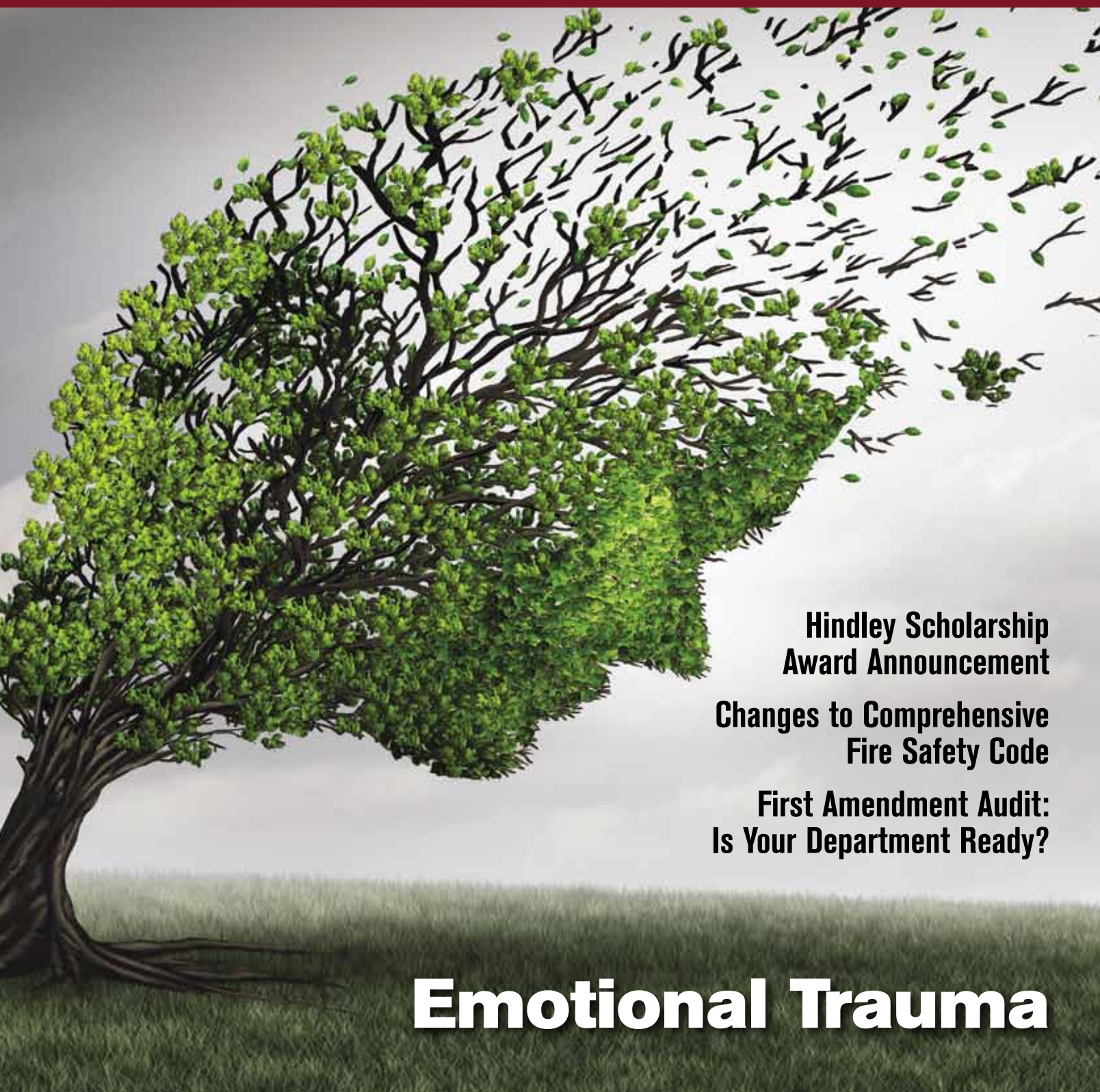


# *Smoke Showin'*

The Official Publication of the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association



**Hindley Scholarship  
Award Announcement**

**Changes to Comprehensive  
Fire Safety Code**

**First Amendment Audit:  
Is Your Department Ready?**

## **Emotional Trauma**

# 2019-2020 Legislative Scorecard

## MCVFA SPONSORED BILLS

Bill Description	Bill Number	Sponsor	Status
An Act relative to death benefits to surviving spouses of call and volunteer firefighters	H.2264 S.1515	Gentile Eldridge	Hearing 07/25/19 - Public Service No Action - Public Service
An Act providing volunteer firefighters and emergency medical technicians with a local option real estate tax exemption	H.2502 S.1666	Howitt Gobi	Joint Committee on Revenue
An Act authorizing voluntary contributions to the Massachusetts Fire Fighters Academy Trust Fund	S.1698	Lesser	Hearing scheduled for 07/23/19 - Revenue
An Act providing for a distinctive registration plate for firefighters	H.3079	Mark	Joint Committee on Transportation
An Act relative to call and volunteer firefighters and EMTs	H.2239	Dooley	Joint Committee on Public Service

## OTHER BILLS OF INTEREST

An Act requiring annual lung cancer screenings for firefighters	H.951	Campbell	Joint Committee on Financial Services
An Act relative to enhanced fire protection in new one and two family dwellings	H.2027	Balser	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
An Act establishing a municipal bulk purchasing program for extractors for fire departments	H.2043 S.1410	Campbell Feeny	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
An Act establishing a public safety facility improvement fund	H.2107	Murphy	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
An Act pertaining to firefighter disability (Kilduff Cancer Network)	H.2362	Ryan	Joint Committee on Public Service
An Act to protect children, families, and firefighters from harmful flame retardants	H.3500 S.1230	Decker Creem	6/27/19 - reported favorably and referred to the committee on Senate/House Ways & Means
An Act creating the fire station building assistance program	S.1466	Tran	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
An Act to support rural volunteer emergency medical technicians (Tuition Reimbursement)	S.1269	Hinds	Joint Committee on Public Health
An Act relative to volunteer ambulance service (Staffing)	S.1416	Hinds	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
An Act relative to surviving family members of public emergency medical technicians	S.1583	Rush	Joint Committee on Public Service

## OPPOSED, NO ACTION OR UNSUPPORTED

An Act relative to the Department of Fire Services Commission	H.2026	Ayers	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
An Act pertaining to public fire safety and professionalism	H.2079	Hunt	Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security





# 2019

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Fall 2019

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The editorial staff of *Smoke Showin'* is always looking for topics and articles about the industry. If you have any suggestions or would like to write an article, please contact Larry Holmberg at [editor@mcvfa.org](mailto:editor@mcvfa.org).



