-duty might change this. It's similar to the issues we face with off-duty alcohol use by firefighters.

I think that fire chiefs have some leeway to prohibit off-duty medical marijuana use by firefighters based upon public safety and federal grant requirements. However, the burden of proving the need to do this falls on the fire department. They also have the option of developing more nuanced policies based upon department and community needs, where off-duty firefighters could use medical marijuana in limited situations or under certain restrictions. Chiefs should review this SJC case with their town administrators and legal counsels, and then develop a written policy on medical marijuana use by firefighters. 🚫

<sup>1</sup> *Barbuto v. Advantage Sales and Marketing, No. SJC-12226 (July 17, 2017)*



# National Volunteer Fire Council Addresses Diabetes in the Fire Service

by Chief Jeff Cash

It is with great pleasure that I get the opportunity to assist in rolling out a new position statement from the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). The NVFC's mission is to provide a unified voice for volunteer fire and EMS organizations, and they always work to be on the front lines of supporting firefighter health and safety. The NVFC has taken on many positions and programs relating to firefighter health and safety, such as smoking cessation, the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, and the Share the Load™ behavioral health program. They have been on the forefront of pushing volunteer fire and EMS organizations into getting their members annual medical evaluations. The introduction of the NVFC's latest position to support and educate the emergency services on diabetes falls right in line with the goals and objectives of those initiatives.

Why is diabetes support and education so important? To answer that question, you need a little background on diabetes. Diabetes mellitus is a metabolic disease characterized by the inability to use glucose (sugar) effectively due to deficiencies or resistance to insulin. It is a situation that responders deal with on a regular basis when responding to diabetic medical emergency calls. Diabetes contributes to a number of other diseases including heart disease, eye complications, kidney disease, neuropathy, foot problems, skin complications, and dental disease. The American Diabetes Association states that almost 30 million children and adults have diabetes, and 86 million more are pre-diabetic in the U.S. today. That equates to nine percent of Americans in our country who currently have diabetes. Odds are one out of every 10 members on your department will be afflicted with the disease at some point in their life. That is why it is so important.

Why does it matter to the NVFC? It's important to the NVFC because one out of every five line-of-duty coronary heart disease (CHD) events occurred in a person suffering from diabetes, according to the 2015 National Fallen Firefighter's Foundation report Heart to Heart: Strategizing an Evidence-based Approach to Reduce Cardiac Disease and Death in the Fire Service. CHD is the leading cause of firefighter line-of-duty deaths each year, and one of the contributing factors to heart disease is diabetes.

Diabetes is something that the fire service needs to recognize in its members to help prevent more line-of-duty incidents. Through the new position statement, the NVFC is prompting education, management, and prevention of the disease. The only way for fire/EMS organization members to get the proper diagnosis and treatment is through an annual medical evaluation and screening. It is one of the many medical ailments that can be found through an annual medical evaluation, providing further confirmation as to why annual exams are so important. Reducing the number of line-of-duty deaths will always be a priority of the NVFC, and urging departments to give members the benefit of an annual physical evaluation is a huge step in that process.

The issues of diabetes and medical screenings are important to the NVFC, but they are also important to me personally. During our annual physicals at the Cherryville Fire Department in 2014, the medical exam provider found an issue with my bloodwork relating to glucose issues. The medical provider urged me to visit my local physician, who ran some tests to check the red flag that was found. I was diagnosed as pre-diabetic. I fall in that 86 million people in this country who are battling and fighting not to fall into the full-blown diabetic category. I would have never known I had an issue with my glucose without our annual physicals, and my condition would have continued to progress unchecked.

Catching diseases and risk factors early are why the NVFC constantly urges the importance of providing those annual physicals. By discovering my pre-diabetic diagnosis early, my doctor was able to put me on a prescription and start working on management. It's been almost three years, and I have never had to result to taking insulin. I am exercising on a much more regular basis, watching my food intake better, and have lost 15 pounds. I am able to continue to serve my department and community without the health complications that full-fledge diabetes surely would have brought. It's an ongoing battle for me to keep from becoming diabetic, but it's a challenge I am glad to

continue fighting, thanks to getting an early diagnosis from our annual physicals.

