

STATE FIRE TRAINING NEWS

THE BUGLE'S ECHO

This issue is dedicated to the lives of the firefighters lost at the Mann Gulch Fire. Let us never forget the cost, nor the courage of these brave young men.

Seventy-six years ago, on August 5, 1949, one of the most tragic days in American wildland firefighting history unfolded in the rugged terrain of western Montana. In the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness, the **Mann Gulch Fire** claimed the lives of 13 brave men—12 smokejumpers and one ground-based firefighter—who were overtaken by rapidly advancing flames, driven by shifting winds and volatile conditions.

That afternoon, 15 smokejumpers parachuted into the Helena National Forest, joining a firefighter already on the ground. As fire activity increased across the gulch, the crew began moving downhill toward the Missouri River, aiming for safety. Unbeknownst to them, the fire had already spotted ahead, cutting off their path. With no other option, the men turned back uphill—into a race they could not win. Driven by slope, wind, and dry grasses, the fire moved faster than any man could run.

In a last-ditch effort to survive, crew foreman Wagner Dodge lit what would become known as the first recorded “escape fire,” an innovation born of instinct and desperation. Dodge lay down in the burned area as the main fire roared past him. Though he urged his men to join him, most ran. Only two others found safety by reaching a rock crevice. The rest were lost in the inferno.

Their sacrifice was not in vain. The U.S. Forest Service, deeply affected by the tragedy, transformed its approach to wildfire training, emphasizing fire behavior science, escape route awareness, and crew safety protocols that continue to shape modern wildland firefighting.

To learn more about this sobering and important event, [Young Men and Fire](#) by Norman Maclean remains a powerful and haunting account of courage, loss, and the unforgiving nature of wildland fire.



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MAINE FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

The planning committee is in the process of securing a keynote speaker for the 2026 conference, aiming to enhance the value of this event as it continues to grow each year.

The conference has evolved into a significant retreat for many members of the Maine Fire Service, providing opportunities for learning, networking, and engagement. Exciting developments are on the horizon.



The Maine Fire Service Institute continues to operate at full steam as we move through the heart of 2025. Once again, we find ourselves answering the call from departments across the state, balancing a heavy workload with a deep sense of purpose. Our spring skill testing season wrapped up recently, and we're proud to report that 256 firefighters successfully achieved certification at various levels. This milestone reflects the dedication of the fire service professionals as well as the dedication of the MFSI staff.

Alongside that effort, MFSI delivered three Fire Instructor programs and three Fire Officer programs in different regions of Maine—all designed to support the growing demand for professional qualifications in our state. This work doesn't stop for summer; in fact, we're deep into the planning and development phase of the Firefighter I & II upgrade aligned with the 2024 NFPA 1010 Standard. The goal is to have it ready for certification testing by January or February of 2026—a timeline that will require grit, collaboration, and some long days, but it's what we do.

Another major challenge on the horizon will be the merging and upgrading of our Fire Instructor and Fire Officer programs under the new NFPA 1020 Standard. What was once two separate standards now falls under one, covering Fire and Emergency Services Instructor, Fire Officer, and EMS Officer Professional Qualifications. This change brings logistical and curriculum hurdles that may temporarily affect program delivery. That said, MFSI is committed to doing everything we can to avoid service disruption—we know departments are counting on us, and we don't take that lightly.

Looking ahead, the fall is shaping up strong. We've got a full schedule of programs across Maine, and we're gearing up for one of our biggest events of the year: the National Fire Academy Weekend, September 20–21 in Brunswick. With several high-quality offerings, we encourage you to mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Until then, stay safe, stay hydrated, and try to enjoy a bit of summer. In true Northern New England fashion, that probably means dodging orange cones, waiting in summer traffic, and sneaking in a few quiet moments at camp before the next firehouse call comes through.

Director Graves & Staff

SMCC-MFSI ADVISORY COMMITTEE WILL MEET ON DECEMBER 5TH, 2025

The SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee will meet Friday, December 5, 2025, at 10:00 AM at MFSI headquarters in Brunswick. This committee, composed of Fire Chiefs and experts from key fire service agencies, shapes Maine's fire training by providing guidance on standards and programs. Their mission is to ensure effective and relevant training aligned with public safety. All meetings are open to the public, encouraging participation from those interested in advancing fire service training in Maine.

NFA WEEKEND IN BRUNSWICK SEPTEMBER 20 & 21, 2025

Join us in Brunswick for a large-scale, high-impact training weekend. This is more than just training—it's a chance to reconnect with your peers, build relationships across departments, and learn directly from seasoned National Fire Academy instructors from across the country. Whether you're new to the fire service or a chief officer, there's a course for you. This weekend is designed to sharpen leadership, improve operational knowledge, and prepare Maine's fire service professionals for the challenges ahead.

