

VOLUME NO.
2026

THE HUDSON VALLEY FIREFIGHTER
ORG. 1889
NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO.
1 – MARCH

From the desk of the 2nd Vice President

John O'Brien

Members, Firefighters and Guests, on behalf of the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firefighters' Association, it's an honor to be welcomed back to Lake George, NY June 10th-13th 2026 for our 137th Annual Convention proudly hosted by Lake George Fire Department. For more than a century, this Convention has served as a cornerstone of fellowship, service and tradition within the volunteer fire service.

This year's gathering continues that legacy by bringing together firefighters, officers, families and support from across the Hudson Valley to celebrate our shared commitment to service, leadership and community. Lake George provides a beautiful and historic backdrop for our convention. Known for natural beauty and welcoming atmosphere. The area offers a wide variety of lodging, dining and recreational opportunities for members, attendees and their families. We encourage you to take time to enjoy the village, the lake and the many attractions that make this region a treasured destination for our Convention.

Throughout this convention, members will have the opportunities to participate in official association business, memorial observances and activities that honor both our history and firefighters. Take the opportunity to sign up, build new connections and reflect on our traditions of the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firefighters' Association.

2026 Convention Dates & Events:

****April 30th – Deadline to submit a Journal Ad for 137th HVVFA Yearbook***

****June 10th through 13th – The 137th Annual HVVFA Convention***

****June 10th – Golf Outing, Cronin's Golf Resort***

****June 11th & 12th – 2026 Annual Convention Meeting, Georgian Hotel***

****June 11th – Red Vest / Blue Vest Outing, Usher Park***

****June 11th – Lake George Fire Department Fundraiser Event, Fort William Henry***

****June 12th – Mardi Gras Parade***

****June 13th – Convention Dress Parade & Awards Ceremony.***

Follow our website; HVVFA.com for a detailed Convention schedule, parade applications, parking pass information, live entertainment schedule, fireworks and much more!

I would like to sincerely thank HVVFA President, Robert Schrader as he concludes our historic first two-year term of Presidentship. Your dedication, leadership and tireless efforts have been a vital to our association success. Thanks to your guidance, we have achieved significant milestones and strengthened the bonds that unite our fire service community. We are also grateful to our hosting Company, the Lake George Fire Department, for their continuous dedication to make this convention a remarkable event in the region.

Appreciation is extended to the members and committees, including Tom McKinney (HVVFA Past President), Jessica McKinney-Benjamin, Nick Benjamin (Captain), Matt Oswald (2nd Assistant Chief), Patty McKinney-Schuster (Ladies Auxiliary, President), Leisha McKinney (Ladies Auxiliary, Vice President), Beth Brundage (Ladies Auxiliary, Past President) for their outstanding efforts in organizing and supporting a seamless convention. Participation strengthens the bond that unites the fire service in our communities. I'm looking forward to spending time together and honoring the spirit of volunteer service that defines the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firefighters Association.

Published four times a year with news and updates to benefit the HVVFA volunteer!

If you'd like to submit an event, article, photo, etc., for publication, please feel free to send your information in!

Our next deadline:
May 15, 2026 for the Convention edition!

You can send your information by e-mail to
thehvffirefighter@gmail.com

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Victoria Dichian

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ADVERTISING RATES

*All rates are per issue**

Business Card - \$25

Half Page - \$65

Quarter Page \$40

Full Page - \$125

Members' Campaign Ads @ Costs Shown Above

**5% discount for a year's advertising*

Memorial/Sponsor Page donations \$100

Our next deadline is:
May 15, 2026

UPCOMING HVVFA EVENTS

2026 Ken Merriman Fire Police Training Seminar

04/18/2026

New Baltimore Fire Department
77 Gill Road New Baltimore, NY 12124
8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

CONTACT

Tom With and/or Douglas Mann

John J. Mulligan & Bill Eck Haz-Mat, Homeland Security and Fire Training Seminar

04/25/2026

Shaker Road-Loudonville FD
550 Albany Shaker Rd, Loudonville, NY
8:00 AM to 3:30 PM

CONTACT

info@hvvfa.com

Quarterly Meeting

04/26/2026

Lake George Fire Department
179 Ottawa St, Lake George, NY 12845
1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

2026 Annual Convention & Parades Hosted by the Lake George Fire Department

06/10/2026 - 06/13/2026

Georgian Lakeside Resort
384 Canada St, Lake George,
NY 12845

CONVENTION 6/11 & 12

STARTS 9:00 AM DAILY

MARDI GRAS PARADE 6/12

DRESS PARADE 6/13

Greene County Report

Submitted by: Karen Schrader, GCVF

138th GCVFA CONVENTION
ASHLAND – SEPTEMBER 8, 2026
THRU SEPTEMBER 12, 2026
Events around Greene County

March

5th, 12th, 19th, 26 – Athens VFC Pizza night's 4-7 (518) 945-2599

6th, 13th, 20th, 27 – Hensonville Hose Company fish fry, chicken or clams 3pm-7pm \$15 sandwich meal / \$20 meal

7th – Round Top Ladies Auxiliary corned beef and cabbage dinner 3pm-6pm take out only \$18 call (631)681-4626

7th – Ashland FD Auxiliary Italian Pasta Dinner 4:30pm-7pm \$13 adults / \$8 kids

22nd – Haines Falls VFC & Auxiliary Maple Weekend Breakfast 8am – 12pm held at Tannersville Rescue Building

April

5th & 6th – Spring Community Flea Market 9am-3pm at Freehold VFC

13th – Kiskatom Firehouse Pancake Breakfast 8am-12pm \$12 adults / \$6 kids 6-12

Upcoming Greene County Meetings – eat at 6:30pm, meeting start at 7:30pm

MAY 7, 2026 – KISKATOM FIRE STATION

AUGUST 6, 2026 - WEST ATHENS LIME STREET FIRE STATION

It has been a tuff time fighting fires in this cold weather, I believe we are all looking forward to warmer weather and outside activities.