The NVFC's position is this: "The NVFC supports and advocates for the education and prevention of diabetes and implementation of approaches to actively cope with the diagnosis for all firefighters and their families." It's a position that makes sense for the NVFC in continuing to promote firefighter health and safety. It's a position that makes sense for the firefighters already coping with the diagnosis. It's a position that is truly personal for me. We only have one heart; we have to do whatever it takes to take care of it and not become another statistic. Your family and your fellow firefighters are depending on you!

Chief Jeff Cash has been in the fire service for over 35 years serving in both the volunteer and career sectors. He has served as the fire chief of the Cherryville (NC) Fire Department since 1986 and is a North Carolina certified firefighter, EMT, rescue technician, fire officer, arson investigator, fire code enforcement officer, and instructor. He is a past president of the North Carolina Firemen's Association and serves as the North Carolina director to the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC). He sits on the NVFC Executive Committee, represents the NVFC on the NFPA 1021 Committee and the IAFC Safety Health & Survival Committee, and has testified before Congressional committees on fire service issues on two occasions. 🚒



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# The Mission is Safety

by Hersch Wilson

**T**here are typically two ways we come to a conversation about the health and safety of our departments. First, and often heart-breakingly, there is a preventable incident that “wakes up” the department. Second, the officers decide that they need to focus on health and safety before something happens. Of course there is often a third scenario, when a department, because they’ve never had an incident such as a firefighter getting clipped by a car while managing traffic at a rush hour crash, believes they are somehow magically protected and do not need to focus attention on health and safety.

The truth is that we can all improve in regard to our two highest priorities – the health and safety of the individuals on our departments.

In my non-volunteer life I’ve had the great fortune to work for companies all over the world as a culture and leadership consultant. This article is based on the best practices I observed.

## Leading

The health and safety of your department starts with leadership – the officers working in concert, on the same page.

But here is the problem. Depending on the day and the last call, the priorities of a volunteer fire department can change in a heartbeat. There’s that old truck that needs to be replaced, money that needs to be spent down before the end of the fiscal year. We need new recruits! We need to change the way we fight fires! No we don’t!

The list goes on.

The attention span of any group of people, including fire departments, is short and easily distracted. However, as Max Depree, former CEO of Herman-Mill, noted, “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality.” This means helping an organization understand that no matter what today’s distractions are, the organization has a mission. The task of a leader is to define the mission and keep the organization focused.



## Mission Driven

A mission statement is simply a statement of what is important to the organization. Most fire department mission statements start with “Our mission is to protect life and property.” But most miss this important clause: “Further, we will execute our mission in the safest way possible.” Next, there needs to be: “The health of our firefighters and first responders is the highest priority.”

A note: If you see tension between those statements, for example, “protect life” and “the health of our firefighters is the highest priority,” that’s great! Why? Because in the resulting conversations you will have you will find ways to accomplish both.

## Creating a Safety- and Health-Focused Mission Statement

The fact is that most organizations and leaders believe that the act of writing a mission statement is the end. Then, the mission statement goes on the wall or in a file and gathers dust. Might as well just toss it.

Writing it is the easy part. Making it come alive is the work. Here are some tips for incorporating the mission into the department’s every-day culture.

- 1 Be the thought leader. Understand it, be comfortable “selling it,” be comfortable explaining it.
- 2 Use it every time you can. It is a speech that you give over and over again until you are sick of hearing yourself talk. Just about then your department will get it, “Oh, you mean safety and health are a priority!”
- 3 Build the expectation that everyone on the department needs to know the mission and their role in executing it. As an example, a CEO friend of mine would randomly ask employees, “What is our mission and what is your role in executing our mission?” The word soon got around that not only did you need to know what the mission was, but your role had better be connected to it. Otherwise, the CEO might sweetly ask, “If your role is not connected to our mission ... why are you here?”
- 4 If safety and health truly reflects the priorities of the department, then regular meetings need to include time spent discussing the mission priorities. Simple as that. In an ideal world, the priority discussions ought to be: “How did we do on safety this month? What did we learn?” And the same for health.