We encourage all members of Maine's fire service to consider attending these in-state offerings. Come for the training, stay for the camaraderie, and leave better equipped to lead your department and serve your community.





Basic Pump Operating Course in Oakfield with Lead Instructor Rob Hendrick and Assisting Instructor Mike Azevedo

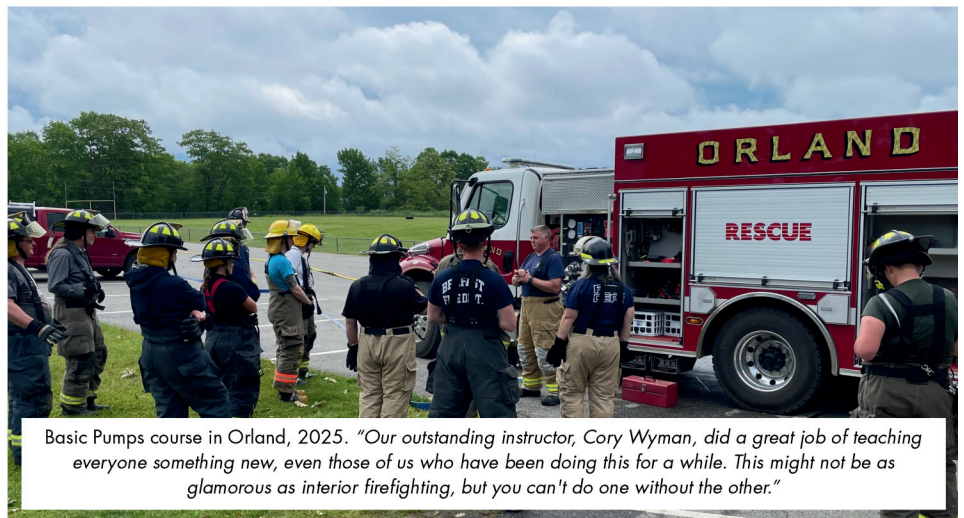
FIRE FIGHTER I & II UPGRADE UNDERWAY

MFSI is wrapping up testing with the 2019 NFPA 1001 standard (4th edition of Jones & Bartlett).

Over the next months, MFSI will be submitting documents to Pro Board for the new NFPA 1010 Standard so that MFSI is ready to test and certify Fire Fighter I & II programs to the new standard.

Firefighter programs starting after August 2, 2025 are recommended to switch to the 5th edition Jones & Bartlett textbook, and will be tested to the new NFPA 1010 Standard. In addition, there will be new progress charts available for Basic Fire & FF I & II.

This Fall/Winter, MFSI will extend invitations to training coordinators and instructors in Maine to run through any significant upgrades and/or changes to process.



Basic Pumps course in Orland, 2025. "Our outstanding instructor, Cory Wyman, did a great job of teaching everyone something new, even those of us who have been doing this for a while. This might not be as glamorous as interior firefighting, but you can't do one without the other."



Live Fire Instructors during the 2024 program.

LIVE FIRE INSTRUCTOR/INSTRUCTOR IN-CHARGE CANCELLED DUE TO LOW ENROLLMENT

Let's clear the smoke: MFSI & NFPA 1403 Live Fire Training.

The Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI) is not here to tell you how to run your live fire training. We're here to ensure that when you do, you have the knowledge, skills, and awareness required to meet the nationally accepted safety standard: **NFPA 1403 Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions**. That standard exists for one simple reason—to **protect firefighters and instructors**. And in today's fire service, where every incident has the potential to end up under legal scrutiny, being able to prove your training was compliant isn't a luxury—it's a necessity.

MFSI's Live Fire Instructor course doesn't add red tape. It **gives you tools**. It's built by passionate, smart fire instructors—people just like you—who've worked hard to make sure the training is **real-world, relevant, and protective** of your department, your people, and your future.

We're urging you to take the course. Not because we said so, but because one day, you might have to explain your training decisions to someone who wasn't present. NFPA 1403 will be the measuring stick. Let's make sure you're ready. **Train smart. Train safe. Train like lives depend on it—because they do.**

LIVE FIRE TRAINING FACILITIES

The Maine Fire Protection Services Commission's Subcommittee on Education and Training reviewed Live Fire Training Facilities Grant applications and unanimously awarded:

- \$500,000 to Auburn for a new Conex Box Live Fire Training Facility
- \$680,000 to Bangor for a new Conex Box Live Fire Training Facility

While repairs and upgrades are planned for existing facilities, a broader effort is needed to modernize fire service training statewide. The Maine Fire Commission seeks community support to ensure all firefighters have access to effective training. They encourage the fire service community to engage politically through calls, emails, and written testimony to secure continued funding for these essential initiatives.



This is a mock up of a Conex Box and is not an exact depiction of the training facility.

INTERESTED IN APPLYING TO BE A STATE FIRE INSTRUCTOR?

MFSI WILL RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 UNTIL JANUARY 30, 2026.

Take a moment—and think back to where your fire service journey began. For me, it was 1973. I was five years old when my Uncle Andrew walked me through the doors of the Conway Village Fire Station in my hometown of Conway NH. It wasn't the gleaming red trucks that grabbed me that day—it was the smell. That unmistakable blend of turnout gear, smoke, soot, hose, rubber tires, diesel, and something else—pride. That smell didn't just cling to my cloths—it sank into my soul. From that moment on, I was chasing something greater than myself: the calling, the brother/sisterhood, the service. For the love of firefighting.

Fast forward to today. We are building something important here at the Maine Fire Service Institute. Under Maine law, we are charged with delivering quality, consistent, and professional fire training to every corner of this state. And we need your help to do it. Not someday—now.

Submit an updated resume, copies of certificates, and a cover letter detailing your qualifications and interest in becoming a State Fire Instructor within the application period: Sept. 1 to Jan 30.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Certified Firefighter I & II
- Certified Fire Instructor I

Preferred Qualifications:

- Fire Instructor II
- Fire Officer I & II
- Incident Safety Officer

We don't need egos. We need leaders. We need firefighters of character—noble, humble, experienced professionals who remember where they came from and are ready to give back. The next generation is watching us, and what we build today will become their foundation tomorrow.

Whether it's helping deliver programs, mentoring new instructors, assisting with curriculum, or stepping into leadership roles—we have work to do. The mission is clear: support the fire service across Maine, and make training strong, accessible, and sustainable.

A handful of us can't do this alone. But if the right people step forward—people who still feel that fire in their gut—we can make a lasting difference. Maine needs you now more than ever.

Director Graves
MFSI



VFIS EMERGENCY VEHICLE DRIVER TRAINING UPDATE

The 2024 VFIS EVDT updates present some significant changes for both instructors and students. While the course content has not significantly changed, administration and delivery of the course has:

- Student enrollment and instructor course administration is now done entirely online, through VFIS University. This is a Learning Management System, similar to Jones & Bartlett.
- Students must create their own account in VFIS University LMS in order to be enrolled in the class.
- The classroom portion requires students to take an online quiz.
- Certificates are now generated by the VFIS University LMS and will be downloadable from the online course page.
- The practical driving skills course has a new station and additional safety requirements.

MFSI has established a Steering Committee to assist with these items. Administrative changes in the program are forthcoming. Several pilot Train-the-Trainers are being conducted for MFSI Instructors in partnership with several fire departments. We hope to have the new class fully online by the end of August. MFSI is planning to host a Train-the-Trainer for all interested municipal instructors early Fall 2025. An Instructor Train-the-Trainer will cover all the new updates and course administration. We encourage all municipal VFIS EVDT instructors to attend – even if you’ve already had a Train-the-Trainer.

At the same time, the Cundy’s Harbor Fire Department is hosting a VFIS Train-the-Trainer for municipal (non-MFSI) EVDT instructors on 8 & 9 Aug 2025, from 9am – 5pm. Pre-registration is required. Contact Assistant Chief Sean Hall, Orr’s & Bailey Islands Fire Department.



Van Buren firefighters train on the SCBA 'Red Maze' Trailer, 2025



Fire Officer II Academy Graduates, 2025

FIRE OFFICER II ACADEMY

We are proud to present to the Maine Fire Service the Maine State Fire Officer II Academy Class of 2025. In a time-honored tradition of excellence, these men and women have earned their rightful place enshrined in the halls of the Maine Fire Service Institute – standing shoulder to shoulder with some of the finest leaders our state has ever produced. Leaders like Chief David Groder of the City of Augusta and his command staff. Chief Darrell White and the command staff of the Presque Isle Fire Department. Chief Mark Caron and the leaders of the City of Lewiston Fire Department. Chief Geoff Low and his command staff in the City of Bangor Fire Department.

A special thank you to all the MFSI State Fire Instructors and Training Program Manager Frank Hammond for their top-tier instruction and leadership.

ABOUT THE MFSI ACADEMY MODEL

The academy format provides an intensive, immersive experience, promoting peer-to-peer learning, enabling officers from various departments to exchange experiences and solutions, thereby strengthening the fire service community and break down departmental silos. MFSI partners with other state agencies (i.e. Maine Forest Service, State Fire Marshal) so that candidates get the chance to train in Maine-specific scenarios.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FIRE FIGHTER I & II

MFSI does not offer Fire Fighter I & II programs but supports local deliveries with instructors and training props. To find Basic Fire School and Fire Fighter I & II programs nearby, contact local departments or check their Facebook pages.

FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES INSTRUCTOR I & II

- **Cumberland County (Falmouth) Fall '25**
- **Penobscot County (Bangor) Fall '25**
- Franklin County (Farmington) Winter '26
- York County (Alfred) Winter '26
- Oxford County (Oxford) Fall '26
- Kennebec County (TBA) Fall '26

Please note: The Fire Instructor and Officer schedule aims to promote fair deliveries statewide. Each region can expect opportunities every four years, while densely populated areas will run more frequently according to demand.

LIVE FIRE INSTRUCTOR & LIVE FIRE INSTRUCTOR IN-CHARGE

The 2026 location will be announced at a later date. To learn about the program and objectives, check out page 3 of this issue.

FIRE OFFICER I

- **Aroostook County (Presque Isle) Fall '25**
- **York County (Alfred) Fall '25**
- Cumberland County (Scarborough) Winter '26
- Penobscot County (Bangor) Winter '26
- Franklin County (Farmington) Fall '26
- TBD Fall '26

FIRE OFFICER II ACADEMY

The next program is being planned for Summer 2026. More information TBA.



Basic Pump Operator Course using the Pump Training Trailer, 2025

NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY IN-STATE

Saturday
& Sunday
**Sept 20-21,
2025**

**Must have at
least 15
participants to
run. Sign-up
before August 1.**

Shaping the Future (O0602)

Exercising Leadership through
Difficult Conversations (F0522)

Wildland Urban Interface Fire
Operations for the Structural
Chief Officer (F0612)

Fire Investigation for First
Responders (F0770)

New Fire Chief: Challenging
Issues (F0760)

CLOSING STATEMENT

As The Bugle Echo signs off for the summer, we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of you who continue to support, assist, and protect Maine's cities and towns. Your dedication is the backbone of our communities, and it never goes unnoticed.

We'll be back in October 2025 with more updates, stories, and highlights from the Maine Fire Service.

Until then, enjoy the rest of your summer. We hope to see many of you here at MFSI this September during our training events and NFA Weekend. Stay safe, stay sharp, and—for goodness' sake—stay hydrated.

Dirigo "We Lead"
The MFSI Team



DEPARTMENTS UTILIZING MFSI PROPS SHARE ON FACEBOOK



Maine ANG Fire Department · Follow
June 24 · 🌐

With the weather as hot as it's been, this week was a perfect time to borrow the sprinkler trailer from [Maine Fire Service Institute](#). On duty personnel were able to cool off a little while getting in some good training. We will be conducting this training over the next couple of days. Thank you Instructor Rob Hendrick and MFSI!

Van Buren Fire Department · Follow
April 12 · 🌐

Today the guys trained in a maze trailer, MFSI (Maine Fire Service Institute) came up and completed a hands on search/confine space maze training. We are grateful for the opportunity. Videos to follow in other post.

Thank you to all who attended, strong work by all.



Falmouth Fire-EMS
June 16 · 🌐

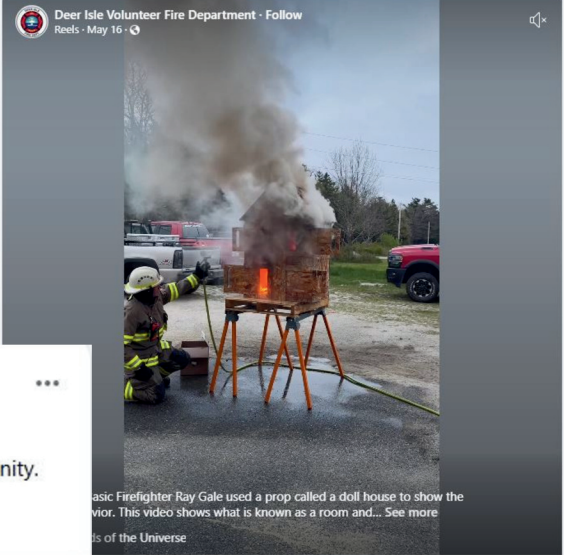
Tonight we had car fire training. Brief classroom review and discussion followed by practical skills with the Maine Fire Service Institute (MFSI) car fire prop. Much thanks to MFSI! We will be training with it all week.



Maine Fire Service Institute
Published by Shannon Els · June 2 · 🌐

MFSI Instructor Ray Gale utilizing a dollhouse prop to show the class fire behavior. These props are hand-built specifically to support Maine's municipal fire training.

Deer Isle Volunteer Fire Department · Follow
Reels · May 16 · 🌐



Basic Firefighter Ray Gale used a prop called a doll house to show the fire behavior. This video shows what is known as a room and... See more posts of the Universe



"Day 1 of a 2 day Basic Pump Operator Course is complete. Members of the Fort Kent, Eagle Lake and North Lakes Fire Departments learned some basic pump knowledge today and tomorrow will hone their skills during the practical portion of the class. Thanks Maine Fire Service Institute for the pump trailer for today's classroom session!"