# Hindley Scholarship Award Announcement

The Executive Board of the MCVFA wants to congratulate this year's recipients of the Hindley Scholarship. This year there were 15 applications and narrowing it down to just five individuals was particularly difficult. There were still four qualified applicants for the last recipient spot and the selection committee literally looked at every detail of their applications and references.

The recipients are:

## REGION 1

**Michael Satkevich**

University of New Haven, Paramedic/Firefighter program

*Sponsor - West Barnstable Fire Dept.*

## REGION 2

**Mikayla Lawless**

Endicott College, Nursing

*Sponsor - Groveland Fire Dept.*

## REGION 3

**Erin Schultz-Dugas**

Norwich University, Airforce Corps of Cadets

*Sponsor - Upton Fire Dept.*

**Autumn Rose Kelly**

Western New England University, Computer Engineering

*Sponsor - Princeton Fire Dept.*

## REGION 4

**Kailey Bak**

University of New Haven, Emergency Medical Services Management, Masters Candidate

*Sponsor - Chesterfield Fire Dept.*

The Executive Board thanks all the applicants for their hard work and their dedication to their communities. We wish you the best of luck over the coming year. We also encourage you to reapply next year.

# Smoke Showin'

The Official Publication of the Massachusetts  
Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association



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## President's Message

The Annual State Meeting & Seminars is right around the corner. This year's date will be Saturday, October 19, 2019 and will be held at the Hadley Farms Meeting House. If you have not yet registered, there is still time to do so. The registration page is available at [events.mcvfa.org](https://events.mcvfa.org).

We will be presenting our Firefighter Memorial program, the annual business meeting and two seminars – Safety for the Firefighter and Mobile Integrated Healthcare and Community EMS. I hope to see you there. Lunch will also be available on site.

The business of the Association will also include electing or re-electing a candidate in the following positions: President, Secretary and Treasurer. This is the end of my second term as your president and I am “termed-out”, being only able to serve two two-year terms as prescribed by the By-Laws. As such, I will be stepping down as the head of the Association. I am hoping there is that person out there that will step up and lead this Association. There is a talented core of people within this important organization that are willing to assist you in any way they can.

The MCVFA is currently evaluating the prospect of discontinuing telemarketing. The Association has used telemarketing as a revenue stream since 1995 and it has been a significant source of income. However, before discontinuing the program other revenue streams have to be established. The board came up with three programs that could generate funds equal to or exceed current income through telemarketing.

These programs are:

- An Annual Golf Tournament
- Texas Hold'em Poker
- 5K Road Race

If you are interested in assisting with any of these proposals, please contact us at [mcvfa@mcvfa.org](mailto:mcvfa@mcvfa.org).

We currently have five pieces of legislation in committees at the Statehouse. The scorecard is listed within the magazine. Two of the MCVFA-sponsored bills have had hearings and four are awaiting scheduling.

The most important bill this session is the Real Estate Tax Exemption – H.2502/S.1666. This one piece of legislation is paramount to recruitment as well as retaining the call/volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician within the Commonwealth.

This bill can pass during this legislative session, but only if the MCVFA gets assistance from the membership. I hope I can count on your help!

In closing, thank you all...it has been a pleasure and an honor. I truly enjoyed serving all of you as President. 🍀

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Connolly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

**Kevin Connolly**  
**MCVFA President**

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

Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association

# Annual Meeting & Seminars



**Saturday, October 19, 2019**

8:00am - 4:00pm

**Hadley Farms Meeting House**

Hadley, MA

Register at [events.mcvfa.org](https://events.mcvfa.org)

**OPEN TO ALL FIRE AND EMT SERVICE PERSONNEL!**





## Still time to Register!

The MCVFA annual meeting serves as an annual opportunity for members of the fire service — especially those from call or volunteer departments — to come together and sharpen their skills by learning from their peers.

This year, the annual meeting will feature seminars led by accomplished experts in mobile integrated health and community EMS programming, as well as firefighter safety. The meeting will also serve as an opportunity to pay tribute to departed members of the fire service through the traditional Firefighter Memorial Program that will kick off the day's events.


W. Scott Cluett III, Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program Manager at the Office of Emergency Medical Services, will present on MIH and community EMS programs. His presentation will highlight the critical resources the Department of Public Health makes available to EMS providers across the Commonwealth. Cluett will offer a glimpse into existing EMS and MIH programs and how they impact the communities they serve, as well as lay out a blueprint for developing an ambulance service in a small community.

Veronica Mard, Impact Instructor at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, will lead a seminar on Safety for the Firefighter and EMT. Her program is designed to stress the importance of safety in all aspects of the work firefighters perform while serving their communities. The lessons Mard will share, though geared toward firefighters, are also highly valuable for emergency medical technicians.

"The annual meeting is an excellent way for our members and those in the fire service to come together and learn from one another in a unique setting," Connolly said. "I encourage firefighters and EMTs to join us so that they can expand their professional networks and take home valuable skills that they'll use every day when they return home."

In addition to the seminars, the event will include free skin cancer screenings administered by a local dermatologist as part of the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's screening program. The meeting will also provide valuable updates on MCVFA business.

**Attendees are encouraged to register in advance online at [events.mcvfa.org](https://events.mcvfa.org).** The event costs \$20 to attend, and lunch will be provided. A variety of fire and EMS vendors will be on hand for the day as well.

Attendees will be eligible for one OEMS Con-Ed credit for each seminar and three points toward Chief's credentialing. 

## Agenda

**8:00 a.m.**

### **REGISTRATION/VENDORS (OPEN)**

**8:45 a.m.**

### **MORNING SESSION**

- **Firefighter Memorial Service: Remembering Our Deceased Members**  
*Rev. Bruce Arbour, Deputy Chief Chaplain  
Mass. Corps of Chaplains*
- **Opening of the MCVFA Annual Meeting of the Membership**
- **Call to Order**  
*President Kevin Connolly, Presiding*
- **Pledge of Allegiance**  
*Sergeant-at-Arms Pro Tem*
- **Greetings and Remarks**
  - a. Introduction and remarks by representatives from Governmental and Emergency Services organizations
  - b. Introduction of guests of the Association
  - c. Introduction of Association Officers
  - d. President's Report
- **Business Session**
  - Adoption of the Minutes from the 2018 State Meeting
  - Report of the Treasurer
  - Unfinished Business (2018 State Meeting)
    - A. Reports of Standing Committees
    - B. Reports of Temporary Committees
      - a. Resolutions Committee
    - C. Reports of Regional Vice Presidents
    - D. New Business
    - E. Presentations (*if applicable*)
- **Election of Officers**  
*Executive Vice President Thomas Burnett*
- **Announcements**
- **Time and Place of Next Meeting**