## A Culture Shift

The culture of an organization is something that can’t be touched or measured but you feel it as soon as you walk into a room of people. It is the ocean we swim in. A great culture is open, fun, curious, supportive, accountable, and can make the job of leading a joy. On the other hand, a toxic culture is back-biting, feuding, blaming, and can make leading miserable.

If you sit back and listen you can hear the culture working. Do we really believe safety is an issue? Do we care about our health? Do we openly discuss incidents and mistakes, or do we cover them up?

Driving mission into an organization, especially into our tradition-bound departments, is a cultural shift. Changing a culture (aka “the way things are here”) takes patience and over-communicating. It needs to be marketed, sold, and most importantly, led.

Yes, it circles back to the leader and the leadership team. You cannot tell adults “how to be.” Rather, first we need to be the change we want to create. For example, create a meeting agenda item such as “Here is the safety mistake I made and what I learned” or “Here are the two things I’m doing to take better care of myself.” Go first! Have your officers go next. Even if there is silence for months, keep the practice going.

Be patient and it will pay off.

The National Volunteer Fire Council recently released a training manual that can help departments learn the “hows” and “whys” of incorporating health and safety into all aspects of their culture and operations. *Volunteer Fire Service Culture: Essential Strategies for Success* is available for free download on the NVFC website at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org), and print copies can be ordered for your department.

Be Brave. Be Kind. Be Safe! 🚒

*Hersch Wilson is the medical captain with Hondo Volunteer Fire and Rescue in Santa Fe County, NM. He has been with the department since 1987. In his “other life” he is a leadership and organizational consultant and a soccer coach. Visit him at [Herschwilson.com](http://Herschwilson.com) or on Facebook at ‘Hersch Wilson-Firefighter.’*

## REGION 2

Covering the counties of Essex, Middlesex  
Vice President Chris Bosch, Groveland

By Lisa Evans, Regional Coordinator

### Who said Firefighters just fight Fires?

Check out these firefighters from Nahant in action while completing a five day Public Safety Rescue Swimmer Course by Ocean Rescue Systems International.

During this course, firefighters prepared for life safety rescue situations including rocky shorelines, moving water, and pre-planning for the challenges of a nighttime response. Safety features included, using glow sticks to track the firefighters training location, in the ocean, at night. When you live at the ocean's edge, it is imperative to track the tides, wind speed, and currents daily. Nahant has assisted with as many as 25 water rescues in one year.

Chief Michael Feinberg states "Given the fact that we are surrounded by water and there has been a tremendous increase in recreational water sports year-round, the response from the fire department has greatly expanded. Having this training and certification will assist the department in responding to all manners in water year-round."

The firefighters of Nahant are grateful to the Nahant Harbormaster for the use of the harbormaster's boat and to the Marblehead Fire Department and the Marblehead Harbormaster who also supplied a boat and Captains.

Nahant is a combination department. See Nahant Fire Fighters Association Local 2718 Facebook page for a video of the training, dated July 21.



## Essex County Fire Explorers Muster

The 3rd Annual, 2017 Essex County Fire Explorers Muster will be held at the Topsfield Fairgrounds Arena, on Thursday, October 5th at 3:30. Each year practice drills are scheduled, at the Topsfield Fire Headquarters, a few weeks prior to the muster. After the explorers drill they also enjoy a cookout and social time together.

If you have any questions, please contact Roland Courtmanche, TFD at [medic5one@yahoo.com](mailto:medic5one@yahoo.com). 🚒



## REGION 3

Covering the counties of Worcester, Middlesex,  
Norfolk

**Vacant**

As you may already be aware, Region 3 has been without a Regional Vice President for a while. Former VP Bob Silver stepped down due for personal reasons. While Bob was the VP, he worked diligently in keeping the members informed at the regional level. The MCVFA would like for someone to step up now and help within



the region. There are approximately 80 possible member departments within the Worcester region. This is a daunting number of departments for a single region. The Executive Board therefore has been discussing the possibility of splitting the region into a more manageable grouping, perhaps along the lines of State Fire Districts (i.e. – District 7 and District 8 to include some of those in Districts 4, 6 and 14). The Executive Board is more than willing to assist anyone wishing to give this position a shot. Until we are able to find a suitable person or persons to represent the region, the Executive Board will assist our member departments within the Worcester Region.