Freehold VFC does food truck Mondays 5pm-8pm 5/18, 6/22, 7/27, 8/24 great food and family fun.

West Athens Lime Street FC is looking forward to a new tanker and their new firehouse, look forward to their open house.

Rensselaer County Report

Submitted by: Brenda Gausby, RCVF

As we await winter's end, fire departments across Rensselaer County remain active with annual mandatory training within their organizations and participation in countywide courses. Recent offerings have included Basic Structural Collapse, Air Sampling, Hazardous Materials, Highway Safety, Fire Police and Traffic Incident Management Systems, and Terrorism Indicators and Suspicious Activities Reporting for

Fire/EMS. For those who enjoy braving the colder weather, Ice/Cold Water Rescue training was conducted over a weekend in February.

The Rensselaer County Fire Chiefs Association (RCFCA) began the year with a guest presenter from the NYS-OFPC HazMat Operations Branch at its January 19 meeting, hosted by Hemstreet Park Fire Department. The meeting welcomed 45 attendees representing 21 fire departments. The next meeting will be held Monday, March 16 at 7:30 p.m., hosted by Pittstown Fire-Rescue.

In February, Pleasantdale Fire Department warmed things up with its Cabin Fever Chili Cook-Off. For those who missed it, another opportunity is coming soon as firehouse chili chefs gather at Brown's Brewing Company on March 22nd for the annual Firehouse Chili Cook-Off, benefiting the Firefighter's Home in Hudson.

Looking ahead to spring, departments throughout the county will host breakfasts, pizza nights, and other community fundraising events.

Rensselaer County high school seniors planning to attend college in fall 2026 to pursue education in an emergency services field—and who have demonstrated community service throughout their high school careers—are encouraged to apply for the Second Annual David Plew Car Two Memorial Scholarship. Details are available on the RCFCA Facebook page.

Sullivan County Report

Submitted by: Shane LaVecchia, SCVP

As I sit and write this article the new year is upon us. With that in mind I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year . Pancake breakfast season is in full swing here in Sullivan County.

On January 31st a Polar Plunge was held at the White Lake Fire Department as part of the Susan Bunce Memorial Sullivan Freeze For a Cure. It is a Sullivan County warm-up event supporting Alzheimer's research and advocacy through the Alzheimer's association. The Event was organized by the Strike Out Alzheimer's a Sullivan County team led by Terry Grafmuller. Who created the plug to increase participation and to get more visibility with in the county.

The White Lake Fire Department played a large roll in the event by cut through the ice and had the dive team in dry suits providing safety support for people entering and exiting the lake.

21 one people in Sullivan County took the plunge. Sullivan County Bureau of Fire Recruitment and Retention task force will begin ramping up efforts to recruit new members into the fire service starting in march with 4 events on their agenda.

The Sullivan County Firefighters association held their meeting on February 10th at the Forestburgh Fire Department. The annual Memorial Service will be held on may 3rd 2026 at 2pm at the government center in Monticello NY. If you are in Sullivan county and are interested in joining the fire service please contact joinsullivanfire@gmail.com

Albany County Report

Submitted by: Butch Recchia, ACVP

Greetings from Albany County. I hope everyone had a joyous and safe Holiday Season.

Many of the Companies and Departments have started the New Year with Their Annual Banquets and Installation of their Officers for the New Year. Congratulations to all who have stepped up to protect and serve their communities and citizens and thank you to all outgoing Officers for your service. Many fund raising events are starting to take place with some having monthly Breakfasts, Chicken BBQ's, Pizza and Wings and soon with Lent starting Fish Fry Dinners. Please check the County's Face Book page for the Location and dates of most of these events.

The Albany County VFA has set dates for their Annual Dinner and Inspection Day. The Annual Dinner will be Sept 16 and will be hosted by the Ravena Hose Company and on Sept 19 the Slingerlands Fire Dept will once again host the Albany County Muster/Inspection Day. The ACVFA's next meeting is scheduled for March 11 (weather permitting) at a location to be announced and the Annual meeting will be held on May 13.

Congratulations to the Fuller Road Fire Department as they start to celebrate their 100th Anniversary and to the Boght Community Fire District on the delivery of their New Aerial Truck.



Ulster County Report

Submitted by: Justus Rice, UCVP

Since the last News article there has been a lot going on in the county. Santa has been making his rounds and visiting numerous Fire Departments at their breakfasts

The following dates are for the upcoming meetings in Ulster County:

March 17 Saugerties, April 21 Pine Hill.

July 24-25 is the county convention being held and hosted by Napanoch which will also be celebrating 100 years of service.

Port Ewen Fire Dept received Pet oxygen masks from Nothing but love Canine Foundation. I would like to congratulate all the Officers that were elected to the County Departments for the 2026 year and wish them a good and safe year.

On a sad note I did attend the funeral services for Barbara Wynkoop Past President of Ulster County Ladies Aux and member of Napanoch Ladies Aux. and also attended the funeral service for Michael Ryan member of MF Whitney Hose Company.

I do hope everyone had a great Holiday and hope that spring is right around the corner. All be safe.

Fire Police News

Submitted by: Tom With

The HVVFA Fire Police Committee proudly presents the 2026 Annual Ken Merriman Fire Police Training Seminar. The Agenda topics to include: Victor Graves, Fire Protection Specialist I, DHSES / OFPC Hazardous Materials Branch, "Today's Hazmat Awareness for Fire Police"; Robert Gorman, Past Chair Empire State Towing and Recovery Association (ESTRA); Towing and Incident Response; Tom With, Co-Chair NYSDOT TIMS Statewide Steering Committee and VFPASNY, "Updates on TIMS – FHWA Course and Fire Police PPE"; Brenda Gausby, Acting Chair, and Angela Outhouse, FASNY Behavioral /Mental Health Committee, "Fire Police experience with Motorists". Go to the Hudson Valley VFA website for Registration and information: hvvfa.com, Click on News, then Training, then Ken Merriman Fire Police Seminar.