**11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

### **LUNCH - VENDORS/NETWORKING**

**12:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

### **AFTERNOON SESSION - TRAINING & EDUCATION**

**12:30 p.m.**

#### **Safety for the Firefighter and EMT**

*Veronica Mard, Impact Instructor, MFA Department of Fire Services*

**2:15 p.m.**

### **AFTERNOON BREAK**

**2:30 p.m.**

#### **Mobile Integrated Health Care and Community EMS Program**

*W. Scott Cluett, III, MIH Program Manager Office of Emergency Medical Services*

**4:00 p.m.**

### **ADJOURN - VENDORS/NETWORKING**

# PROFILE

## OF A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER

by Melissa Fitzgerald & Nicole Heath, Guidance Counselors, Dartmouth High School

*Editor: The last issue of Smoke Showin' featured the national award winning Westport Fire Department Junior Firefighter Program. After publication, I was contacted by Melissa Fitzgerald who requested additional copies for the school and her student, a member of the Program. We happily complied but did request an article about the student.*

Jonathan often visits the Guidance Department at Dartmouth High School and had recently expressed an interest in seeking part-time employment. A hard-working young man with experience within the farming and animal industries, through further conversation Jonathan, explained that it was his dream to become a firefighter. He reported always wanting to have a career in which he could help others. He was very intrigued by a presenter at Career Fair two years ago, New Bedford District Fire Chief Jim Fortin, who just happens to be our school psychologist's husband. Jonathan spent most of his time speaking with Chief Fortin that day, he took the advice he received very seriously and set out to work. A Unified Athlete, Jonathan has been working on building his strength to train for his intended career path.

I worked with Jonathon to build a resume that showcased his talents, strengths, and interests while his Guidance Counselor Nicole Heath, did the leg work to identify a program that Jonathan could access with the greater community. Ms. Heath, myself and Jonathan's teacher Mrs. Kocur-Pierpont worked with Jonathan on developing interviewing skills so that he could communicate effectively with Westport Fire Department staff. His mother was very supportive throughout the process, driving him to the interview and both weekly and weekend training sessions.

From our initial contact with the Westport Fire Department, we knew this was an ideal match. An appointment was scheduled and information was shared by Jonathan and his mother. As the weeks passed, we at school would eagerly await Jonathan's stories about the training, education and team building skills he was acquiring alongside both peers and veteran firefighters.

The change in Jonathan's confidence level and social skills were remarkable. He stood taller and proudly donned his Junior Firefighter shirt to school events promoting the program to anyone within earshot. I cannot say enough about the Westport Junior Firefighter Program. Their willingness to include young people of all abilities, their dedication to their service profession and overall professionalism is unmatched. Jonathan's experience was marked by Post #774's photo donning the cover of *Smoke Showin'*.

As an educational professional, I continue to be moved by the compassion and professionalism extended to myself, Ms. Heath, Jonathan, his family and all who interact with both the Westport Fire Department and *Smoke Showin'* magazine. I extend sincere thanks, gratitude, and appreciation to you and all that you do. Please do let me know if we can be of any support to your organization in the future. I have attached a photo of Jonathan after he found out that he and his fellow junior firefighters were the recipients of a national award. 🍀





# NVFC and IAFC-VCOS release Posters highlighting 11 Best Practices for Cancer Risk Reduction




The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) and International Association of Fire Chiefs' (IAFC) Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) released the Lavender Ribbon Report last year to detail 11 actions firefighters need to take to reduce their risks of occupational cancer. As part of this continued initiative, the NVFC and VCOS have developed 11 posters to highlight each of the best practices and remind firefighters to protect themselves and their crew.

Studies have shown that firefighters have increased rates of multiple types of cancer when compared with the general population. Reducing exposure to toxins and carcinogens encountered is critical in protecting firefighter health. The best practices presented in the Lavender Ribbon Report should be adopted in all fire departments and adhered to by all firefighters in order to decrease the risks responders face.

The new posters can be hung up at the station to remind firefighters of the actions they need to take to protect themselves and their crew. Departments can also use the poster images in social media, newsletters, and other correspondence with their members as periodic safety reminders.

"Firefighters are contracting cancer at alarming rates, and it is imperative that we all work together to raise awareness of this threat and educate firefighters of the specific actions they need to take to reduce their risks," said NVFC Chair Steve Hirsch. "I encourage all department leaders to download the Lavender Ribbon Report, adopt the best practices into your standard operating procedures, and utilize the 11 posters to educate your members and reinforce these life-saving messages."

"The VCOS continues to advocate for fire and emergency services along with

our peers of the NVFC and other fire service organizations, in the battle against occupational cancer," said VCOS Chair Charles Flynn. "*The Lavender Ribbon Report: Best Practices for Preventing Firefighter Cancer* and now the 11 best practice posters are our way of ensuring we provide information, education, and services to our members, so they can help protect their personnel now and in the future." 

*Download the Lavender Ribbon Report and the 11 best practice posters at [www.nvfc.org/lrr](http://www.nvfc.org/lrr) or [VCOS.org/BeatFFCancer](http://VCOS.org/BeatFFCancer). Find additional resources for occupational cancer risk reduction at [www.nvfc.org/cancer](http://www.nvfc.org/cancer) and [www.vcos.org/BeatFFCancer](http://www.vcos.org/BeatFFCancer).*



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# CHANGES TO COMPREHENSIVE FIRE SAFETY CODE



Photo credit: Sundry Photography/Shutterstock.com

Make space on your bookshelf for the 2020 amendment package to the Comprehensive Fire Safety Code. Since the adoption of the current edition of 527 CMR 1.00, many changes and advances in technology have encouraged the Board of Fire Prevention Regulations to review and amend the code. The amendment package supplements the current code, bridging the gap between the current 2015 NFPA 1 base code and the recently published 2018 NFPA 1 edition. The amendment package revises some items for clarity and adopts new chapters from the 2018 edition of NFPA 1.

### **AUTHORITY HAVING JURISDICTION (AHJ)**

**[527 CMR 1.00: 3.2]**

The board decided to remove Massachusetts-specific language for authority having jurisdiction and revert to the base language in 2015 NFPA 1. This change simplifies how the code is used but requires code users and enforcers to determine who the AHJ is, depending on the situation. Additional annex material provides clear guidance and examples about when:

- The fire department has authority (maintenance of building systems, hazardous materials use and processing, blasting and hot work, etc.).
- The building department has authority (setting minimum clear egress widths, determining the need for sprinklers in new construction, mandating fire resistance rated walls for hazardous materials control areas, etc.).

