

Call/Volunteers Serving Today to Protect Your Tomorrow

SMOKE SHOWIN'

The Official Publication of the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association



Advancing EMS in the Fire Service: Carlisle FD launches its first AEMT training program

SWANSEA FIREMAN'S BALL

100TH *Anniversary*

Join us for a historic evening as we honor 100 years of bravery, sacrifice, and community spirit. The Swansea Fire Department is proud to celebrate its Centennial Anniversary, and we would be honored to have you join us for this landmark occasion.

MAY

SATURDAY

16TH

AT 6:00 PM

VENUS DE MILO, SWANSEA, MA

COCKTAIL HOUR: 6:00 PM
DINNER & PROGRAM: 7:30 PM
DANCING: TO FOLLOW

TICKETS: \$75 PER PERSON

RSVP BY MAY 8TH

FORMAL ATTIRE IS REQUIRED

PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT STATION TWO TO PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS.



The Fifty-fourth Annual Rehoboth Firefighters' Ball

Held on March 21, 2026, Five Bridge Inn,
Pine Street, Rehoboth, and sponsored by the
Rehoboth Call Firefighters Association, a
not-for-profit organization

Submitted by Tom Rose

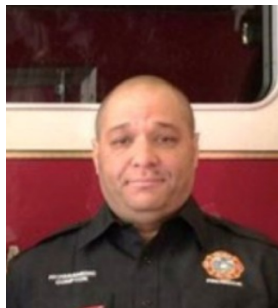


Left: Tom Rose

Right: Fred Chrisbaie

Tom Rose has 50 years in the Fire Service, serving for 12 years (1976-1988) with Dighton Fire Department and for 38 years (1988-2026) with Rehoboth Fire Department. He served as the Delegate to MCVFA for a number of years starting in the early 1990s.

Fred Chrisbaie (ret.) has served the Town of Rehoboth for 36 years, at the age of 80 this year.



INTEGRATING INTELLIGENCE INTO RISK ASSESSMENTS:

A PRACTICAL REFLECTION FOR EMERGENCY MANAGERS

By Daren Compton

I have been in Public Safety for 15 years now and if there are two things experience teaches you it is that:

- It is invariably easier to manage emergencies with situational awareness, and
- You need to respect your work.

As a Firefighter Paramedic, I bet you can guess why I link emergency management and situational awareness together. It is because the more you know about what you have in front of you, the easier it will be to make good decisions.

The second item is a personal paradigm born out of hard to accomplish interventions in patient care that, if lost, are catastrophic. For example, if you need an IV line to provide time sensitive medication that is sustaining life, like Milrinone, then losing that line is not an option. If you secured an airway and someone is depending upon you to breathe for them, then losing that airway is not an option. If it was not easy to obtain, then you especially see the need to respect your work and protect it, throughout the process of patient care. These concepts may seem simple, but they are very modular and can be applied at scale.

What is not as obvious is that situational awareness and the discipline of intelligence offer the same thing.

Because that is hidden in plain sight, you may not realize that utilizing intelligence will deepen the quality of your risk assessment. Let me explain.

What is Intelligence? It is the production, through research, of actionable information that reduces uncertainty. Often people associate intelligence with how good you are at math, or some individual with shades and an earpiece. Truth is, it is just a discipline, that is all. It is a discipline we do well to employ as Emergency Managers.



Traditional Risk Assessment

Our traditional risk assessments follow a hazard Identification model and then threats. This is commonly known as THIRA. Most of you are familiar with this model and the planning capabilities it affords over a three-year cycle. It is the basis of everything else we plan and periodically review. It is especially useful.

What I want to direct your attention to, however, is a limitation and a gap that exists in the model itself. The 2019 update stated this under its limitations:

“Assumptions in existing plans and models often do not account for ongoing incidents or after effect.” - 2019 National Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, THIRA, Overview and Methodology

This means that after we have gone through our risk assessment, it remains a bit static. So, wait, are you telling me that after we have done a probabilistic risk analysis that we are static?

The point I am making is that we can spend all this time doing high level quantitative analysis for a plan that we are going to review in three years, ok. Well, what about for starters, having situational awareness around the AND OR XOR events in the interim? What was the point of doing all that work if you sold yourself short and did not respect it as a solid assessment by utilizing intelligence as a discipline? Respect your work, it was good.

Why Is There a Gap? Why is this occurring? Simple. Intelligence is not a cross-cutting capability across the five mission areas, and it should be.

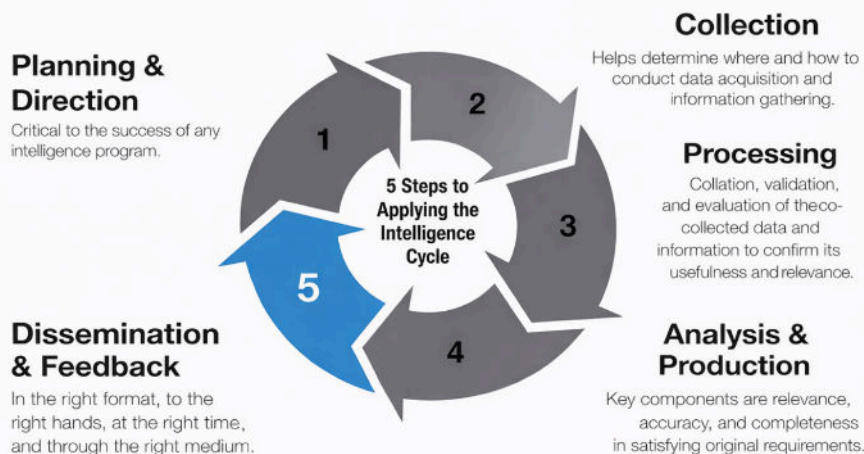
“Many plans and models assume that major, complex incidents occur in isolation.” - 2019 National Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, THIRA, Overview and Methodology

- **Planning and Prevention.** We can see that unlike planning; intelligence is relegated to prevention and protection. We briefly considered that it can be underutilized by emergency managers in its given mission areas, of Prevention and Protection. A further example that I hope spurs introspection is the electric and water provider in Littleton, MA, and VOLT Typhoon (Pelley, 2025; Bruce, 2019)
- **Response and Recovery.** With the move towards a more interconnected and digital world we can easily see how real time intelligence may help Response and Recovery. We need not spend time on that.
- **Mitigation.** Is intelligence useful in Mitigation mission areas? Let us say we have performed a strong quantitative assessment that concludes that we need a redundant power supply, because our power lines are exposed, and we have no other alternative. Critical Infrastructure are big targets that at times seem like soft targets to towns and municipalities. Would it be helpful to know that, recently, rogue communication devices have been found in some inverters used for solar grids and that these communication devices can bypass firewalls and destabilize power grids by remote access? (Mcfarlane, 2025) Information like this can help any Emergency Manager as they plan with their respective towns.
- **Utilize Intelligence.** You see, deciding that you will utilize the discipline of Intelligence does not have to be complicated. It can start with just paying attention to the world around you. Asking the appropriate questions, developing a collection plan, making sure you have a due diligence process to vet your findings, and then asking how I can use this information to reduce the uncertainty in my town, city, municipality, or area of responsibility.

Utilizing the discipline of intelligence will prime you to ask the right questions, more often. It will make you better at what you do. It will certainly improve your risk assessment. You do not have to wait to innovate. We can do this together. Utilize Intelligence in your planning. Improve your situational awareness. Respect your work.