HVVFA Ladies Auxiliary
Submitted by: Victoria Dichian
LA-HVVFA Liaison

From the Editor

In the December 2025 issue of this newsletter, I mistakenly listed Karen McDonald as the LA-HVVFA Liaison, this was not the case and it has been corrected in this issue. My apologies to Karen and Vicky and thank you for promptly advising me of the error. Chuck

BRRR! Is it ever going to warm up! The holidays have come and gone with several of our Member Auxiliaries joined in Holiday Parades, Breakfast with Santa and Holiday parties for both adults and children. Several members were able to make it to the FASNY Firefighter's Home for the tree lighting and other activities with there with the Residents.



We are looking forward to our April meeting, the first of 2026! It will be on April 19, 2026 at the Coldenham Fire Department, 511 Coldenham Rd, Walton, NY 12586. There will be a luncheon at 12 noon with the meeting starting at 1pm. Second Vice President Megan Rivenburgh will have our ways and means tables set up with spring themed gifts along with Dark secrets and Specials provided by our Members.

Our July daily drawing tickets will be available at this meeting. They are \$5.00 each with two numbers on each ticket, giving you six changes to win each day. If you would like to purchase or sell some tickets contact Karen McDonald at kmcdonald@earthlink.net or by text at 518-339-9605.

The Lake George Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary has been busy planning our 51st Annual Convention meeting.

The Auxiliary meeting will be held on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at the Holiday Inn Resort located at 2223 Canada Street, Lake George, NY 12845. There will be more information provided at our April meeting and in

our upcoming Chatterbox newsletter.

Any nonmember who wishes to receive a copy of our Chatterbox via email please contact Karen McDonald at the email or cell number shown above.

All members, prospective members and visitors are encouraged to attend.

Rockland County Report
Submitted by: Lisa Castaldo, RCVP

At the November 21, RC Fire Chiefs Assoc monthly meeting, NYS Troopers Derick Macaulay and Peter Pjetri received awards for their heroic rescue of a driver who was trapped in his burning vehicle after being involved in an accident on the Palisades Interstate Parkway on September 14, 2025. The actions of Troopers Macaulay and Pjetri were no doubt lifesaving. We thank both Troopers for going above and beyond in their call of duty.

On the morning of September 23rd at approximately 0830 hours the Tappan Fire Department was dispatched to Organic Recycling for a person whose leg was trapped in a piece of machinery. Upon arrival Assistant Chief, Steven Neuendorf confirmed one party with both legs trapped in a commercial mulching machine. After arrival of the first due units, it was evident that this was going to be an extended, in-depth incident, and extremely uncommon extrication emergency to free the victim from the machine.

Due to the type of machinery and its construction, conventional extrication techniques were not going to be able to free the victim. Assistant Chief Steven Neuendorf requested the Rockland County Technical Rescue team and members of the Orangetown Sewer department to respond with specialized equipment to cut through the hardened steel of the machine. During this time members of the Tappan Fire Department stabilized the victim along with South Orangetown EMS and Rockland Paramedics. The incident lasted approximately an hour before the combined efforts of all the responders were able to free the victim from the machine. Due to the quick thinking and valiant effort put forth by these fire fighters the victim was removed and expected to make a full recovery. These Tappan FD Firefighters are thanked for this heroic rescue: Thomas Abraham, Brian Acosta, Gerardo Caltagirone, Michael Dempsey, Clark Heffernan Sr., Robert Miller, Eric Werner, Wayne Werner &

Steven Neuendorf. Also, thanks to Larry Gianetta-Blauvelt FD/Orangetown Sewer, Kevin O'Connell-Blauvelt FD/Orangetown Sewer & Ryan Boscoe-Orangetown Highway Dept.

This past September, at the 113th Rockland County Volunteer Firefighters Association Convention, the Monsey Fire Department was awarded the Joseph K Wright Unit Citation for events that transpired on May 12th 2025 in which the heroic actions saved the lives of two construction workers who had severe injuries as a result of a fall. Evan Humphrey, president of the Rockland County Volunteer Firefighters Association, formally presented the citation to the members of the Monsey fire department at their annual meeting on Thursday Dec 4, 2025. "This is a prestigious award they are receiving and share the honor with Hugh Gassner Fire Company of South Spring Valley Fire Department. Congratulations to both Departments on their awards.

TROPHY WINNERS FOR THE 2025 GREAT HOLIDAY PARADE SPONSORED BY ORANGEBURG FD:

Congratulations not just all of the winners but for all the parade participants that made the parade very special for our little buddies. From the bottom of their hearts, Orangeburg FD thanks you and their wonderful community for making this annual event great.

Chiefs Trophy - Tonka Truck (MGM Paving)
 Presidents Trophy - Mahwah Air Boat
 FD/EMS/PD Category - Best - West Paterson
 1st Place - Nyack Fire Department
 2nd Place - New City Fire Department
 3rd Place - Old Tappan
 Civilian Vehicles - 1st - Montana Construction
 2nd - First Due Crew Commercial Vehicles Best - Two Brothers
 Construction - 1st - AMH Restoration
 2nd - Edge Landscaping
 Antique - Pearl River Hook & Ladder
 Floats - 1st - Sons of Italy
 2nd - Aunt Mia's Sweets
 Most Creative - Penguin Plunge

Also thanked: the Orangetown Police, Orangetown Auxiliary Police, RC Sheriff Reserves, RC Sheriff Mounted Unit, RC Fire Police, RC Safety Officers, Orangetown Highway Department, and all of our volunteers that protect our community 24/7/365 plus help with the many community events we host throughout the year.

The Rockland County Fire Chiefs Association will be holding the annual Old Timers Dinner on Sunday March 1, 2026 1300hrs at the Haverstraw Elks Club located in Haverstraw, NY.

Two awards will be given at the dinner: Charles M. 'Smokey' Fales Award: Candidates will be a senior member who are still active in their respective Department and other firematic associations including committees and community service. The Candidate must follow in Smokey Fales image. Chief's Award: The recipient of this award is a Member in good standing of the Rockland County Fire Chief's Association. He/She is or has served in the capacity of Chief Officer in their Department and has demonstrated a level of excellence in the fire service leadership.