With a better understanding of who the AHJ is in each scenario, and working with your local counterpart, the code can be applied properly.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT VEHICLE ACCESS ROADS**

**[527 CMR 1.00: 18.2]**

The trend in urban areas is to use every available space for building. The current edition of the fire code requires fire department vehicle access to large residential and commercial structures, but exempts one- and two-family dwellings. When these one or two-family homes are located behind an existing building, the delay of responding fire apparatus ability to deliver water to the building to protect the property and exposures can be detrimental. Provisions in the code note this situation and require access for fire department vehicles when one or two-family dwellings are located behind another structure.

### **CANNABIS GROWING PROCESSING AND EXTRACTION**

**[527 CMR 1.00: 38]**

The proliferation of cannabis growing and processing operations across the Commonwealth created the need for

statewide standards for these occupancies. While the building code applies to construction of Use Group F-1 (moderate-hazard factory/industrial) occupancies, facility operations were not specifically addressed in either the building or fire codes. The board voted to adopt the most recently published national standard, 2018 NFPA 1, Chapter 38, to establish minimum criteria for fire and life safety in these buildings. Requirements include gas detection and notification for cannabis extraction processes, as well as equipment and ventilation requirements.

### **ON-DEMAND MOBILE VEHICLE FUELING**

**[527 CMR 1.00: 42.10]**

Fuel delivery to your vehicle at home or at work is a new trend in customer service. Companies want to offer this service in Massachusetts, so the board voted to adopt provisions from 2018 NFPA 1 for mobile fueling. In addition to complying with the code, mobile fueling companies must obtain general approval from the State Fire Marshal's Office and then apply to each jurisdiction where they intend to operate. The purpose of the state application is to create consistency and to streamline the approval process for businesses.

### **ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS**


**[527 CMR 1.00: 52]**

The current edition of 527 CMR 1.00 includes a chapter on battery storage systems, but the board voted to adopt the recently published 2018 NFPA 1, Chapter 52. The new language expands the scope of the chapter to address new energy storage technology and is based on recent testing conducted by NFPA's Fire Protection Research Foundation. The increased scope addresses energy storage system equipment installation, configuration, and protection schemes.

### **TIMELINE**

The Board of Fire Prevention Regulations voted to promulgate the proposed amendment package on July 18, 2019. Based on the anticipated promulgation process, the amendment package should be published and enforceable in early 2020.

### **TRAINING**

The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy will host training for fire prevention officers on the amendment package. The training will familiarize fire prevention officers with these code changes, their implications, and application in local communities. Training times and locations will be posted soon on the DFS Learning Management System (LMS). 



# First Amendment Audit: Is Your Department Ready?



BY CHIEF JOE MARUCA

**I**s your department ready for a First Amendment Audit? Will it pass? Are you prepared or will you blow it? Get ready, it's coming.

Don't know what I'm talking about? You're not alone. First Amendment Audits or 1A Audits are new to the fire service. They really aren't audits and there is nothing official about them. First Amendment Audits are a social movement. First Amendment Audits are conducted by self-appointed citizens.

The purpose of a First Amendment Audit is to test your department's ability to respect the first amendment rights of the citizens you serve. They are testing your department's reaction, and your individual reaction as a firefighter or an EMT, to see

if you can be baited or tricked into violating someone's first amendment rights. Until recently, these audits have occurred mostly to police departments and federal agencies, but they are starting to pop up in the fire and EMS world.

Here's what typically happens. A citizen shows up at an incident scene, your fire station, or any other public place that you are working (training, getting lunch, fundraising, etc.) and without explanation they start to photograph or videograph you with their cell phone. They are looking for you to react badly to being photographed or videographed. Then you end up on YouTube looking like an idiot, or worse, they bring charges against you and your department for violating their rights or committing a crime.

The public has an absolute right to photograph you or videograph you, in the performance of your duties (or anytime you are on duty) as a firefighter or EMT, in public places. You cannot require or demand the public to identify themselves or explain why they are doing it. It's OK to politely ask (make sure you smile), but if they refuse or remain silent, don't ask again or make any smart-ass comment. You can't make them stop taking photos, DO NOT TRY.

There are some limits. People must be photographing you in a public place. So if they are on the street, sidewalk, public parking lot, park, beach, or any other place this is open or typically open to the public, they are within their legal rights to photograph you. If your fire station has places open to the public, such as a lobby, a public meeting room, or you simply have the doors up and allow people to come in a look at the fire trucks, they can photograph in these spaces without your permission.

And, don't become the champion of a stranger's private property rights. If they are standing on the lawn of the house across the street, don't start an argument with them over whether or not they have permission from the property owner to stand there. Their potential trespass on private property is not your issue; it is up to the private property owner to complain.

So here's how it goes. You are at fire call, an EMS call, getting lunch in the fire truck, doing a truck check, or out doing a fundraising event, and a person comes up and starts photographing you. You ask them what they are doing and they remain silent. You say "can I help you", and they remain silent or say "no". They are hoping you escalate the matter and you threaten to call the police, take the camera away, or otherwise demand that they stop. You must resist all of your emotional impulses to push the issue, and instead you must accept their presence and photographing, and continue on with whatever you were doing as if they weren't there.

Go on YouTube and look up First Amendment Audit. You will find all kinds of videos of police and firefighters arguing with these auditors. Don't become a YouTube star and argue with them. You cannot win this argument. You make the fire service and your fire department look bad.

In the world in which we currently live, we are always being photographed. Our world is loaded with hidden and not-so-hidden security cameras. Everyone has a camera. Some studies indicate that 70% of all people take photos of motor vehicle crashes. Firefighters must always assume they are being photographed and videoed. The difference with the First Amendment Audit is that

the photographer will be obvious and want you to feel their presence. You need to be prepared for this.

Each fire station should be proactive and establish public and private areas so that you have private space in the station that is off-limits to the public, and therefore off-limits to 1A Auditors and photographers. You must have a written and posted policy. Be realistic, you can't post the entire fire station property off-limits, after all, you are not Area 51. Instead, focus on areas that make sense such as bunk rooms, bathrooms, maybe certain offices. Then put your policy in writing and put up signs. Of course, the hardest part is to actually follow your own policy, because you'll be in big trouble if you routinely allow the public to access private areas, and then try to keep a 1A Auditor out.