The Membership Committee is reaching out to all member departments who have not sent in their dues for 2017-2018 and non-member departments within Region 3.

Call and volunteer firefighters and EMTs in Massachusetts should be members of the Massachusetts Call Volunteer Firefighters' Association (MCVFA) in order that they might have a seat at the table and a voice when decisions are being made about the fire service.

Additionally, as a dues paying member of the MCVFA, call and volunteer firefighters and EMTs are entitled to benefits that the organization continually updates. These include an AD&D insurance policy (which in September was increased dramatically), scholarships and discounts from BJ's Wholesale Club and Liberty Mutual Insurance to name a few.

Finally, the MCVFA is the only organization in Massachusetts whose sole purpose is to support and advocate for call and volunteer firefighters and EMTs and their departments.

We hope you will consider becoming members of what has become a significant organization. 🚒

The Executive Board is in need of that individual who will continue to move the region forward. The Executive Board is more than willing to assist anyone wishing to give this position a shot. Until we find a suitable replacement, the Executive Board will assist the region as needed.

The Membership Committee is reaching out to all member departments who have not sent in their dues for 2017-2018. As of 8/23, those departments current with dues are: Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Chesterfield, Colrain, Goshen, Granville, Leverett, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Rowe, Russell, Shelburne Center, South Deerfield, South Hadley #2, Sunderland, Three Rivers, Warwick and Williamsburg. If you have not paid your dues, you are not eligible for benefits.

Call and volunteer firefighters and EMTs in Massachusetts should be members of the Massachusetts Call Volunteer Firefighters' Association (MCVFA) in order that they might have a seat at the table and a voice when decisions are being made about the fire service.

Finally, the MCVFA is the only organization in Massachusetts whose sole purpose is to support and advocate for call and volunteer firefighters and EMTs and their departments. 🚒

## REGION 5

Covering the counties of Berkshire

**Vice President Paul Vallone, Clarksburg**

### Old Hose Cart dedicated to the deceased Members of the Alert Hose Co.

Photo by Cory Adelt (Alert Hose Co.)



## REGION 4

Covering the counties of Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire  
**Vacant**

As you may already be aware, Region 4 has been without a Regional Vice President for a while. The MCVFA is seeking an outgoing individual to step up and help within the region as regional VP. The region has been a strong group of member departments for some time.

*continues on page 22*

## Adams welcomes New Fire Chief

By Jack Guerino, iBerkshires Staff

Fire Chief John Pansecchi has been on the Fire Department for 30 years. He stepped into his new role after being elected on May 9, 2017.



The Adams Alerts Hose Company has a new leader in John Pansecchi, who was elected as chief engineer during the annual Fire District election on May 9.

Pansecchi, who has been on the Fire Department for 30 years, said taking the helm feels like a natural transition. "It feels no different, and I have been assistant chief for 15 years so this was the next step in line," the new fire chief said. "If the former chief was ever away I would fill in, so I worked pretty closely with the last two chiefs."

Pansecchi replaced Fire Chief Paul Goyette, who officially turned over the department on May 9. Goyette spent nearly 40 years with the company and had been chief since 2011.

Pansecchi said he plans to run the company like it has been run in the past and continue to train hard. "We have a great bunch of guys and we will continue to train hard and try to advance," he said. "That won't change."

Pansecchi said his biggest concern and charge is recruitment. He said volunteer fire departments have seen decreasing numbers over the past few years and that problem is finally "rearing its ugly head" in Adams.

"Recruitment and retention is a problem across the country and it is no different here and I want to put a big effort into that," Pansecchi said. "We are probably at the lowest number of members since I have been here." He added that it is hard to replace veteran members like Goyette, who have years of experience.