NEW FIREFIGHTER PODCAST:

TWO VOLLIES AND A GUEST

Jerry Knapp reports that his new podcast on the Fire Engineering net is now live. Tim Pillsworth and he will interview Fire Service experts on very specific topics to provide you with strategic and tactical considerations that you can use. The upcoming show will cover tactical considerations for CSST caused house fires. A December episode had two spectacular guests, Sara Laird and Celeste Flynn, whose husbands were LODDs in house fires caused by CSST. They provide a background of these fires, causes and origin, latest research and tactical considerations to protect you and your members from this hazard that kills indiscriminately to those not aware. Hope is not a plan, so I urge you to listen in to understand this latest Fire Service enemy to honor Josh and Nate's sacrifices.

WE MOURN THE PASSING OF DEDICATED ROCKLAND COUNTY FIREFIGHTER

Alfred L. Magnatta died Jan 22, 2026 age 100 (he would have been 101 on Jan 27). Al joined Congers Fire Department on March 4, 1946, after returning home from World War II. During the war, he served with the U.S. Army 8th Air Force Division, stationed in England from 1943 to 1945, where he completed 25 combat missions as a B-17 aerial gunner.

He rose through the ranks of firematic office. In 1960 Al was elected to the position of Chief, where he served until 1962. That same year Al became a Rockland County Deputy Fire Coordinator and held the position until 2020. He was the longest-serving Deputy Fire Coordinator in Rockland County history. Al was also an RCVFA Life Member.

THIS PAGE IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:
THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF
The Royal Order of the Blue Vests

9/23

FROM THE ROYAL ORDER OF THE BLUE VESTS

Greetings and news from the Nut Busters! It's nice to see some of the snow beginning to melt – or I guess “shrink” as the temps haven't been warm enough to melt anything!

Speaking of the weather, Old Man Winter forced us to cancel our January meeting, which was to be held at the Firefighter's Home on January 25th. With that said, we now need to look forward to our next meeting, which will be held Sunday, March 15th, at the Brewster FD; a meeting that includes nominations for Desk Officers, Chaplains (2) and Sgt. At Arms. (Directors are appointed by their respective counties and announced at the May meeting.) Oh, and of course it includes our traditional Corned Beef & Cabbage luncheon, compliments of the Brewster FD and its Commissioners!

I'm happy to report that once again a very generous member purchased a December daily drawing ticket for each of the members of the Home as a gift and, guess what? Quite a few won! We had 16 winning checks to send out totaling \$370! Sadly one winner passed before the monies were sent so those winnings were then earmarked for the Home Activities Fund on her behalf.

Adding to this holiday theme, Mr. & Mrs. Claus were a true hit at this year's Blue Vests' Christmas party! Not only did they visit all of the residents during lunch, along with Pres. Stockman and VP Butler, but the jolly couple mingled for a little while during Bingo ... until they needed to return to their sleigh and head back to the North Pole!

We are proud to report that the Royal Order of the Blue Vests agreed to purchase new Game Room equipment that would be instrumental in maintaining members' mobility and making exercise fun. Home Activities Director Tori Ozga suggested both a Foosball table and an Air Hockey table for the members to enjoy. This was approved by the membership and the new equipment will replace existing games that weren't as stimulating; however, they will be stored away for future 'renewed interest' swaps!

If you're on our email distribution list, you'll be the first to know about any of the events scheduled for this year – including our May meeting/family picnic, our convention steak roast and our June “Day at the Home” that now includes our installation of officers! If you're not yet on our mailing list, I can easily add you! Just email me at luannedele@gmail.com and you'll get the very next mailing that goes out! Of course, if you're not yet a member, email me anyway and I'll send you back an application so you can join our 'Nut Buster' team!

I hope to see many of you at our upcoming March meeting in Brewster! If you've not yet paid your dues, you can pay them then! Also, if you need a vest, tam (beret) or tie, contact George Hill ahead of time so he can have your items with him that day! His email is bluevests@optonline.net

Thanks so much to those of you who continually purchase or sell our daily draw tickets. It's because of you that we are able to do things for the Home that make the members happy! Our only current fundraiser, the March tickets are now available (\$5 ea) and I'll be happy to send some your way, just say the word! Keep warm till we meet again! - LuAnn



DON'T FORGET
RED VEST/BLUE VEST
OUTING
JUNE 11TH
USHER PARK
LAKE GEORGE

THIS PAGE IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:

The Royal Order of the Red Vests, Inc.

12/23

Rockland County Report Continued

Throughout his career, Al helped shape the fire service across the county. He served on the False Alarm Committee and the UL Committee, worked to establish countywide alarm system standards, and filled many roles including Fire Instructor, Administrative Assistant to the County Fire Coordinator, and Fire Liaison during major emergencies and drills, including operations at Indian Point. He responded to nearly every type of emergency the county experienced, including the 80- hour freight train fire following the June 6, 1974 derailment in the tunnel between Congers and Haverstraw.

In 2005, Al was honored as Grand Marshal of the 93rd Annual Rockland County Volunteer Firemen's Parade, proudly hosted by Congers Fire Department. At the time of his passing, Al remained the department's oldest active member with an extraordinary 79 years of continuous service.

On Tue. evening, Feb. 7, 2017 during County Executive's Ed Day State of the County address, near the end, he presented Awards of Recognition to long-serving fire volunteers; Al Magnatta of Congers and Stuart Gates of Stony Point, both of whom have been volunteering for the fire service for more than 70 years each.

On Aug. 14, 2023 Congers Fire Department and the VFW Post 9215, presented 2022 Firefighter of the Year Award to Al Magnatta. "Al, with his 77 years of service in Congers and his 58 years as Deputy Fire Coordinator, has been and still is a mentor, coach and friend to many of us in the fire service and the - community". - Tom Biersds.