The Intelligence Cycle

Facilitates well-informed business and security decisions about risks to your brand, reputation, people, infrastructure, and partners.



Sources:

Bruce, J. (2019). Volt Typhoon’s long shadow. Retrieved from IISS website: <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/cyber-power-matrix/2026/01/volt-typhoons-long-shadow/>

Mcfarlane, S. (2025) May 14. Ghost in the machine? Rogue communication devices found in Chinese inverters. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/ghost-machine-rogue-communication-devices-found-chinese-inverters-2025-05-14/>

Pelley, S. (2025, October 12). China is hacking America’s critical infrastructure, former NSA and retired Gen. Tim Haugh warns. Retrieved from [Cbsnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-hacking-us-critical-infrastructure-retired-general-tim-haugh-warns-60-minutes-transcript/) website: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-hacking-us-critical-infrastructure-retired-general-tim-haugh-warns-60-minutes-transcript/>

Daren Compton has been in public safety for over 15 years. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Paramedicine and a Master’s degree from Northeastern University in Security and Intelligence with a concentration in Emergency Management. He is a progressive thought leader with roots in Cape Cod. He is committed to improving the risk culture throughout the region through education, increasing organizational resilience, and responsible mentorship.



ADDRESSING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER RETENTION CHALLENGES

A Deep Dive Into Applicant Pools, Mental Health, and Wellness

By Keith Hanks

Volunteer and on-call fire departments are the backbone of emergency services in countless communities, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Their dedication provides a critical layer of protection, often at great personal sacrifice. However, these departments are facing a crisis of sustainability driven by significant retention issues. The challenge is multi-faceted, stemming from evolving societal pressures, the nature of the work, and, notably, a dwindling applicant pool compounded by critical concerns regarding mental health and overall wellness. Understanding and addressing these interconnected factors is essential to securing the future of volunteer fire service.

The most immediate and concerning factor is the decline in the pool of potential new recruits. Historically, volunteer firefighting was a family tradition or a clear civic duty deeply ingrained in the community. Today, this traditional pipeline has been fractured. Modern life presents significant barriers to entry for potential volunteers. Increased economic pressures often necessitate dual-income households, making the time commitment required for training and callouts a financial and logistical impossibility for many. Furthermore, high mobility means fewer people remain rooted in their communities long enough to invest in the extensive training required.

The shift in community structure itself contributes to the problem. In many areas, the population is aging, reducing the number of physically fit individuals in the prime age range for firefighting. For younger generations, the time commitment competes with career advancement, academic pursuits, and other community activities. Recruitment efforts often fall flat because the core promise—unpaid, dangerous, high-commitment work—is a difficult sell against a backdrop of increasing personal and professional demands. As fewer new volunteers join, the burden of calls, training, and administrative duties falls on a smaller, already overstretched core of veteran

members, initiating a vicious cycle that further drives retention down. A lack of an applicant pool means fewer people enter the system, and those who remain are quickly overwhelmed, leading to burnout and eventual departure.

Compounding this strain is the critical, often-overlooked role of mental health and wellness. Firefighting, whether volunteer or career, exposes individuals to traumatic events with alarming regularity. Critical incidents—motor vehicle accidents, structural fires, medical emergencies, and particularly incidents involving children—imprint lasting psychological damage. For volunteer firefighters, this trauma is absorbed on top of their full-time jobs, family responsibilities, and everyday stress, without the comprehensive, built-in wellness support systems often available in professional, career departments. The emotional labor is immense: a volunteer may be responding to a neighbor's house fire or resuscitating a colleague's family member, blurring the line between professional duty and personal life.

The stigma associated with seeking mental health support remains a major deterrent within the first responder community. Many volunteers operate under a culture of toughness and self-reliance, viewing vulnerability as a weakness. This cultural resistance prevents them from acknowledging or addressing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and compassion fatigue.

When mental health issues are left unaddressed, the consequences are severe, both for the individual and the department. A volunteer struggling with trauma may experience decreased job performance, increased irritability, relationship problems at home, and, ultimately, burnout. These symptoms make the already strenuous commitment unsustainable. A critical element of retention, therefore, must be the proactive and destigmatized provision of mental health and wellness resources. This includes access to peer support programs,

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams, and confidential, easily accessible professional counseling services specifically trained in first responder trauma.

Beyond trauma, the physical and administrative demands contribute significantly to overall wellness issues. Training standards have become more rigorous, and the administrative burden of compliance, fundraising, and maintenance often consumes more time than responding to calls. This constant pressure leads to physical and emotional exhaustion. Volunteer departments must invest in preventative wellness, which includes encouraging regular physical health checks, promoting adequate rest and nutrition, and ensuring that the work-life balance—however difficult to achieve—is respected.

To meaningfully address retention, departments must tackle these challenges simultaneously.

- First, the applicant pool issue requires creative community engagement. This could involve offering specialized, less intensive roles for individuals who cannot commit to full firefighting duties (e.g., administrative support, grant writing, or non-emergency community risk reduction). Departments should also partner with local businesses and educational institutions to create formal release-time programs or apprenticeship opportunities.
- Second, a complete cultural shift is needed concerning mental health. Wellness initiatives cannot be an afterthought; they must be integrated into every aspect of the volunteer's service. Mandatory, regular check-ins, not just after critical incidents, and anonymous mental health resources should be the standard. The leadership must openly advocate for mental health and normalize the act of seeking help. Only by creating a supportive, resilient environment that acknowledges the full human cost of the service can volunteer and on-call fire departments hope to retain their most valuable asset: the dedicated individuals who answer the call.

The future of community protection hinges on our ability to protect the protectors, ensuring their wellness and sustaining their commitment.

Smoke Showin'

The Official Publication of the Massachusetts
Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association



MCVFA Offices

P.O. Box 1158, Sherborn, MA 01770-1158
1-800-551-FIRE
mcvfa@mcvfa.org | www.mcvfa.org

Editor

Jeffrey Gruenglas, Truro FD

Publisher/Art Direction/ Production

Carlotta Maruca

The editorial deadline is the 18th of the month
preceding each issue

Address all editorial content to:

Smoke Showin'

P.O. Box 1158, Sherborn, MA 01770-1158

Or Editor@MCVFA.org

For advertising requests
contact the Editor

Editor@MCVFA.org

Smoke Showin' is published three times a year by the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association, P.O. Box 1158, Sherborn, MA 01770-1158.

Smoke Showin' is the official journal of the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association, a non-profit organization, and carries news and announcements concerning the MCVFA. MCVFA members receive this magazine as part of their dues. The MCVFA is not responsible for content or opinions other than association activities. Entire contents are © 2026 the Massachusetts Call/Volunteer firefighter Association, all rights reserved and, as such, may not be reproduced in part or in whole without written permission of the publishers. The MCVFA reserves the right to print portions or all of any correspondence received by the editors without liability on its part no such correspondence will be returned without prior agreement. Home delivery of *Smoke Showin'* is one of the many benefits of the MCVFA membership.



THE MOST DANGEROUS WORDS IN THE FIREHOUSE: “I’M JUST A VOLUNTEER”

Show Up Ready or Don’t Show Up At All

By Jordan Amorin, Captain, Swansea Fire Department

The Stigma We Didn’t Create — But Still Carry. The fire service is full of traditions — some honorable, some outdated, and some that need to be retired for good. One of the most damaging is the idea that volunteer firefighters aren’t “real” firefighters; they’re weekend warriors with flashing lights on their trucks, hosting pancake breakfasts to buy new T-shirts and stickers.