For instance, if you post the apparatus bays as off-limits to the public, but you routinely leave your doors open and let parents and kids come in to see the trucks; you aren't enforcing your policy in a consistent manner. Now your policy is open to attack. You might have areas that are open to the public only during certain hours, for official events, or when escorted by a firefighter. You'll have to fight the impulse to let firefighter friends and family violate your rules, so make the rules realistic and applicable to all. Whatever you do, make sure you actually do it. Selective enforcement will get you in extra trouble.

I think it would be reasonable to post your bathrooms and locker rooms as being off-limits to any kind of photography, even if you let the public use your bathrooms. If you have bunk rooms or day rooms, it would be reasonable to post them as off-limits to the public, unless accompanied by a firefighter. It would also be reasonable to post bunk rooms and day rooms as off-limits outside of business hours. Each department will have a different set of rules because they all have different spaces and different use patterns.

You can also limit the presence of civilians inside fire lines or delineated work areas at incident scenes. Just don't be selective and let some civilians in and keep others out. You can restrict access to civilians for legitimate safety reasons or when they would reasonably interfere with your operations. It's OK to ask all the civilians to stay on the other side of the street to watch, so they don't get underfoot or get hurt, but make sure it's really about their safety and not your vanity. In the best case, you can put out street cones and stretch fire line tape.

Whatever you do, always be polite and professional when dealing with 1A Auditors. Don't put your hand up in front of the camera. Don't touch them. Don't argue. Don't raise your voice. Don't threaten. What should you do, get over it, get used to, accept it, and get on with your job. 🚫



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the FUTURE



■ NVFC Update ■



**T**he National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Board of Directors held its 2019 spring meeting on April 26-27 in Alexandria, VA. The board meets as a whole twice a year to conduct Council business. Highlights of the meeting included officer elections, the adoption of a drug and alcohol policy, and the honoring of the NVFC award recipients.

Representatives from 41 state associations attended the meeting, including Chief Joe Maruca, a director from Massachusetts. Committees met on a variety of topics including legislation, standards and codes, membership, wildland, and health, safety, and training. In addition to the meeting, many directors came early to participate in the Congressional Fire Services Institute day of advocacy, seminars, and the annual fire service dinner.

## Council Business

Among actions taken by the Council, the board voted unanimously to support the Protecting America's First Responders Act (S. 1208) and the 9/11 Victims' Compensation Fund Reauthorization Act (H.R. 1327/S. 546). The board also made some amendments to the budget and adopted a drug and alcohol policy, which can be viewed on the NVFC web site at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org). In addition, the board received updates on the NVFC's programs and partnerships, including the launch of a new partnership with Anheuser-Busch to provide clean drinking water to volunteer firefighters who battle wildland fires.

NVFC North Carolina director Chief Jeff Cash presented the NVFC with a check for over \$252,280 for the memberships of over 14,000 North Carolina firefighters and EMS providers who joined the NVFC through the North Carolina State Firefighters' Association. Cash has actively worked to promote NVFC membership throughout North Carolina and encouraged other states to do the same.

## Awards – A Big Win for Westport, Massachusetts



An awards banquet held during the meeting honored the recipients of the NVFC's annual fire service achievement awards. Learn more about the recipients on the NVFC web site at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org).


- The Junior Firefighter Program of the Year, Westport (MA) Fire Department's Explorer Post #774, will be recognized at their department to enable all their juniors to attend.
- Late Maryland Director James P. Seavey Sr. was recognized with the James E. Monihan Director Award, sponsored by Provident. His wife, Mary, and son, Jimmy Jr., accepted on his behalf.
- Robert Dowd of the Syosset Fire Department junior firefighter program received the Junior Firefighter of the Year Award, sponsored by California Casualty.
- NVFC New York Director Brian McQueen was the first recipient of the James P. Seavey Sr. Health and Wellness Leadership Award, sponsored by Ward Diesel and VFIS.
- Wylie L. Donaldson Jr. of the Odenton (MD) Volunteer Fire Company was recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award, sponsored by Rosenbauer America.

## Guest Speakers

A line-up of speakers addressed the board, including the following:

- Cathie Patterson from FEMA gave an update on the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program.
- Liz Barton from American Addiction Centers spoke about their partnership with NVFC to administer the Fire/EMS Helpline to assist firefighters, EMS providers, and their families with behavioral health issues.
- A panel discussion on recruitment moderated by recruitment and retention committee chair Ken Brown featured Robert Bailey from Marketing for Change, volunteer firefighter and international student Christophe Cheroret, Natascha Hennen of Freeport Fire Department, Brad Quin of Purcellville Volunteer Fire Department, and Judy Smith Thill of Inver Grove Heights Fire Department.

## Join the NVFC

All MCVFA members are eligible to become NVFC members for only \$18/year. To join go to [www.nvfc.org/join-nvfc/](http://www.nvfc.org/join-nvfc/). The NVFC is the only national organization created solely to support call/volunteer firefighters. Membership includes a \$10,000 Accident Death & Disability Insurance policy, free online training, special members-only opportunities such as gear giveaways and educational scholarships, grant-writing resources, advocacy in Congress and before federal agencies, volunteer recruitment programs and firefighter health, wellness and safety programs. You should join now. 

# *What Do You Say to Someone with Emotional Trauma?*





# Someone Struggling From

by Chief Jared Meeker

*Reprinted from the NVFC Firefighter Strong newsletter*

You might already know that mental health conditions occur at higher rates for first responders compared to the general public. We are routinely exposed to physical and emotional trauma, sometimes on a daily basis.

Most people in this world do not see what we first responders see, and they cannot relate to what we feel after a tragic call — the change of mood, the feeling of depression, the attempts to file away those images from that traumatic event in hopes they never return. It is not surprising, then, that for many firefighters a traumatic incident or the accumulation of witnessing trauma over time can have a significant impact on their mental wellbeing.

You may notice that a fellow first responder is struggling from one of those calls, or a series of stressful bad calls that just won't leave their minds. You might have overheard them discuss their sleepless nights, their nightmares, and their increased anxiety. Or it might be the opposite; they may be isolating themselves or shutting down in response to the grief or sadness.

You want to help them, but you don't know what to say. What if they get defensive when you approach them? What if they deny there is a problem? What if the depression has taken over and the person is having suicidal thoughts? What if they refuse your help?

It may seem intimidating to approach someone who is struggling, but we are firefighters and we don't turn our backs on someone in need, especially one of our own. Reaching out may be the key to getting that responder the help they need.