On January 21 2025, Congressman Mike Lawler addressed the United States House of Representatives to honor Ex Chief and Past Rockland County Deputy Fire Coordinator Al Magnatta from the Congers FD to help celebrate his upcoming 100th birthday on January 27th. "Chief Magnatta served our country in WWII as a B-17 Gunner flying 25 missions over Germany. In 1946 he returned home and joined the Alert Hook, Ladder and Engine Co. #1 in Congers. He quickly

rose through the ranks and served as Chief from 1960 to 1962. After his term as Chief, he became a RC Deputy Fire Coordinator and served for 6 decades. Congratulations Chief on this remarkable milestone."

In April 2025 at the Chiefs Old Timers Dinner, it was noted that there are no longer any charter members still alive, and the oldest Life Member of Assoc was now Al Magnatta (x44-2, who turned 100 in Jan 2025).

On Aug 12, 2025 the Congers Fire Department, in coordination with the Town of Clarkstown, honored Al by dedicating and renaming the street where he grew up. Chauncy St. & Endicott St was officially be renamed in his honor.

Fire Police News II Submitted by: Tom With

The Volunteer Fire Police Assn. of the State of New York presents the "2026 Annual Thomas With Fire Police Training Seminar", March 21, 2026 hosted by the Fuller Road Fire Department, 1342 Central Avenue, Colonie, NY

MORNING SESSION: "Fire Police Refresher Safety", Presenter Chief Anthony Sege, Woodgate FD, Current NYS Fire Police Instructor, Class Length – 3 Hours.

AFTERNOON SESSION: "Traffic Incident Management Overview", NYSDOT Statewide TIMS Steering Committee, Presenters Steve Bornt, Disaster Preparedness Rep., Emergency Transportation Operations, NYSDOT, and Statewide Co-Chair Thomas With; "Fire Investigations – How Can You Help", Presenter from OFPC Investigations Branch. "Update on Current Legislation, TIMS, Fire Police Safety PPE, Presenter Colonie Emergency Services Committee Operations CAR 8, Thomas With.

For Registration Form please go to the website: VFPASNY.com, Click On "What's New". Any questions, please contact Tom With at tomwith@hotmail.com Seminar Co-Chair. The 2026 Seminar will be the third of three Seminars held outside the NYS Fire Academy at Montour Falls. The NYSFA is currently undergoing renovations.

Dutchess County Report

Submitted by: Kyle Pottenburgh, DCVP

Welcome to 2026 everyone. I hope this New Year will bring only good things to you all and I hope you all had a safe and enjoyable holiday season.

Most Districts and Departments have had their annual elections by now. I can only wish for a good year for all the newly elected officers. For those of you who have stepped down, we thank you for all your years of service and hope you continue to serve your communities.

Speaking of elections, The Dutchess County Volunteer Firefighters Association conducted our annual election on Tuesday, Jan 20st at our quarterly meeting at SW Johnson Fire Company #2 in the village of Wappinger Falls. We elected an number of new officers which included the following:

2nd Vice President: Janine Wheeler

Director: Tom Pomarico

Director: Jack Schmidt

Director: Kim Schmidt

The Dutchess County Department of Emergency Response has announced the selection of two individuals to fill vacant leadership positions within the agency. Glenn Scofield Jr. has been appointed Deputy Commissioner, becoming the department's second-in-command under Commissioner William Beale. Glenn brings a wealth of experience from both the fire service and law enforcement, offering a strong and balanced background that will support the department's mission and daily operations.

Filling Glenn's—and previously my—former role of County Car 13 will be his brother, Dean Scofield. Dean has been deeply involved in the fire service for most of his life and served as Chief of Protection Engine Co. in the Village of Fishkill for 14 years. His long-standing dedication and leadership within the fire community make him a strong addition to the department's command structure.

These appointments strengthen the counties leadership team and reinforce Dutchess County's commitment to providing effective, experienced emergency response services to the community.

Last October, the Dutchess County Volunteers memorialized 93 firefighters, EMTs, and support-group members who answered their

final alarm over the past year. The annual memorial ceremony was held at the County Emergency Response Center in Poughkeepsie and brought together families, friends, and fellow responders for a day of reflection and gratitude.

The day began with a memorial motorcycle ride through the county, sponsored by the Red Knights Motorcycle Club. Riders traveled in honor of the men and women whose service and sacrifice helped protect our communities.

The ceremony itself began at 1:00 p.m., offering a solemn and heartfelt tribute to those we lost. Following the service, attendees gathered for a luncheon at the Exempts Firefighters building in the City of Poughkeepsie, where stories were shared and memories honored. It was a meaningful day—one that recognized the dedication, courage, and selflessness of our emergency responders and ensured that their legacy continues to be remembered..

The Dutchess County Fire Chiefs Council is proud to announce that Dutchess County Weekend #30, a comprehensive multi day training event for firefighters across the county, will be held March 20–22, 2026. This year's program will take place at several key training locations, including the East Fishkill Fire District, New Hackensack Fire District, Mid-Hudson Regional Airport, and Dutchess Community College.

Rebooted last year after many years of being hosted at the NYS Fire Academy in Montour Falls, Dutchess County Weekend will once again be held entirely within Dutchess County—bringing high quality training closer to home for our firefighters.

Dutchess County Weekend offers a diverse range of classes focused on essential firefighting skills, tactics, and safety practices. Participants will have the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge in a variety of firematic disciplines. The program features NYS outreach classes that incorporate the latest industry best practices, along with lessons learned from recent fire incidents.

Training will be delivered by experienced instructors from across both the county and the state, ensuring that attendees receive top tier, relevant, and practical instruction.

Dutchess County Weekend #30 is open to all Dutchess County firefighters, and registration is now open.

Last January, the Hughsonville and New Hackensack Fire Departments successfully hosted their annual "Get Fired Up" Leadership

Seminar, bringing together fire officers and firefighters from across Dutchess County and the region for a day of professional growth and collaboration.

This year's seminar featured Deputy Chief Frank Viscuso and his acclaimed "Step Up and Lead" program—an inspiring and practical leadership workshop designed to strengthen teamwork, communication, and leadership within the fire service. Attendees engaged with strategies and insights aimed at elevating performance both on and off the fireground.