It’s time we put that stigma to bed.

But there’s another side to this problem, and it comes from within the volunteer ranks themselves. Too many volunteers introduce their role with a shrug and the phrase, “I’m just a volunteer.” Those words carry a weight that does real harm. They imply less training, less professionalism, less importance, and less commitment. They send a message to the public — and to the rest of the fire service — that volunteer firefighters are somehow a lesser version of the job. None of that is true.

The Damage of “I’m Just a Volunteer.” Calling yourself “just a volunteer” isn’t humility — it’s a pre-emptive apology. The public demands perfection. That’s not dramatic; it’s the reality of the job. When someone calls 911, they expect a trained, capable firefighter to step off that rig and handle the problem without

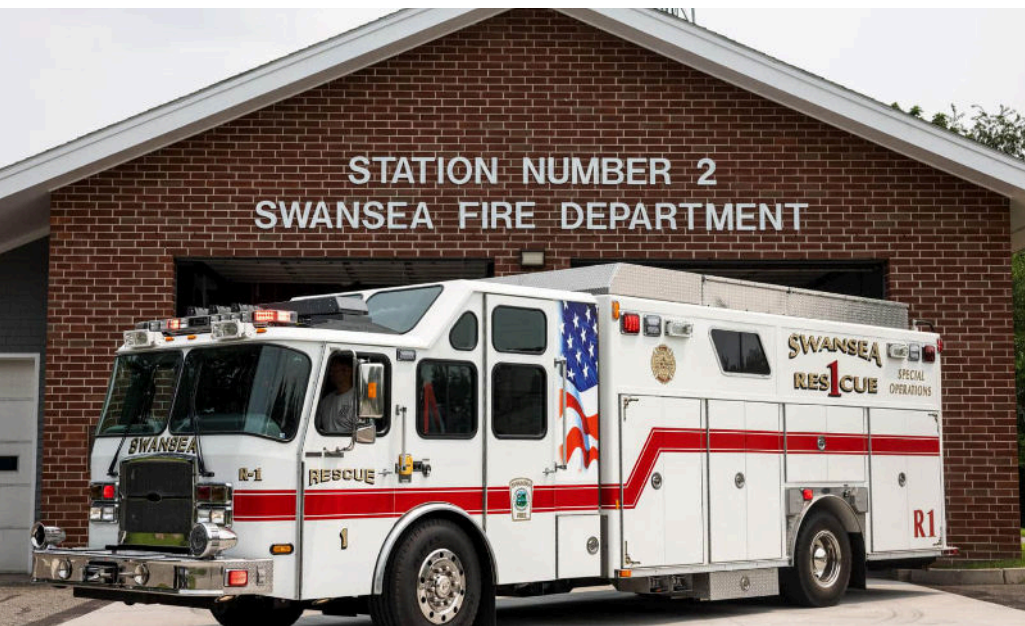
excuses. Leading with “I’m just a volunteer” tells them you might not be able to meet that expectation. It lowers the bar before anyone else even has a chance to.

This Is Real Life. The emergencies we respond to aren’t drills, and they’re not scenes from a training prop. They are real homes, real cars, real people — and real consequences. When someone calls 911, they are living the worst moment of their life. They are not thinking about what patch is on your sleeve, what title you hold, or whether you’re paid or volunteer. None of that matters in that moment. What matters is that we show up ready.

Fire doesn’t care about your excuses. It doesn’t care about your committee meetings, your fundraiser hours, or how many years you’ve been on the roster. It reacts to competence, preparation, and action. And the victims we serve — the ones trapped, injured, scared, or waiting for help — they’re counting on us to get it right.

The Strength Volunteers Bring. Volunteer firefighters bring something to the table that no other part of the fire service can match: the sheer diversity of who they are and what they do outside the station. Look around any volunteer department, and you’ll find mechanics, carpenters, electricians, engineers, teachers, nurses, truck drivers, business owners — just about every profession this country has.

That’s a strength. It means we draw knowledge, problem-solving skills, and real-world experience from every corner of the workforce. That kind of depth can’t be taught in a classroom; it’s built into who volunteers are long before they ever put on a set of turnout gear.





Different Doesn't Excuse Lower Standards. Volunteer departments operate differently — different schedules, different availability, different demands on our time. Everyone knows that. But none of those differences changes the reality of the job. Emergencies don't slow down because we're tired from work. Victims don't get a pass because we had a long week. Fire doesn't wait for a better night or a better roster. Our challenges are real, but they can't become excuses.

The Anchors in the Firehouse. Every volunteer department has them — the people who love the idea of being a firefighter more than the reality of doing the work. They want the title, the pager, the hoodie, the sticker on the truck. They want to be seen as firefighters, but they don't want to be firefighters. They skip training, avoid anything that requires effort, and disappear the second things get uncomfortable. Yet somehow, they're always the loudest ones in the room.

While they might be the minority, their impact is massive. We all know exactly who they are. We've all watched them hold a department hostage with laziness disguised as "experience" and entitlement disguised as "tradition." It's long past time we stop pretending they're harmless.

Accountability Without Ego. Being held accountable is uncomfortable — no one likes hearing they're not giving enough effort or that they missed the mark. But in the fire service, ego has no place in that conversation.

We don't get better by defending our mistakes or taking feedback personally. We get better by owning our faults, fixing them, and moving forward.

Owning the Problem — Even When I Can't Fix It Alone.

I'm going to be honest about something most officers won't say out loud: I know I'm not the most popular person in the room. I don't play the social game well. I don't spend my nights hanging around the station or sitting on every committee. Like anyone else, I can always be better on the fireground. But right now, the hardest part of this job isn't the fireground — it's trying to connect with people who don't want to hear the message.

Opportunities to learn are everywhere in this job, but not everyone takes them. When the incident comes, the difference shows fast. The members who skip training, avoid drills, and coast on the title are the same ones who freeze, fall behind, or get sidelined on scene because they aren't ready. With shrinking rosters, that's not just frustrating — it's dangerous.

Training That Matters

Volunteer departments don't have the luxury of endless hours together. Every drill night is borrowed time away from families, jobs, and sleep. So when we finally get everyone in the same room, the training must matter. It must make us better at the job the public expects us to do.

What we absolutely cannot afford is training that entertains instead of educates. We've all seen the social-media-friendly stuff — like playing Jenga with cribbing and spreaders. Sure,





it gets laughs. Sure, it keeps people “engaged.” What it doesn’t do is challenge anyone, build competence, or prepare a crew for a real emergency. That kind of training lowers the bar. It makes us feel busy instead of making us better.

Culture Isn’t a Chief Problem — It’s an Us Problem

Culture isn’t fixed by a chief, a policy, or a budget line. Chiefs set direction, but the day-to-day culture — the real culture — is built or destroyed by the firefighters sitting at the kitchen table. We decide what gets tolerated. We decide whether accountability is normal or “too harsh.” We decide whether the loudest voices

belong to those doing the work or those avoiding it. And if we keep letting the least invested members steer the ship, then we’d better be ready for the consequences that follow.

At the end of the day, the public doesn’t care about our excuses — they care about our readiness. They expect us to be trained, disciplined, and capable every single time the tones drop. They’re right to expect that. Protecting the public is the entire point of this job. If we can’t do that, nothing else matters.

The moment the committed voices get louder than the comfortable ones, everything shifts — the training, the expectations, the pride, the readiness, the culture.

That shift doesn’t come from a policy or a chief’s memo. It comes from us.

Jordan Amorin has served the Swansea Fire Department for nearly 22 years, and I’m proud to call this community home. Outside the firehouse, life is all about my wife, my boys, and spending time with the friends and family who make everything worthwhile.





CARLISLE FIRE DEPARTMENT STARTS ADVANCED EMT CLASS



12 EMTs from the Carlisle Fire Department recently started an Advanced EMT (AEMT) class, which is being held evenings in Carlisle until June. The course is approximately 200 hours long (plus a lot of homework!) and includes hospital ER clinicals and ambulance ride-time with paramedic preceptors.

Carlisle has for many years provided BLS coverage to the town, using a shared regional paramedic intercept resource when needed, which is stationed between 15-25 minutes away. Captain David Newman along with two other members had already completed the AEMT class in 2025 in New Hampshire see if AEMT could be a fit for Carlisle--no courses were available in MA. "It was 4 solid months of studying, practice and clinical time" said Newman, "I feel like I learned an incredible amount that will be applicable for Carlisle".

After the Carlisle class ends, the Department plans to apply for a license change this summer from BLS to Advanced (AEMT). In addition to a focus on honing basic skills, AEMT adds more on assessment and differential diagnosis, as well as advanced airways, IV and IO access, acquiring 12-lead EKGs, administering fluids and several new medications. Carlisle's Medical Director, Dr. Ryan Kring, has been a strong advocate for the program.

"Carlisle doesn't have the call volume to support a full in-house paramedic program, but AEMT lets us increase the skills of our EMTs so we can work at a higher level. It's also been a nice retention tool for EMTs that were asking for more training and a challenge." Fire Chief Bryan Sorrows

Although the AEMT designation is not commonly used in MA since the former EMT-I designation was retired, it is popular in other states, including our neighbors in NH and VT. Harvard MA, with a call fire department that is in many ways similar to Carlisle's, recently changed its service level to AEMT with good results. Other towns are starting to look at AEMT also.

"The AEMT class has given us new advanced abilities, but it also helped our basic EMTs become better basic EMTs." Lt. Andrew Perry, EMT-P, Harvard Fire/EMS

Carlisle's Captain Newman adds, "AEMT will provide additional training and tools to improve overall patient care. It doesn't take the place of medic; instead, it augments it."

Watch Smoke Showin' for additional updates on how the AEMT class goes in Carlisle, and if it could be applicable to your department.

For more information, contact dnewman@carlislefdma.org

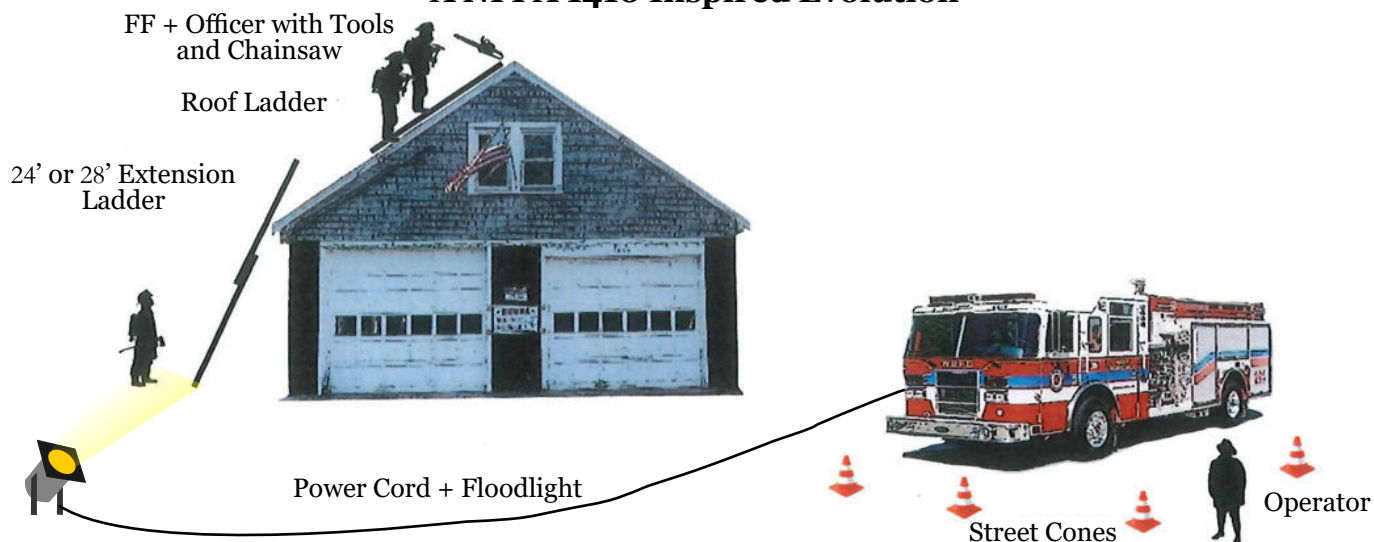


Top, left: Catherine Stevenson, AEMT, starting an IV as part of AEMT training. **Top, right:** Art Levine, EMT practices IV skills on a sim arm, while fellow AEMT student Will Harte, EMT watches closely. **Top, right:** Captain David Newman, AEMT practices IO skills. **Bottom, center:** Bonnie Greco, EMT-P (center) reviews how to set up a 12-lead EKG with EMTs (L->R) Will Harte, Art Levine, Jeff Dike and Jeff Perkins

MCVFA Model Engine Company Evolution #4

Engine Company Roof Ventilation - Typical Asphalt Shingle Roof

A NFPA 1410 Inspired Evolution



Objective: To place two firefighters with hand tools and a power saw on the roof of a one or two story structure ready to open the roof for ventilation using engine company ladders.

Evolution Description:

An engine is positioned at the simulated fire building. The engine company places its extension ladder to the roof and places its roof ladder on the roof. The crew starts and tests its power saw on the ground. The company proceeds to the roof with hand tools and power tools and starts the saw on the roof. Consider wind direction when choosing the side of the roof to use. This evolution can be done with three or four firefighters.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Ladders shall be properly deployed.
 - Saw is tested on the ground.
 - Proper tools are brought to the roof.
 - Firefighters were PPE properly and perform all actions safely.
 - Time begins when the engine stops at simulated fire scene and sets brakes. Time ends when a crew of two firefighters with hand tools is on the roof and the power saw is running.
- RECOMMENDED MAXIMUM TIME: 4 1/2 MINUTES**

Preparing your engine companies to arrive and open a roof is the topic of this issue's company training evolution. The drill is good for small towns and rural areas where ladder companies are few and far between. While opening the roof for ventilation is a tactic that is falling out of favor, it is still an essential skill, and the drill is a great way to practice putting up ladders combined with saws, SCBA, and crew teamwork at the same time.

This drill can be conducted without any special props, certified instructors, and for no cost. You should modify the drill to fit your trucks, equipment, and staffing. Add or subtract staffing based upon what is typical for your department.

This drill allows you to practice your skills in an immersive manner. In other words, instead of practicing one skill at a time, you combine driving, communicating, hose handling, SCBA use, pumping, ladders, and other skills into a single exercise. Doing so, pulls all your skills together in a realistic manner and improves operations.

The drill only takes about 15 to 20 minutes to explain, execute, repack the truck, and review. You should repeat the drill two or three times in an hour and rotate firefighters among the positions.

Give this a try once a month for the next three months and we believe you'll discover that your speed, confidence, and effectiveness will improve.

MCVFA MODEL ENGINE COMPANY TRAINING EVOLUTION #4

Engine

Safety	Yes	No	N/A
1. Everyone Seated and Belted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. PPE + SCBA Worn Properly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Wheels Chocked + Traffic Cones Deployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Flood + Scene Lights on if Nighttime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Operator Wears Traffic Safety Vest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Procedures - Step 1	Yes	No	N/A
1. IC (the instructor supervising) gives order by radio to the Engine Company to open the roof & Engine Officer acknowledges the order by repeating the instructions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Driver/Operator sets up and operates flood lights.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Officer & Firefighter raise 24' or 28' extension ladder to the roof line with two-four feet of the ladder above the edge.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Firefighter checks and starts the chainsaw on the ground and then shuts it off for safe carrying on the ladder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Firefighter (or Driver/Operator) & Officer place roof ladder to peak.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Firefighter with chain saw and officer with irons, using SCBA, climb the ladder to the peak.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Firefighter or Driver/Operator stages pike pole at foot of ladder and foots ladder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Firefighter starts saw on roof.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Date _____ Time _____

Engine _____

Crew Members _____

Judge/Referee _____

BOSTON, MA — MARCH 28, 2026:

HUNDREDS OF FIREFIGHTERS, FIRST RESPONDERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS GATHERED FOR THE ANNUAL “FIGHT FOR AIR” CLIMB

A physically demanding and deeply meaningful event hosted by the American Lung Association



The event challenges participants to scale high-rise buildings while raising funds and awareness for lung health, clean air initiatives, and respiratory disease research.

Once again, participants climbed 1 Boston Place, ascending 789 stairs—the equivalent of 41 floors. Among the many teams participating were firefighters from departments across Massachusetts and New England.

Representing the Holliston Fire Department, seven members took on the challenge. In keeping with the tradition of firefighter participation, the team completed the climb while wearing approximately 90 pounds of personal protective equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), simulating the real-world conditions faced during emergency responses in high-rise structures.

Beyond the physical challenge, the Fight for Air Climb is fundamentally about impact— and the Holliston Fire Department stood out in a major way. The department was recognized for raising the highest amount of funds among participating teams, with a total of \$16,190 contributed to the American Lung Association’s mission.

The achievement highlights not only the physical dedication of Holliston’s firefighters, but also their strong connection to the community and commitment to supporting critical health initiatives.

As the final climbers crossed the finish line, the event served as a powerful reminder of the resilience of first responders and the importance of community-driven efforts in addressing public health challenges. For the Holliston Fire Department and their fellow participants, the climb was more than just a test of endurance—it was a step forward in the fight for every breath.

2026 MCVFA Officers

President

Michael Goldstein, Sherborn FD
President@MCVFA.org

Secretary

Jeffrey Gruenglas, Truro FD
Editor@MCVFA.org

Treasurer

TK Menesale, CPA
tawnya@cpaoncape.com

Executive Vice President

Andy Gleckel, Southborough FD
sbor090@gmail.com

Region 1 Vice President

John Walcek, Wareham FD
john_walcek@warehampolice.com

Region 1 Coordinator

Mike Palmieri, Carver FD
mpalmieri@gmail.com

Region 2 Vice President

David Newman, Carlisle FD

Region 2 Coordinator

Lisa Evans, Newbury FD
reg2cor@mcvfa.org

Region 4 Vice President

Kevin Connolly, Northfield FD
shamrock3910@comcast.net

Region 5 Vice President

Frank Speth, III, New Ashford FD
vpreion5@mcvfa.org

Region 5 Coordinator

Kevin Hampstead, Clarksburg FD
klhnyy27@yahoo.com





HOW TRAINING IMPACTS CALL/VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

By Chief Joe Maruca (Retired)

Three years ago, the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), NFPA Research Foundation, and the North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD) set out to see if “too much training” was in a fact a reason for there being fewer call/volunteer firefighters. In a groundbreaking national study, here’s what they found:

- Training is fundamental to the volunteer fire service and acknowledged as a critical part of a volunteer fire department.
- Training must be relevant to the community needs, the role of the volunteer, and the resources of the fire department.
- Training must be flexible to fit volunteer life/work schedules.
- Training must be modular to allow departments to focus on the topics most relevant to them.
- Training must be hands-on and immersive to the fullest extent possible.
- Training must be locally delivered whenever possible.

- Skilled instructors are essential.
- State training academies are underutilized by small departments.

If the volunteer fire service follows these principles, then training isn’t going to be the significant barrier to recruitment and retention that many say it is.

The study is the most in-depth and comprehensive look at training needs in the volunteer fire service that has ever been done. While it has data on a wide range of community sizes, the survey focused on fire departments serving communities with populations of fewer than 2,500 people. Fire departments serving towns of smaller than 2,500 people represent about 45% of all fire departments in the United States and until now, there has been little data gathered about these departments and the call/volunteer firefighters that support them.

The study gathered data from 2,053 firefighters across the country. Thirty-two percent of these responses came from departments serving communities of 2,500 or fewer residents.



Here's more about some of the key findings.

- **Perceptions of training as a barrier to recruitment and retention varied by role.** Chiefs and officers were more likely than rank-and-file firefighters to identify training as a barrier, whereas firefighters were more likely to report that training was not a barrier or that they were unsure. This pattern suggests that leadership may be more attuned to the operational or administrative challenges associated with training requirements, while rank-and-file firefighters may be less likely to view training demands as a barrier.
- **Training needs to be relevant and modular.** Time management is critical for today's volunteer firefighter. If people think their time is being wasted, they won't volunteer. This means that the fire service needs to break up the training into topical modules so that each department can choose the modules relevant to their fire problem and resources. For instance, a community without an aerial ladder truck would not provide training about aerial ladder trucks to its new recruits, just as an urban department that has 100% hydrant coverage can choose to skip tanker/tender operations training. This approach would allow departments to focus on essential topics, particularly during initial training, reducing the time and resources needed to safely place new volunteer firefighters in the field. As training becomes longer and incorporates more non-essential topics, it may create barriers to successful recruitment and retention.
- **Training must be immersive and hands-on.** We need to move out of the classroom as much as possible. A consistent message from the data says that firefighters value hands-on and scenario-based training. It's engaging. It should be designed to be relevant to the situations they will be expected to deal with. Immersive training, the use of two or more senses at once, doesn't necessarily mean high-tech augmented reality goggles. It can mean firefighters discussing video-based fire ground scenarios in a group setting.

- **Local delivery is important.** Long travel distances to training can be a strong disincentive for volunteers. In many areas, volunteers must drive hours to attend training sessions. Bringing training to local or nearby fire stations presents an opportunity that state training institutions should prioritize.
- **Lastly, there is a need for skilled instructors to lead local training.** Participants described a skilled instructor as someone local, knowledgeable in the subject matter, and able to create an engaging learning environment. That did not necessarily mean a formally certified instructor.

This study doesn't answer every question about fire training and how it impacts recruitment and retention for volunteer firefighters. But it does, for the first time, give us comprehensive data and a clear direction. The challenge for us in the volunteer fire service is to become advocates for what the study and the data have taught us.

To read the complete study go to <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/research/fire-protection-research-foundation/projects-and-reports/understanding-the-role-of-training-on-volunteer-firefighter-recruitment-and-retention>



The NFPA Research Foundation also has an excellent webinar about the study that you can watch at <https://www.nfpa.org/videos/training-impact-in-volunteer-firefighter-recruitment-and-retention>.