First, it is important to be able to recognize the signs that someone may need help. Many in the fire service try to hide or downplay what they are experiencing, perhaps out of fear of how others might perceive them, or because the department's culture doesn't foster open communication, or maybe because of lingering misconceptions about mental health.

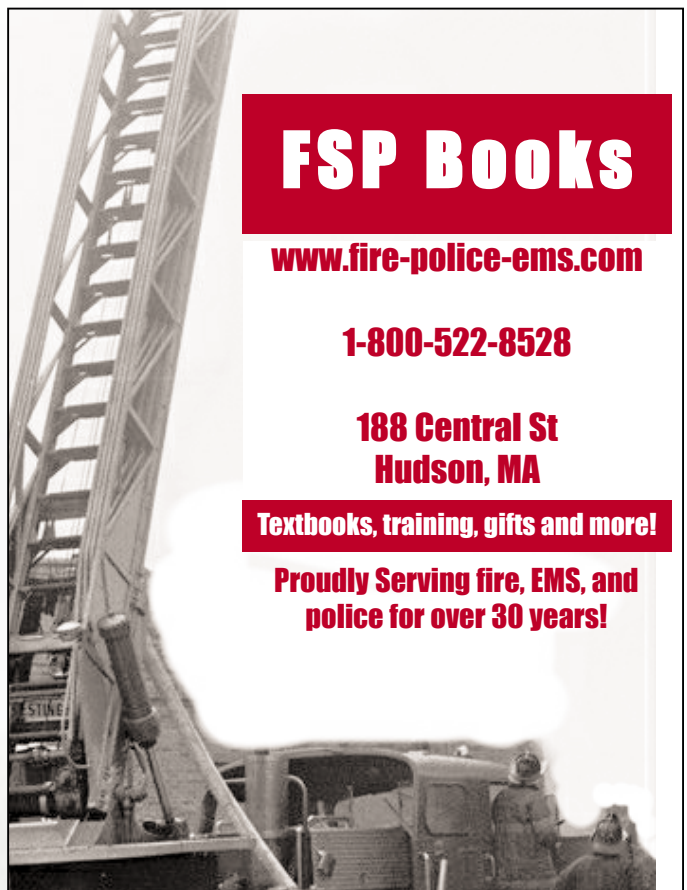
Some of the more common signs that someone is struggling include:

- Avoiding people, places, or activities that could remind them of the traumatic event(s)

- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Trouble concentrating as their minds wander easily
- Overwhelming guilt or shame
- Recurring distressing memories of an event or series of events
- Irritability with angry outbursts
- Drinking or using prescription medications too much

Unfortunately, I know all too well what it is like to walk in their shoes. I recently recovered from one of those situations that overfilled my stress bucket and placed me into a state of

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depression. I wrote about my experience in the last issue of the National Volunteer Fire Council's Firefighter Strong newsletter. In that article, I explained how each of us has a bucket in our minds that gets filled with stressful moments over time. For some, their stress buckets can keep filling up and never spill. But for others, we reach a point where it just becomes too much, and the stress bucket starts to overflow.

What is it that will finally overflow that stress bucket? Will it be a traumatic stress incident, such as a senseless motor vehicle accident caused by a driver under the influence? Or will it happen unexpectedly, maybe while watching a movie, when a part of the film takes your mind back to one of those traumatic events in your past?

After my incident, many people would not approach me because they didn't know what to say or felt they couldn't help. At the same time, I didn't reach out to anyone as I wasn't sure what I wanted to hear. After many months of struggling with the depression and PTSD on my own, an acquaintance I ran into broke through the barrier I had built up. He asked me how I was doing and told me about resources that could help me. Although it still took me some time to follow through on getting the help I needed, that conversation was the first step and opened up the path to recovery.

So, what should you say or do when you know someone is struggling? Here are some tips to help you:

- First and foremost, be compassionate. We use compassion on every call. Talking to someone who is struggling with emotional trauma doesn't require any special training. Let the person know you are there for them and that they are important to you.
- Notice what you are observing that creates concern and have a conversation with them. Explain to them the signs and symptoms that you have noticed and that you want to help.
- Periodically check-in with the individual. Volunteer firefighters can hide by just staying home and struggling in silence.
- Avoid asking questions that prompt limited or vague answers. For instance, when I ask my firefighters "How are you doing," 99.9% of the time the response will be "I'm okay chief." Instead, phrase the question in a way that will encourage a more detailed and open response, such as: "That child drowning call will stress me for a while as she was the similar age as my niece. How is this going to affect you?"
- Listen actively. When you get someone talking about the stress they are feeling, do not interrupt them. Just keep listening and let them open up.

- Do not try to compare one of your prior traumatic events in an attempt to lessen their traumatic event.
- All conversations must be in confidence. The only way an individual in crisis is going to open up is trusting that you will keep what they say in confidence. The exception is if they express that they are planning to commit suicide, at which point follow department protocol to get them through the crisis point.
- Only offer help to your ability, then suggest options for additional help, such as a local peer support team, a seasoned veteran, or behavioral health specialist.

A simple "I want to help" or "I will listen when you are ready" can go a long way, but sometimes you will need to give the person time to heal by themselves and then be there for them when they are ready to talk or show emotion. There is only so much you can do if the person is not ready or willing to open up or accept help.

I also want to say a few words to those who are struggling. Don't be afraid of professional help. Many responders won't seek the help of a professional because of the stigma that it shows weakness. That is so far from the truth. There are some things that we can't fix by ourselves, and the way your mind works is one of them. It is important as first responders that we recognize when we truly need help. The treatment can only start with you standing up to say that you need help and that you want your life back.

It is always important that we prioritize taking care of ourselves, and also that we are there for our brothers and sisters to ensure their mental wellness and emotional health.

Stand up for yourself... life is too short.

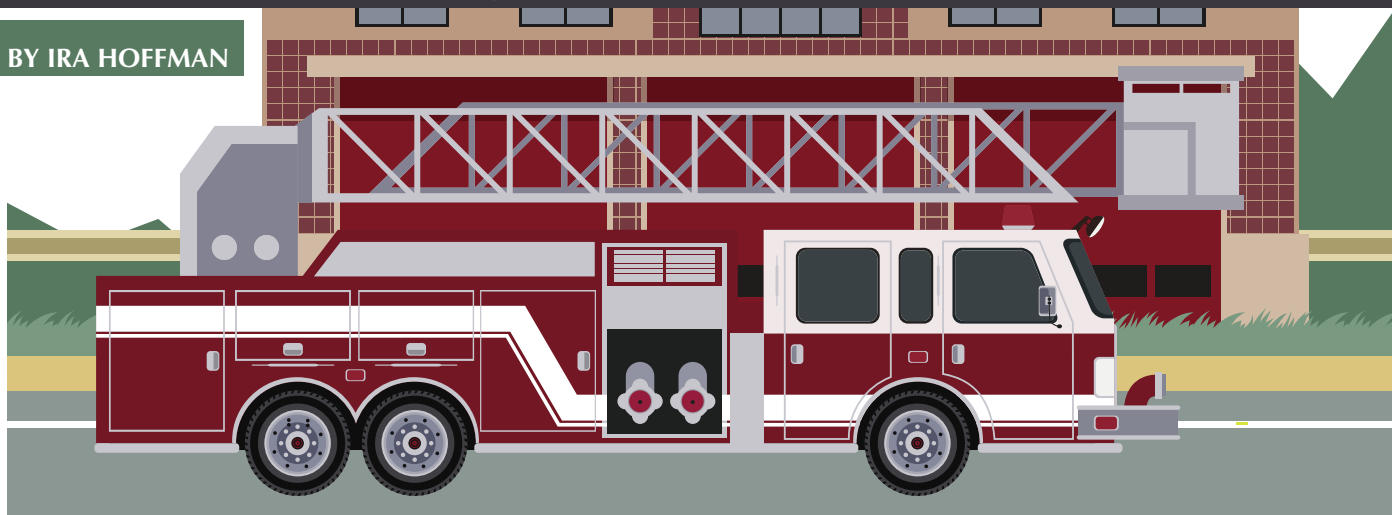
**Note: The National Volunteer Fire Council and American Addiction Centers partner to provide the Fire/EMS Helpline at 1-888-731-FIRE (3473). Calls are anonymous and confidential, and the trained counselors who answer the calls can get you the help you need. 🚒**

*Jared Meeker is a 30+ year fire service veteran currently serving as a fire chief for the Lake Shore Fire Department, a combination fire department in upstate New York. His passion for the fire service includes teaching incident command skills to aspiring fire officers and career survival skills to all first responders. Jared has written two prior NVFC articles, *When the Stress Bucket Overflows: A Firefighter's Story of Pain and Healing* and *Fireflies and the Fire Service*, available at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org). He currently offers a training program on firefighter behavioral health; learn more at <https://seeingincoloragain.wordpress.com/sizing-up-your-behavioral-health/>.*

## Fire Station

# Get Them In, Then Sell Your Product

BY IRA HOFFMAN



Anyone who owns a retail store knows the importance of getting customers, or potential customers, into their store. Sure, there are other ways to see their products – on a computer, in a printed catalog, on their smart phones, but nothing compares to someone looking at an awesome product display to really appreciate what they have to sell.

Understanding the importance of getting customers into the store is also true of the fire service. Sure, you can tell the public, via a website or your Facebook page, you can have articles written about your department in newspapers, you may use your cable access channel, but nothing compares with someone coming into your station and seeing with their own eyes what their hard-earned tax dollars are paying for.

Planning is important. Here are some things to think about:

Before you invite anyone into your station, think about whom you are inviting, and what your goal is in inviting them. Are they elected officials, school children, the general public? Tailor your presentations to the specific audience.

- When they come in will they wander around or be greeted by someone and given a tour.
- Will refreshments be provided (food always draws people).
- Are the restrooms clean?
- Will you have a program, maybe something about fire prevention or fire survival? How long will these programs be? Remember, “less is usually more”.
- Will you be giving away literature, and something to put it in?



- Fire trucks carry a variety of tools - a sign with a brief explanation of what each is and what it does would be helpful.

Perhaps the most important thing to think about is the opportunity that you will have to talk one-on-one to those attending. What is the most important message that you want them to leave with?

After the event try to get feedback as to how successful it was and “tweak” it if necessary. Then start planning for your next event. Good luck! 🌸

*About the author: Ira Hoffman is the owner of FSP Books and Videos and the photographer and special projects coordinator for several Worcester County fire departments. He may be reached at: [ira@fire-police-ems.com](mailto:ira@fire-police-ems.com).*

## REGION 1

Covering the counties of Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Middlesex, Nantucket, Norfolk, Plymouth

**Vice President Ken Jordan, Wareham**

We congratulate Michael Satkevich, the Region 1 Robert J. Hindley Memorial Scholarship recipient. We wish Michael the best of luck as he starts this new chapter in his academic career. Michael plans on pursuing a career as a Paramedic and get his Fire Science Degree from the University of New Haven in Connecticut.



With the increase of Personal water craft and power boats the numbers of water accidents/incidents have been on the rise here in the Buzzards Bay area. Always wear Personal Flotation Devices PFD's when going on these calls. Make sure everyone comes home safe from these calls as well as fire related calls.

Region 1 elections will be held in September, date and time will be distributed to Region 1 Members via Constant Contact, Rachel Rawlings is the incumbent. 🚒

## REGION 2

Covering the counties of Essex, Middlesex

**Coordinator Lisa Evans, Groveland**

The West Newbury Junior Firefighter Program works in conjunction with the Groveland and Merrimac Fire Departments and is comprised of anywhere from 15-25 young men and women, ages 15-19, and range from simply being curious about various career choices, through being serious candidates for our Call Fire

Departments and for possible professional firefighter positions.

The West Newbury Jr Firefighter Program is run like a mini fire academy through the summer; they meet once a week to build up their firefighter skills and train for a final evening complete with a theatrical smoke-filled structure. During the school year the students meet every other week.



Many of the students have chosen public safety careers and the Jr program has worked as a feeder program for many of our surrounding communities. In addition, local departments have asked to have their new recruits attend the WN Jr program to assist in having the recruits build their firefighter skills.

### Hindley Scholarship Winner

I would like to, congratulate Mikayla Lawless, daughter of Lt Mike Lawless of the Groveland Fire Department, on earning the Hindley Scholarship, for Region 2. Mikayla participated as one of West Newbury's Jr Firefighters and enjoyed the medical portion of the program. Mikayla is attending Endicott College, in Beverly, MA, and is majoring in Nursing. 🚒



Left to right Mikayla's Parents, Melissa and Lt. Mike Lawless along with Mikayla receiving her scholarship from Region 2 Membership Coordinator, Lisa Evans.