The event was held at the Town of Wappinger, which provided an ideal venue for learning, discussion, and networking among members of the fire service community.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- DCVFA Quarterly Meeting: Tuesday, May, 2026 @ 6:30 New Hamburg Fire station #1, Poughkeepsie NY
- Dutchess County Weekend: Fri – Sun, March 20, 21, & 22. Classes will be held at the East Fishkill Headquarters Bldg., Mid-Hudson Regional Airport. and the New Hackensack Fire Station. Sponsored by the DC Fire Chiefs Council, DCVFA, and The Fire Districts Association of Dutchess County.
- J. H. Ketcham Hose Company Monthly Pancake Breakfast: The 2nd Sunday of each month, Jan – April & Sept – Dec. 8:00am – 11:00am at J. H. Ketcham Hose Co. Station #1 Dover Plains, NY.
- Milian Rescue Squad Monthly Pancake Breakfast: The 3rd Sunday of each month, Jan – May & Sept – Dec. 8:00am – 11:00am at the Milan Town Hall. 20 Willcox Circle Red Hook, NY.
- Millerton Fire Company Monthly Pancake Breakfast: The 4th Sunday of each month from 7:00am – 11:00am Jan – April & Sept – Dec, at Millerton Fire Station #24 Century Blvd., Millerton, NY.,
- Rombout Fire Company Monthly Pancake Breakfast: The 4th Sunday of each month from 8:00am – 11:00am at Rombout Station #1 901 Main St. Fishkill, NY.
- New Hackensack Fire Company Annual Fish Fry: Friday Nights starting on March 20th and running until April 3rd, 4:30 pm – 7:00pm at the New Hackensack Fire station 217 Myers Corners Rd. Wappingers Falls. (PICKUP ONLY)

Putnam County Report

Submitted by: David Cariddo, PCVP

Well Mother Nature has not been very nice to us the last couple of months that didn't stop our local departments from keeping busy.

Most Departments held their annual Installation of Officers I want to wish each and everyone a safe and successful year. The frigid weather didn't deter our brave heroes from continuing their training. The Brewster and Patterson FDs teamed up for an Ice water rescue drill that spanned several days as did the Kent FD. The Mahopac FD has been busy completing all the OSHA requirements in Feb.

During the cold and dark days of this winter the Lake Carmel FD has held 2 Line dancing fundraisers. In the upcoming months Brewster FD will be having a Quad raffle and Golf outing so keep an eye out for those events. For the first time in many years the Carmel FD will not be having the ever-popular Spins Bowling Tournament Fundraiser. The Mahopac will be having their annual carnival parade the end of July with the Firefighters parade kicking everything off on July 23rd.

On Sunday Sept. 13th there will be a Memorial Mass at St. John Church in Mahopac for the 25th Anniversary of the tragic events of Sept. 11th 2001 this event is being spearheaded by Past County President Kevin Neary. More details to follow.

Our next County Association meeting is Monday March 30th. Location TBD please check our website pcvfa.org for more information. It will also be updated on hvvfa.com website.

We are saddened to announce the passing of Blue Vests' Charter Member LOUIS GASPARINI of Putnam County.

Louis Gasparini joined the Nut Busters at its inception back in 1972. He was a 65-yr member and Deputy Chief of the Brewster FD, as well as a Past President of the Putnam County VFA. He was also a member of the Hudson Valley VFA and FASNY. First & foremost, though, Louis Gasparini was a proud U.S. Army Veteran, having served our country during the Korean War. He was a very active member in his local VFW Post, #672.

Warren County Report**Submitted by: Jessica McKinney-Benjamin, WCVF**

Hello everyone, I hope you all have had a wonderful start to your new year! We certainly have had a difficult winter and I'm sure most of us are ready for it to be over!

As I am sure you have seen, things are in full swing for the 2026 Convention being held in Lake George in June. This year, we are trying something new and parade applications are only being accepted online. The link for the application has been live since January 1, 2026 and has been posted on the Hudson Valley website as well as their Facebook page and the Convention Facebook page. If anybody is having any issues with their applications or has any questions, please reach out to Nick Benjamin at parades@lgfd.org.

Please be sure to stay tuned to Lake George Fire Department's Facebook page as they are running some very good raffles! Tickets are sold online only and the raffles will be drawn at the April 26th quarterly meeting being held at Lake George Fire Department. Lake George Fire Department, North Queensbury Fire Department and the Town of Lake George EMS Department were all awarded a Georgie award at this year's Lake George Winter Carnival Gala. This award is given out by the Lake George Winter Carnival Committee at their annual gala to recognize members of the community and organizations that go above and beyond to assist and help local businesses and tourism throughout the community. Lake George Fire Department had five members in attendance who were all greeted with a standing ovation as they received the award. It is nice to be recognized by members of your local community for the spirit and dedication that all volunteers express and live by as we do our jobs every day.

The Lake George Winter Carnival Committee is made up of citizens and businesses in the area and has been in existence for over 40 years. Lake George Winter Carnival is held every weekend for the month of February and this year we have been extra lucky that for the first time in many years, all of Lake George, from the Southern basin up to Ticonderoga has froze which has been amazing for all of the weekend events since a lot of events are held on the ice. Warren County has some very good upcoming trainings available including; School Bus Rescue

(4/20-4/21), Basic Passenger Vehicle Rescue (3/2-3/7) and (5/11-5/16), Pump Operations (5/18-6/6), Emergency Vehicle Operations (3/23-4/11), SCBA/Interior Firefighter Operations (3/24-5/14) and Firefighter II (4/13-4/20).

Registration is now open for the 2nd Annual FASNY Training Symposium being held in Lake George at the Fort William Henry from May 15th-May 17th.