The NFPA has a podcast titled "The Volunteer Crisis" from February 10, 2026 that is also available for you to learn more about this research and what it means. Check it out at <https://www.nfpa.org/news-blogs-and-articles/podcasts/the-volunteer-crisis>

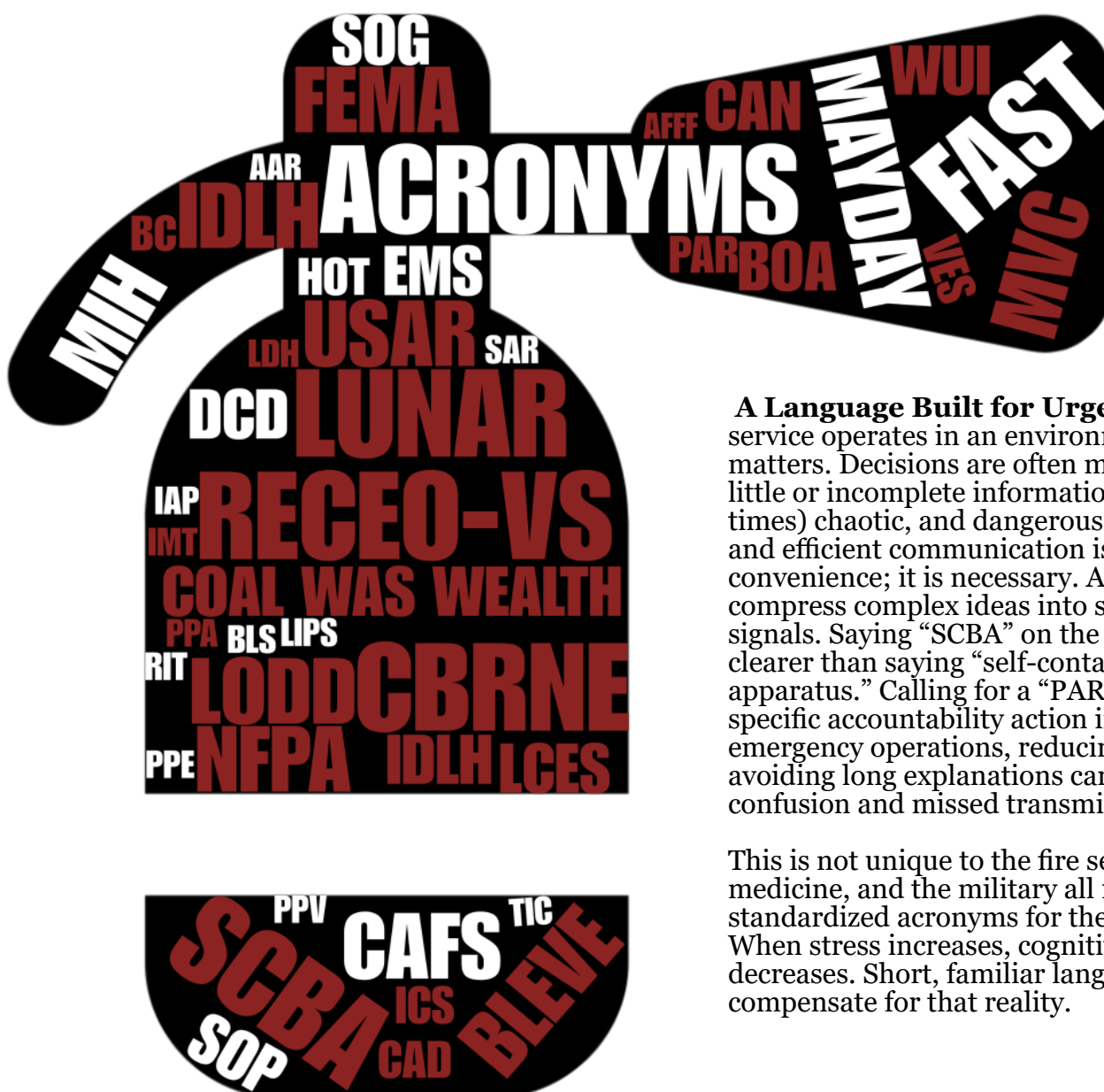


ACRONYMS IN THE FIRE SERVICE

By Dean M. Babineau

If you have spent any time around a firehouse or emergency scenes, you have heard them. Acronyms fly across the kitchen table, over the radio, and through training rooms with such speed and confidence that no one thinks twice about them. SCBA. PPE. PAR. RIT. SOP. To veteran public safety professionals, these terms are second nature. For newer members, these may feel like learning a second language.

Acronyms are so deeply embedded in the fire service that we often forget to ask an important question: Why do we use them so much? Or more importantly, are they actually useful, or are they just the way we have always done it? Acronyms, when used correctly, bring value to how firefighters think, communicate, and operate under stress. Like any tool, they can help or hurt depending on how they are applied. Understanding their value and limitations is especially important given our members' diverse backgrounds.



A Language Built for Urgency. The fire service operates in an environment where time matters. Decisions are often made quickly, with little or incomplete information, in loud, (at times) chaotic, and dangerous conditions. Clear and efficient communication is not a matter of convenience; it is necessary. Acronyms help compress complex ideas into short, recognizable signals. Saying “SCBA” on the radio is faster and clearer than saying “self-contained breathing apparatus.” Calling for a “PAR” communicates a specific accountability action in a single word. In emergency operations, reducing radio time and avoiding long explanations can prevent confusion and missed transmissions.

This is not unique to the fire service. Aviation, medicine, and the military all rely heavily on standardized acronyms for the same reason. When stress increases, cognitive capacity decreases. Short, familiar language helps compensate for that reality.

Acronyms as Mental Checklists. Beyond speed, acronyms function as mental checklists. Many common fire service acronyms are not just abbreviations; they are structured reminders that can guide decision-making.

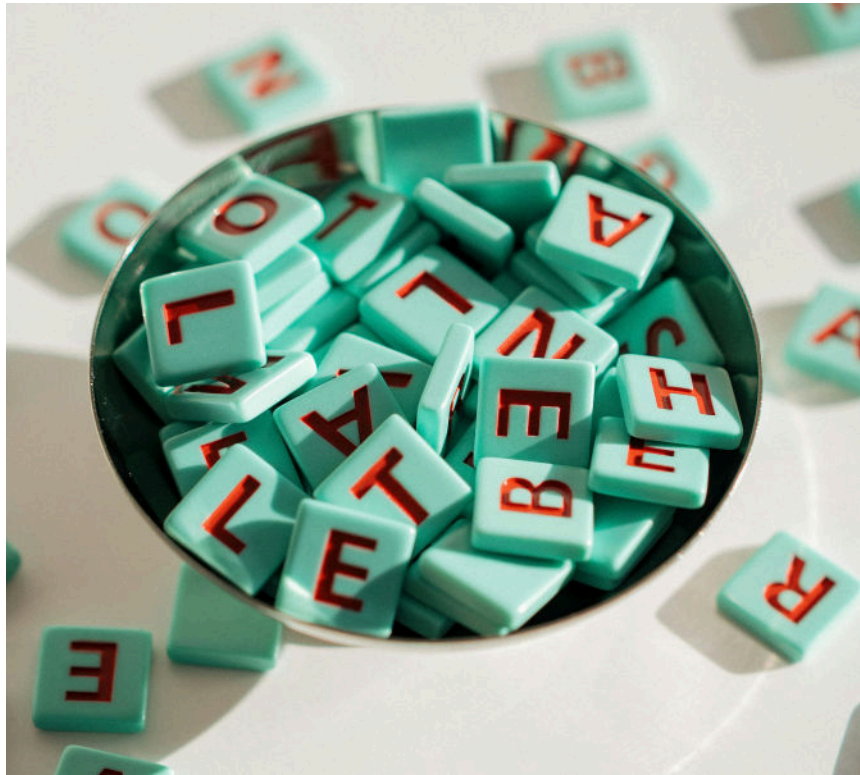
Consider size-up acronyms such as COAL WAS WEALTH, tactical priorities like RECEO-VS, or firefighter survival acronyms like BOA. These are not intended to be recited verbatim during an incident. Instead, they serve as a checklist to help firefighters avoid overlooking critical considerations when stress narrows attention. When an incident commander requests a PAR, every company officer knows what is expected. When a MAYDAY is declared using LIPS (or LUNAR) information, others immediately understand the structure of the message. This shared language reduces confusion and allows those on-scene to focus on action rather than interpretation.