"It's tough we lost some good firemen the last couple of years. This is volunteer and other commitments come up," he said. "When you lose members, who have 20 to 30 years' experience, it is a hit. They are trained and experienced and it takes a while to get that back, but we have to look forward."

The annual election drew 287 voters from the Fire District. Timothy Ziemba was elected as first assistant engineer, David Lennon Jr. as second assistant engineer, Edward Capeless as third assistant engineer and Mike Therrien as fourth assistant engineer.

Kathleen Fletcher was re-elected as water district clerk and treasurer and Norman Schutz was elected to the Prudential Committee.

## Adams Alert Hose Co. "Firefighter Sunday"

Photos by Anita Doucette Gutmann

This year's special guest was Lee Fire Chief Ryan Brown.





## Cheshire Volunteer Fire Company in need of Membership

By Jack Guerino, iBerkshires Staff

The Volunteer Fire Department is in need of new members, especially during the day shift.

Fire Chief Thomas Francesconi told the Selectmen on Tuesday that the department is down to five volunteers who are available during the day.

"It is becoming an issue for us and I think we need to collaborate and put our heads together and see if we can come up with some solutions," he said. "It's not getting any easier."

He said this is mostly an issue on the emergency medical services side of the department because Cheshire has mutual aid agreements with other fire departments.

When General Electric was still in operation in Pittsfield, it was easy to cover daytime with volunteers who worked the night shift, Francesconi said, but with most people working 9 to 5 jobs, it is hard to fill out this block of time.

"In the days of GE there was second shift and third shift so we had people around during the day before work," he said. "Right now, we rely on basically the Highway Department because many of our members work for the town. We have relied on some of the retired members but even that is getting scarce."

Francesconi said he has thought of a few options so far, such as removing the residency requirement. Currently, you have to be a Cheshire resident of six months to volunteer.

"I have received some interest from people who live on our side of Pittsfield who want to give back and be on the fire department but have too many commitments to be full time in the city," he said. "But even this brings logistical issues like response times and insurance."

Francesconi said another option would be to have a private ambulance service use the garage.

"That would cost Cheshire nothing except the cost of lighting the garage and heating it during the winter," he said. "There would be no salary from us they would just use the building."

He said a local organization offered this some years ago and he would see if the offer still stands as well as reach out to other organizations.

Francesconi said volunteer department membership numbers are down everywhere.

"It is not specifically a Cheshire problem and I don't want you to think we are doing anything wrong because it is a nationwide problem," he said. "I have spoken to a number of my brother and sister chiefs around the county and neighboring communities and they are going through the same thing."

He added that with all of the training that goes along with firefighting, it is a larger commitment than it was in the past.

"Gone are the days I hand you a helmet, a rubber coat and some gloves and tell you to jump in the fire truck," he said. "There are guidelines and certifications and people just don't have time for it anymore."

Selectman Robert Ciskowski said the decline in population is, in general, causing issues for the town.

"We need 500 younger families to move to Cheshire and what we saw in the Master Plan is that Cheshire is going gray," he said. "In 15 years, barring something unforeseen, it's only going to escalate. We are getting older." 🚒

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And make even more connections by following us on Twitter. [www.twitter.com/MCVFA](http://www.twitter.com/MCVFA)





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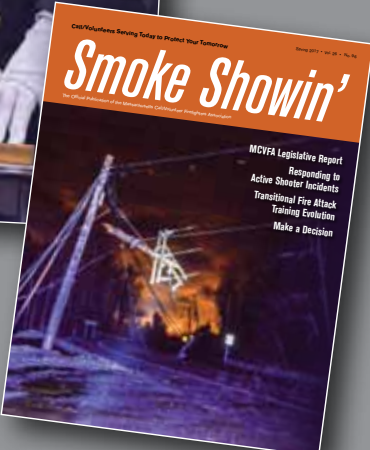


If your department has not yet paid, please make every effort to get them in as soon as possible.

Questions can be directed to the Membership Committee at [membership@mcvfa.org](mailto:membership@mcvfa.org).

The association depends on timely receipt of dues to be able to pay its bills and to facilitate the programs that the organization sponsors.

*The Membership Committee*

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