RecruitNY is once again happening April 18th and April 19th. As we all know, across communities nationwide, the number of volunteer firefighters has been steadily declining, creating serious challenges for public safety and emergency response. Many departments struggle to recruit and retain members due to busy work schedules, increased training requirements, and growing demands on personal time. This shortage places greater strain on the volunteers who remain, leading to burnout and slower response times in critical situations.

Volunteer firefighters play a vital role in protecting lives, property, and neighborhoods, often sacrificing their own comfort and safety to serve others. To ensure that communities remain safe and prepared, it is essential to support, promote, and invest in volunteer firefighting by encouraging new members to join and by recognizing the dedication of those who already serve. I encourage all departments to open up their doors on this particular weekend and hold fun events to try to recruit new members in your department. Answer questions and give information because there is a job for everyone!

I look forward to seeing all of you at this year's Convention in Lake George! Stay safe!



Legislative Report

Submitted by: James Hartwick, Legislative Chair

Congressman Michael Lawler who represents the entire counties of Rockland and Putnam, along with parts of northern Westchester and southern Dutchess counties in the Hudson Valley has introduced a special resolution designating 2026 as the "National Year of the Volunteer". On February 9th at the Rockland County Fire Training Center the Congressman held a press conference that included emergency first responders, local leaders and community-based volunteer organizations for the announcement of the Resolution. The Congressman stressed in his opening remarks that for generations dating back to the founding of our Nation, that volunteers have been the backbone of the Hudson Valley-answering alarms, stocking food pantries, mentoring young people and supporting various charitable causes to strengthen our communities.

Highlights of some of the "whereas" of the Resolution:

*Whereas volunteers play a critical role in our communities in public safety, health, education and civic life and unites people of all backgrounds in common purpose, bridging divides and strengthening the bonds of citizenship

*Whereas volunteerism bolsters organizations that keep neighborhoods safe, healthy and connected and contribute billions of dollars worth of service annually, driving local economies and offsetting government costs

*Whereas despite rising demand, critical civic organizations, such as volunteer fire and EMS departments, scout troops, youth sports, houses of worship, food banks, shelters and nonprofit organizations reports struggling to recruit and retain volunteers

*Whereas the year 2026 marks the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the United States of America, a milestone that offers citizens the opportunity to renew the spirit of service, unity and shared purpose that has defined our Nation since its founding

*"As our Nation approaches its 250th Anniversary, this Resolution honors that enduring spirit of Volunteerism and calls upon Americans to recommit to serving one another".

This Resolution must now work its way of passage thru the House of Representatives and the Senate and finally the signature of the President.

This is truly a bipartisan resolution that we will all celebrate by July 4, 2026. Thank you, Congressman Lawler for sponsoring this Resolution.

WHY CODES MATTER TO THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

ARTICLE EXCERPS 2017

Most, volunteer fire departments have little or no involvement in code enforcement. To most volunteer fire Chiefs, code enforcement, plan review and inspections are the purview of the municipal building codes department.

With all of the other demands on fire departments, this arrangement is understandable, but might not be the right thing to do. Codes matter to the fire service and we must start paying attention to them. Let me say that again: codes matter to the fire service and we must start paying attention to them.

After a fire on November 17, 2017, destroyed seven residential buildings and displaced 21 people in the City of Hornell, the Fire Chief was quoted in the Hornell Evening Tribune as saying: "We talk about codes, and people don't like codes, and they get frustrated when we have to do things the right way, but this is a case in point ... years ago, when these houses and structures were built, this was the way things were built: one on top of each other. Now we have codes that say you have to be a certain distance, have fire ratings, and you have to have smoke detectors. And that's why things like this were put into place because you can lose a whole city block very easily."

There are many other examples of fires in New York State that have resulted in changes and improvements to the fire & building codes and the enforcement of them. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire may be the best known, but it is not the only one. This 1911 fire occurred on the top three floors of a Manhattan building that housed a sweatshop that employed mostly young, immigrant women. It resulted in 146 fatalities and 78 non-fatal injuries. An investigating commission was tasked with finding out what happened.

Their findings resulted in many fire code and labor law changes designed to protect the lives of future workers. Among these were requirements for fire sprinklers and exit doors in New York City factories, including a prohibition on locking exit doors from the inside.

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Legislative News Continued

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, another tragic fire occurred in New York City. The blaze, at the Happy Land Social Club in the Bronx, killed 87 people and was the deadliest fire in the city since 1911. The illegal club had no sprinklers, fire exits, emergency lights or exit signs. Events like this stress the need for effective and efficient code enforcement.

One more example of a New York fire tragedy that resulted in a significant code change was the Stouffer's Inn Fire. Located in the Westchester County Town of Purchase, the Inn and Conference Center was a popular location for many of the international companies then headquartered in the area. Built in 1977, at a cost of \$20 million, it had 366 guest rooms and numerous meeting rooms. It also had a two-level conference center adjacent to the tower that contained the hotel rooms.

When the fire started on December 4, 1980, PepsiCo, General Foods, IBM, Nestle and Arrow Electronics were all holding meetings at the Inn. The business executives in those meetings did not have a chance to escape. Within minutes, 26 people were dead due to fire and smoke inhalation. The fire's rapid spread was a result of highly flammable carpeting and wall coverings and the fact that there was no sprinkler system in the building. Once again, fire codes were changed to require sprinkler systems in every hotel in New York State.

No one can argue that the changes that have occurred in response to these fires made improvements that have subsequently saved lives. Yet, it is just as vital that the fire service of today not wait until another tragedy occurs to ensure that appropriate codes are adopted and enforced.

The primary responsibility of the fire service is to ensure the safety of the public and of our firefighters. We must be advocates and activists for improvements to all relevant codes.



COMMUNITY SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

The Union Vale Fire Co. began collecting aluminum beverage tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities in Albany the end of 2024. To date, 169 pounds of aluminum tabs have been collected for the charity. Union Vale FD Public Information Officer Kathy Welsh has partnered with the Eastern District Home Bureau of NYS Federation of Home Bureau Inc. Eastern District Chairperson Alice Dickson, Dutchess County Chairperson Anne Christmas, and Eastern District/Dutchess County Community Service Chairperson Marie Elliott to collect aluminum tabs for Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Welsh said, "When I heard the Home Bureau was collecting aluminum tabs for a worthy cause, it occurred to me that we could help to collect even more aluminum tabs and invite the public to participate." And the public has come through in flying colors!