## Photos of West Newbury Junior Firefighters



## REGION 3

Covering the counties of Worcester, Middlesex, Norfolk

**Vice President Michael Goldstein, Sherborn**



*Pre-meeting MCVFA dinner at Sherborn Fire Department hosted by the Sherborn Fire and Rescue Association. Firefighters and Captains from Sherborn, Upton, Dover, and Sterling are pictured. MCVFA President Kevin Connolly is pictured in a green shirt in the far back center with the American Flag and the Firefighters Flag above him.*

On Thursday, August 8, 2019, MCVFA Region 3 had a meeting in Sherborn at Sherborn Fire Department Headquarters. Dinner was generously provided by the Sherborn Fire and Rescue Association, which had its meeting just after the MCVFA meeting. Fire Chiefs, Assistant or Deputy Chiefs, Lieutenants, MCVFA delegates and members from Upton, Dover, Sterling, and Sherborn were in attendance: Upton Chief Mark DiFronzo, Upton Assistant Chief Michael Marchand, Upton Lieutenant (and Sherborn Captain Zachary Ward), Dover Chief Craig Hughes, and a Sterling Lieutenant, as well as Sherborn Chief Erron Kinney, many Sherborn Captains and Lieutenants including Senior Fire Captain Shawn Flanagan, and many firefighters and EMS personnel attended, with about 30-40 people in the room. Of particular note, there was a member of Dover Fire who had been Dover's MCVFA delegate for over 24 years!

VP Region 3 Michael Goldstein opened the meeting. After a nice welcome from Sherborn Chief Erron Kinney, we heard from MCVFA President Kevin Connolly who drove about 2 hours from Northfield, MA just to attend. President Connolly reviewed notable legislation in the Massachusetts State House that will

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affect call and volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel and reviewed the MCVFA legislative and other efforts. He also reviewed the benefits of MCVFA and answered questions. Members of the group suggested that of particular interest was having the MCVFA pursue making sure that call and volunteer firefighters and EMS staff get the same disability and loss of job protections that are provided by legislation to full-time (recruit) firefighters. MCVFA President Connolly emphasized that MCVFA covers not only fire personnel, but EMS personnel – whether associated with a fire department or on private ambulances.

At the meeting, the group unanimously re-elected Seth Grill of Upton Fire as the MCVFA Region 3 Coordinator. The meeting ended after about 45 minutes – not too long or too short.

Thank you to all the members and participants who came. (A special shout out of thanks to Dan Murphy of Dover Fire who helped get the word out to Dover Fire – we had great attendance from Dover Fire!)

We are looking forward to holding another Region 3 meeting soon. We very much need to hear from some of you to find another location in which to hold our next meeting – please e-mail me at [vpregion3@mcvfa.org](mailto:vpregion3@mcvfa.org). Finally, please pass along any news, new apparatus, pictures, or details of special events or actual fires you would like to share to [vpregion3@mcvfa.org](mailto:vpregion3@mcvfa.org) so I can feature your department or association in the next *Smoke Showin'*. 🌀

## REGION 5

Covering the county of Berkshire

**Frank Speth, III, New Ashford**

### Hinsdale Fire Department Chief Retires after 45 years of Service

On June 30, 2019, Hinsdale Fire Chief Larry Turner officially retired after serving the Department and Town Of Hinsdale for 45 years. Chief Turner joined the Department in 1974, when he was 24 years old and served as Chief for 26 years. Turner turned the reins over to his longtime Assistant Chief, Ralph Cormier.

The number of volunteers at the Hinsdale Fire Department has grown from about 20 firefighters to 40 and the gear has significantly advanced. The reward of helping those in need has remained Chief Turner's favorite part of the job.

One of Chief Turner's missions was to ensure that his firefighters were safe while fighting fires. Turner has been credited for building the Department's two Firefighter Rehab Units, a 2004 International Bus that was refurbished to be used as a rehab unit where firefighters can cool down and recover while battling a fire. The other rehab unit is a 1993 Mack that not only has the rehab capability but also has an on-board cascade air system to refill SCBAs. Using money from the Hinsdale Volunteer Firemens Association, Chief Turner found inexpensive equipment and had these units built. These rehab units have been a valuable asset to the Departments in Berkshire County and neighboring departments. Thank you to Chief Turner for his hard work and dedication.

Chief Turner's other legacy was the creation of a Support Unit, a team of volunteers who cannot fight fires but can be on scene assisting with other tasks on the Fireground, this is especially important when this can be a challenge in a small town with a Volunteer Fire Department.

Firefighting has been a central part of Turner's life for decades. Before Chief Turner retired from Crane Company in the early 2000's, being a Chief of a Volunteer Fire Department took up a majority of Turner's free time.

In Massachusetts, firefighters have to retire by age 70. So Chief Turner decided to retire as chief this year and assist over the next year with Assistant Chief Cormier's transition as the new chief.

Chief Turner is hoping to work with the Town and the Fire Department's Association on a partnership that would allow volunteers who are 70 and older to continue to help out on fire scenes, which is currently prohibited due to liability reasons. Chief Turner has said "I would be able to do that, to stick around and help out. That's what we are looking at now, to keep our 70-year olds going because they want to keep going".

Chief Turner said that he feels lucky to have worked in a town that has been so appreciative of the Department's work, and he knows he is leaving the Department in capable and dedicated hands.

We wish Chief Turner a healthy, happy retirement and thank you for all you have done for the Town Of Hinsdale, the Hinsdale Fire Department and fire service for Berkshire County.

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## Interstate Mutual Aid & Drilling

Recently, the East Chatham, NY Fire Department invited the Richmond Fire Department to drill with their department. The Richmond Fire Department frequently is called for mutual aid assistance from Columbia County, NY Fire Departments. These departments train together regularly and have a great mutual aid working relationship. 🚒



## Like the MCVFA on Facebook

Check out the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association (MCVFA) on Facebook and LIKE our page.

The MCVFA Facebook page is a great source of training opportunities, up-to-date fire/ems methods, and political and regulatory changes that affect your department.

The MCVFA Facebook is also a great place to see what other fire departments, like yours, are up to. You can see their emergency calls, drills, and events. You'll get excellent ideas from see what others are doing.

## Has your Information changed?

If your address or email has changed please let us know. To update your information, contact the Membership Secretary at kibird@verizon.net or 1-800-FIRELINE.

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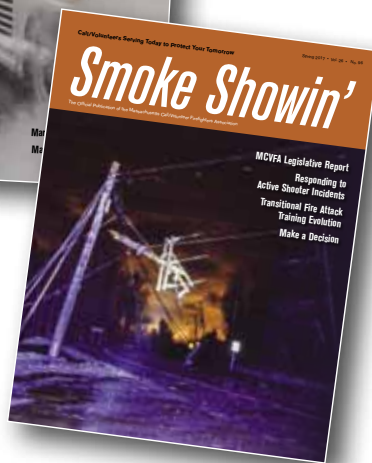
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