In training, these acronyms provide a shared structure for teaching complex concepts. In operations, they reinforce consistency. When everyone learns the same acronym the same way, it creates a common mental model across shifts, companies, and even departments.

Furthermore, shared language is even more important because mutual aid is a fact of life. Acronyms provide a baseline level of communication across town lines, staffing models, and organizational cultures. While not every department uses acronyms in exactly the same way, widely accepted terms help ensure that critical messages are understood quickly.

Training Efficiency and Knowledge Retention. Acronyms also play a major role in training efficiency. Fire service education encompasses a broad range of topics, including fire behavior, building construction, fire control, hazardous materials, rescue techniques, and more. Acronyms help organize that information into manageable pieces. From a learning standpoint, acronyms aid memory by grouping related concepts together. This is especially useful for recruits and newer members who are still building their knowledge base. A well-designed acronym can improve recall during testing and, more importantly, during emergencies.

However, this benefit only exists if acronyms are taught properly. Simply handing a recruit a list of abbreviations is not education. Acronyms must be explained, demonstrated, and reinforced through scenario-based training. When firefighters understand not just what an



acronym stands for but how it applies operationally, it becomes a useful tool rather than a waste of information.

The Risk of “Alphabet Soup.” While acronyms can be powerful, they are not without risk; overuse or misuse can create confusion, frustration, and even pose a safety hazard. This is sometimes referred to as “alphabet soup,” a situation where communication becomes cluttered with abbreviations that not everyone understands and strays from the concept of “plain language.”

One of the most common problems is assuming shared understanding where none exists. An acronym that is second nature to a senior member may be completely unfamiliar to a newer firefighter. Without explanation, acronyms can become jargon that not everyone understands.

Another issue is inconsistency. Some acronyms have different meanings in different departments or disciplines. Others evolve over time, with new letters added or definitions changed. Without clear documentation and training, this can lead to misunderstandings during critical moments. Many of us learned the VES (Vent, Enter, Search) sequence for entering a compartment from the exterior to search. Yet, some agencies and training use VEIS, adding the ‘I’ for isolate to indicate that after entering, we must close the interior door to the compartment.

Finally, acronyms can unintentionally exclude people. When leaders rely too heavily on shorthand without explanation, it can make newer members hesitant to ask questions. In volunteer departments that rely on recruitment and retention, this may have a larger impact; new people may feel excluded. Language should invite participation, not discourage it. A classic example of this can be seen with our partners in law enforcement: some agencies have retained '10-codes' or similar terminology despite the National Incident Management System's call almost 20 years ago to adopt plain language.

Acronyms and the Public. It is also important to recognize that acronyms are primarily an internal communication tool. While they work well among firefighters, they can confuse or alienate the public if used carelessly. When speaking with citizens, elected officials, or the media, plain language is usually more appropriate. Explaining actions clearly builds trust and transparency. Acronyms that make sense in the firehouse may sound like jargon to those outside the service.

This also carries into our social media presence. We often post the way we speak inside the firehouse, including acronyms that make sense internally but confuse the public consuming our content. When that happens, the message and the opportunity to educate may be lost.

This does not mean acronyms are wrong. It means firefighters must be intentional about when and where they use them. Good communicators know their audience and adjust accordingly.

Best Practices for Using Acronyms

Effectively. To get the most benefit from acronyms while minimizing their drawbacks, departments should consider a few best practices:

- **Teach acronyms in context.** Every acronym introduced in training should be tied to a real-world application. Explain not just what it stands for, but when and why it is used.
- **Be consistent.** Use the same acronyms consistently across policies and procedures, training materials, and operations. Consistency builds confidence and reduces confusion.

- **Define before abbreviating.** In written documents and formal presentations, spell out terms before using acronyms. This small step improves clarity for all readers.
- **Encourage questions.** Leaders should create an environment where members feel comfortable asking for clarification. No one should feel embarrassed for not knowing an acronym.
- **Avoid unnecessary complexity.** Not every concept needs an acronym. If an abbreviation does not improve clarity or recall, it may not be worth using.

A Tool, Not a Crutch. Acronyms are tools, not shortcuts for thinking. They do not replace judgment, experience, or training. Instead, they support those things by providing structure and efficiency. When used thoughtfully, acronyms help firefighters communicate faster, remember more, and operate more safely. When used carelessly, they can confuse, exclude, or oversimplify complex situations.

Many firefighters balance service with family, work, and other responsibilities, and effective communication tools are essential. Acronyms, when taught and used well, help level the playing field and strengthen the organization.

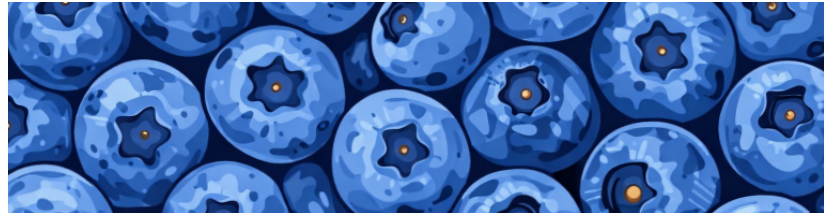
Closing Thoughts. The fire service is built on tradition, but it is sustained by communication. Acronyms are one small but important part of that communication system. They reflect our need to operate efficiently, think clearly under pressure, and work together in challenging environments.

In a profession where seconds often matter and teamwork shapes outcomes, acronyms will always have a place, but only if we continue to use them with intention.

Dean Babineau is a 27-year veteran of the Massachusetts fire service and has served in various operational and training leadership roles. He hosts the Talkin' Fire podcast and can be found on LinkedIn at [dean-m-babineau](#) or by e-mail at deanbabineau@gmail.com

IT'S GRILLIN' TIME!

Submitted by Joe Maruca



Blueberry Cobbler

Ingredients

- 4 cups of fresh blueberries
- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 1 package of yellow cake mix
- 1/2 cup of melted butter

Directions

1. Preheat Oven to 350 degrees
2. In a 9"x13" baking pan, mix the blueberries, sugar, and cinnamon.
3. Cover the blueberry mix with dry cake mix. Don't stir.
4. Drizzle the melted butter in a zig zag over the cake mix. Don't stir.
5. Bake until the top is light golden brown, about 30 minutes
6. Enjoy topped with ice cream.

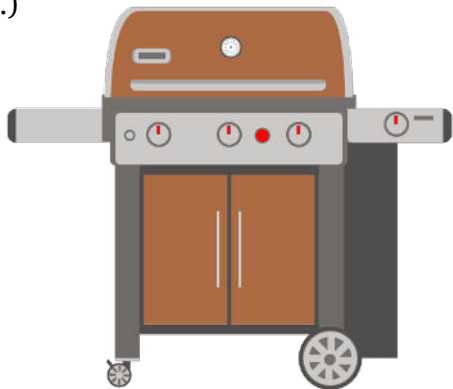
12 Turkey Sliders

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 Pounds of Ground Turkey
- 1/2 Medium Size Onion, finely chopped
- 1 Teaspoon Garlic Powder
- 1 Tablespoon of Thyme
- 1/4 Cup of Chopped Flat Parsley
- 1/2 Teaspoon Salt
- 1/4 Teaspoon Pepper
- 6 Slices of Your Favorite Cheese
- 1 Package of Hawaiian Sweet Rolls
- Toppings of Your Choice (Mayo, Ketchup, BBQ Sauce, Grilled Onions, Pickle Chips, Etc.)

Directions

1. In a large bowl mix ground turkey, onion, garlic powder, salt, pepper, and parsley. Divide mix into 12 equal portions and form them into patties.
2. Halve and open Hawaiian buns and lay them out on a baking sheeting.
3. In large skillet, heat canola or vegetable oil and add patties. Add as many patties as can fit and cook on medium high until slightly browned on both sides, for about 3 to 4 minutes per side.
4. Break up the cheese slices into smaller squares and add them to the top of each patty. Cook until the cheese melts and internal temperature of burger is 165 degrees.
5. While the burgers cook, place the baking sheet of buns on the top rack of the oven and broil them until just toasted.
6. Assemble the sliders by painting both sides of the buns with mayo, ketchup, BBQ sauce, or whatever you like. Add the burger and top with grilled onions, pickle chips, or other toppings.



HAIL TO THE CHEF!

Got a "secret" recipe or "hot" firehouse dish?

Share your department's recommendations for firehouse grub. Name it what you want—as long the food's good!

Editor@MCVFA.org





NEW ADA RULES FOR WEBSITES & SOCIAL MEDIA

By Chief Joe Maruca (Retired)

The US Justice Department has ruled that the Americans for Disability Act (ADA) applies to government websites and social media sites, as well as private sites open to the public. This means that all photos on these sites must have imbedded captions and descriptions of what the photo shows. Documents must be readable by screen readers.

Compliance by state and local governments is required as follows:

- 0-to-49,999-person population – April 26, 2027
- Special Districts – April 26, 2027
- 50,000 or more-person population – April 24, 2026

Private websites that are open to the public (businesses, non-profits, and associations) should already be in compliance.

According to the Justice Department, the following are examples of website accessibility barriers:

- **Poor color contrast.** People with limited vision or color blindness cannot read text if there is not enough contrast between the text and background (for example, light gray text on a light-colored background).
- **Use of color alone to give information.** People who are color-blind may not have access to information when that information is conveyed using only color cues because they cannot distinguish certain colors from others. Also, screen readers do not tell the user the color of text on a screen, so a person who is blind would not be able to know that color is meant to convey certain information (for example, using red text alone to show which fields are required on a form).
- **Lack of text alternatives (“alt text”) on images.** People who are blind will not be able to understand the content and purpose of images, such as pictures, illustrations, and charts, when no text alternative is provided. Text alternatives convey the purpose of an image, including pictures, illustrations, charts, etc.
- **No captions on videos.** People with hearing disabilities may not be able to understand information communicated in a video if the video does not have captions.

- **Inaccessible online forms.** People with disabilities may not be able to fill out, understand, and accurately submit forms without things like:
 - Labels that screen readers can convey to their users (such as text that reads “credit card number” where that number should be entered);
 - Clear instructions; and
 - Error indicators (such as alerts telling the user a form field is missing or incorrect).
- **Mouse-only navigation (lack of keyboard navigation).** People with disabilities who cannot use a mouse or a trackpad will not be able to access web content if they cannot navigate a website using a keyboard.

What do you need to do? First, open the administrative page on your social media accounts and make sure that the “alt text” function is turned on. It should already be on for your Facebook page but make sure. Then, click on some of your photos and see what the alternate text says. How accurate is it? You may find that you need to check these and clean them up for accuracy before you post your next photo.

For instance, I just checked the Alt Text on the most recent photo I published on Facebook and it said, “May be an image of game fowl and dog.” Does anyone think they can guess what this photo really is? Good luck. To avoid complaints and potential lawsuits, your best practice is to check the Alt Text for reasonable accuracy before posting. The ADA fine for non-compliance starts at \$75,000.

I also discovered that I could only alter the Alt Text of the photos I am posting. If I repost a photo or post from another source, I’m stuck with whatever the originator did or didn’t do.

Webpages are an even bigger problem. Where social media sites are using AI driven captions and have a relatively easy way to edit the captions, your website doesn’t. Many of our websites are so old they don’t have Alt Text capabilities. It’s time to upgrade and that will cost money.

Additionally, with websites it isn’t just the photos you need to worry about. Any documents that are shown for the public must be readable by screen readers. Newer PDFs can have this function switched on, but older PDFs may have to be converted. Fillable forms also need to be accessible by screen readers.

SINGLE STAIR CONSTRUCTION – WATCH OUT & SPEAK UP

Massachusetts is considering allowing single stair construction in multi-unit residential buildings up to six stories high. Currently, two flights of stairs are required.

The reason for this change is part of the effort to increase the inventory of lower cost housing. Having only one exit stairway is less expensive to build and allows for more square footage to be used for additional units. Currently an advisory group is being formed to study the issue and make a recommendation.



Proponents of this plan point out that New York City and Seattle have permitted single stair residential buildings for decades without serious fire safety outcomes. However, small town fire departments need to remind legislators that the Fire Department of New York can get a fire engine to a building in about 4 minutes and gets six trucks and thirty firefighters on location at fires in less than 10 minutes. Small towns are arriving at fires with two or three firefighters in 8 to 10 minutes and it can take 30 minutes to assemble six trucks and thirty firefighters.

While this single stair buildings might be acceptable in urban or large suburban communities that can assemble a large firefighting force in minutes, they aren't a good fit for small town, mostly volunteer fire departments, that have fewer firefighting resources.

And of course, the call/volunteer fire service wasn't included on the Technical Advisory Group that the Governor has appointed to review this proposal. The union and chiefs are at the table. Without a seat at the table, we'll have to shout a little louder to be heard.

Length-of-Service Certificate

MASSACHUSETTS

The MCVFA awards certificates to call/volunteer firefighters and EMT's who have achieved 20, 25 and 50 or more years in the call and volunteer fire and EMS service.

The MCVFA also awards certifies to call/volunteer and combination departments with a 75+ year certificate commemorating keystone department anniversary dates.

Certificates are issued by the MCVFA, and we ask that we have at least 3 weeks' notice before the scheduled presentation.

Please forward information to Kevin Connolly at mcvfa@mcvfa.org or mail to:

MCVFA Certificate Request
P.O. Box 13
Northfield, MA, 01360-0013

Smoke Showin' Wants You!



Submit your articles (300-500 words) and photos for the next issue.

Winning photo makes the cover. Runner ups are guaranteed a spot in the issue.

NEXT ISSUE DEADLINE IS AUGUST 18

Editor@MCVFA.org



Visit us on
social media