For example, 2nd Asst. Chief Travis Floyd of Wassaucott Fire Rescue "The Blue Crew" noticed our campaign on social media and decided they would collect tabs for us," said Welsh. As a surprise in December 2025, they delivered 5 pounds of tabs right to the firehouse!

"These tabs will be given to the Ronald McDonald House in Albany to help with their heating expenses. We are very grateful to Kathy Welsh, the fire department, and the entire community for partnering with us and helping to support this project," said Marie Elliott. Elliott added, "As a result of Dutchess County sharing this collaborative effort at a state meeting, other areas have begun to initiate their own collaborations to benefit their local Ronald McDonald houses."

Welsh said the fire company will continue their campaign. As a courtesy, and for the public's convenience, there is a drop-off container at the Union Vale Town Hall, where the public can bring their aluminum tabs. "We are very happy to help the Eastern District Home Bureau of NYS to ultimately help Ronald McDonald House Charities," said Welsh. The Union Vale Fire Company is located in Dutchess County, NY.

Their local community service efforts focus on helping veterans, those in nursing care facilities, and babies born at Northern Dutchess Hospital and Albany Medical Center.



2025-2026 Legislative Scorecard

Updated October 31, 2025

Yellow indicates progress

Green indicates passage

Description	Bill Information	Senate Status	Assembly Status
Raise the VFBL	S.5432 - Sen. Skoufis A.6410 - MOA McMahon	4.29.25 - Reported to Finance	3.4.25 - Referred to Local Governments
Designate EMS as an essential service <i>*Executive and Senate included in budget proposals</i>	S.7501-A - Sen. Mayer A. 8086-A - MOA Otis	6.12.25 - Passed Senate	6.16.25 - Passed Assembly
Sales tax exemption for home life safety products	S.5468 - Sen. Comrie A.6816 - MOA Griffin	2.21.25 - Referred to Budget and Revenue	3.14.25 - Referred to Ways & Means
First Responder Peer Support Program Act	S.5407-A - Sen. Harckham A.7285-A - MOA Burdick	6.4.25 - Passed Senate	5.29.25 - Amended in Mental Health
VFF/VAW income tax credit increase; repeal prohibition on collecting both local RPT exemptions & tax credit <i>*Senate included in their budget proposal</i>	<i>Tax credit increase:</i> S.6233 - Sen. Martinez A.6790 - MOA McMahon <i>Repeal of prohibition:</i> S.6019 - Sen. Baskin A.288 - MOA Barrett	6.10.25 - Passed Senate 3.4.25 - Referred to Budget and Revenue	3.14.25 - Referred to Ways & Means 1.8.25 - Referred to Ways & Means
Extend Heart Presumption to 2030 Extend Lung Presumption to 2030	S.8011 - Sen. Harckham A.8275 - MOA Jones S.7852 - Sen. Harckham A.8276 - MOA Levenberg	6.18.25 - Signed by Governor (Chapter 143)	
Extend EMS Cost Recovery to 2031	FY2026 Final Budget Language HMH Part KK	5.9.25 - Signed by Governor (Chapter 57)	
Phase out firefighter PPE containing PFAS	FY2026 Final Budget Language TED Part SS	5.9.25 - Signed by Governor (Chapter 58)	
Enable fire district to pay local training stipend - <i>new proposal</i> – pending introduction			

PRIORITIES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Lithium-Ion Battery Safety	FASNY's Legislative Committee will continue to review and lend support to worthy legislation and regulations regarding products containing lithium-ion batteries		
Retirement Credit for Volunteer Fire/Emergency Service	S.7021 - Sen. Ryan A.8082 - MOA Eachus	5.20.25 - Reported to Finance	4.24.25 - Referred to Governmental Employees

FY2026 BUDGET MONITORING:

Recovery of 54-G funding for code enforcement efforts	S.3212 - Sen. Kavanagh A.7059 - MOA McDonald	3.24.25 - Reported to Finance	3.20.25 - Referred to Insurance
Recovery of Public Safety Surcharge for Next-Gen 911	S.196 - Sen. Martinez A.5910 - MOA Jones	3.12.25 - Reported to Finance	2.24.25 - Referred to Ways & Means

HVVFA Fire Police Committee proudly presents
the
**2026 Annual Ken Merriman
Fire Police Training Seminar**



**April 18, 2026
8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

*New Baltimore Fire Department
77 Gill Road
New Baltimore, NY 12124*

AGENDA TOPICS TO INCLUDE:

- Victor Graves, Fire Protection Specialist I, DHSES / Office of Fire Prevention and Control, Hazardous Materials Branch, "Today's Hazmat Awareness for Fire Police"
- ▣ Robert Gorman, Past Chair Empire State Towing and Recovery Association (ESTRA), "Towing and Incident Response"
- ▣ Tom With, Co-Chair NYSDOT TIMS Statewide Steering Committee and VFPASNY, "Updates on TIMS – FHWA Course and Fire Police PPE"
- ▣ Brenda Gausby & Angela Outhouse (Acting Chair), FASNY Behavioral /Mental Health Committee, "Fire Police Experience with Motorists"

Pre-registration is required to the two Co-Chairs below.

Registration on your subject line and provide your name the way you would like it written on your certificate.

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. on the morning of event. Certificates will be issued immediately following the program. **First Speaker starts at 9:00 AM.**

Registration fee of \$15 per person.

Any questions, please contact Co-Chairs:

Registrations - send name of FD and attendees names to either:

Douglas Mann: mr103liberty@aol.com / Tom With: tomwith@hotmail.com

*The Officers, Directors and County VP's
of the*



Wish you all a very Happy, Healthy & Safe...



THE HUDSON VALLEY FIREFIGHTER
c/o Chuck Larkin, Editor
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TO: