



This issue is dedicated to the four (4) Houston, TX firefighters killed in the line of duty on May 31, 2013, at the Southwest Inn Fire. What began as a fire at a restaurant and motel complex quickly escalated into a five-alarm incident that would become one of the deadliest days in the history of the Houston Fire Department.

Crews arrived to heavy fire conditions in a one-story commercial structure with a flat roof and significant concealed spaces. The building's layout and lightweight construction contributed to rapidly deteriorating interior conditions. During offensive operations, a sudden structural collapse trapped multiple firefighters inside.

Four firefighters, *Captain Matthew Renaud, Engineer Operator Robert Bebee, Firefighter Robert Garner, and Probationary Firefighter Anne Sullivan*, made the ultimate sacrifice. Twelve others were injured in the effort to rescue their fellow firefighters.



The subsequent investigation highlighted critical lessons regarding size-up, risk assessment, radio communications, mayday management, and the dangers of lightweight commercial construction with hidden void spaces. It served as a stark reminder that even single-story commercial occupancies can present extreme and rapidly changing hazards.

As we reflect on this event, we honor the courage of those who responded without hesitation. Their sacrifice reinforces a truth that we all know well; complacency has no place on the fireground. Training, discipline, communication, and command presence matter every single day. We remember the fallen. We carry the lessons forward. That is how we honor them.

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From the Director's Desk

I hope you all had a good winter and managed to stay warm through the cold. With the arrival of spring, we are now moving into the heart of the fire training season, and programs are underway across the entire state.

As always during this time of year, things move quickly. We respectfully ask for your patience. We continue to operate one staff member down in Support Services, and our calendar is rapidly filling with Fire Fighter, Fire Instructor, and Fire Officer Pro Board written and skills examinations. In addition, MFSI instructors and staff are supporting numerous Fire Fighter I & II and Basic Fire School programs statewide.

It is shaping up to be another busy and productive year for both our staff and our dedicated cadre of instructors. There is a significant amount of work required behind the scenes for every delivery visible in the field, but we remain fully committed to the mission and grateful for the continued support of Maine's fire service.

As Director, I personally wish to thank all those joining in the fight and making a positive impact all over the Great State of Maine. Please stay safe out there when the alarm sounds.

State Fire Instructor Recruitment

Open enrollment has closed, and the process has begun with over 20 candidates interested in joining our fire instructor cadre. We have been in contact with the candidates. Unfortunately, the hiring process is postponed until July due to demand in the field. We will keep everyone apprised of our progress.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

NFA Programs

- ☐ April 28 & 29: Best Practices in Community Risk Reduction [O0635] *Few spots left* ([link](#))

The next NFA In-State weekend will be held in September at MFSI in Brunswick. We hope you will consider joining us and networking with other Maine Fire Service members. *Registration will open in July.*

- September 19 & 20: [F0635] Best Practices in Community Risk Reduction
- September 19 & 20: [F0762] New Fire Chief: Contemporary Issues



Fire Instructor I & II [Fall/Winter 2026-27]

- Penobscot County (Bangor) or Knox County (TBD)
- Kennebec County (Waterville or Augusta)

Fire Officer I [Fall/Winter 2026-27]

- Franklin County (Farmington)
- Oxford County (Oxford)

Due to high demand, Fire Instructor and Officer programs have been placed on an annual schedule. **Applications will open by July 15.** Programs will begin in September or October with completion before the end of December.

Fire Officer II [Summer 2026]

This year, as MFSI staff works towards the Pro Board extension of application for MFSI's Fire Officer II program to meet the updated 2024 Standard for NFPA 1020, MFSI is partnering with RAFT to ensure that MFSI's annual goal to deliver a Fire Officer II program is not affected by this upgrade.

Note: This accreditation timeline is unprecedented at MFSI, as we aim to reaccredit two standards in under a year. We kindly ask for your patience as we work towards completing these efforts.

External Training Agencies

Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training (RAFT)

External agency, in collaboration with MFSI.

- Fire Officer II: July 20 - 23 at MFSI ([link](#))
- Fire Officer III: June 8 - 11 at MFSI ([link](#))

Volunteer Fire Insurance Services (VFIS) EVDT

External agency, in collaboration with MFSI.

- May 9 & 10: EVDT Instructor (TtT) at Presque Isle Fire Department (MFSI-endorsed) ***FULL***
- May 30 & 31: EVDT Instructor (TtT) at United Technologies Center in Bangor ([link](#))

York County Regional Training Center

[Link to schedule of programs.](#)



A cold day of water supply training at the Firefighter I & II Academy in Houlton. Photo by State Fire Instructor Chief Darren Woods.

SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee

The next meeting of our SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee will be held on **June 5, 2026, at 10:00 AM** at MFSI headquarters in Brunswick. All meetings are open to the public, and we encourage participation from anyone with a vested interest in the advancement of Maine's fire service training.

The SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee plays a vital role in shaping the future of fire training in Maine. The committee is comprised of fire chiefs in good standing and seasoned subject matter experts from key fire service agencies.

The committee's mission is to ensure that Maine's fire training remains effective, relevant, and aligned with both professional expectations and public safety demands by providing critical guidance on training standards, programs, and statewide fire service needs.

NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY

On March 14 & 15, 2026, MFSI hosted the In-State National Fire Academy (NFA) weekend. Due to the National Fire Academy being closed, MFSI opted to work directly with the instructors to see that these programs ran without interruption from external influences.

- ✓ Fire Investigation: Fire as a Weapon [O0756]
- ✓ Exercising Leadership Ethically [O0523]

After a delayed start due to snow, the programs were off and running. Candidates were engaged and the feedback was very positive. Special thanks to NFA Instructors Harold Cohen and Joel Davis.



Recognizing the importance of these programs to the professional development of Maine's fire service leaders, the MFSI administration has sent letters of concern to all four members of Maine's federal congressional delegation to ensure they are aware of the impact this closure is having on fire service training and leadership development.



Closure of the National Fire Academy & Impacts to the Maine Fire Service

The National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg, Maryland is currently closed due to a lapse in federal funding affecting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA). This funding lapse is tied to an ongoing federal budget dispute impacting the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As a result, all in-person training programs at the National Fire Academy have been canceled or postponed until federal operations return to normal. This situation has created uncertainty across the national fire service and is already affecting state training programs, leadership development opportunities, and scheduled training events.

Due to the current closure of the National Fire Academy, the Maine/Florida State Weekend at the NFA has been canceled for 2026. While this is certainly disappointing for those who were planning to attend, we were able to preserve an important opportunity for Maine firefighters by continuing the In-State Weekend program at the Maine Fire Service Institute in Brunswick.

The closure is also impacting many Maine fire service professionals who are currently enrolled in the Managing Officer Program and Executive Officer Program, both of which are nationally recognized leadership development pathways offered through the National Fire Academy. With the academy closed, progress for many officers working on these programs has unfortunately been slowed.

Fire service professionals across Maine are encouraged to consider getting involved by communicating with their federal representatives and reinforcing the importance of restoring National Fire Academy operations as soon as possible.

The National Fire Academy has long played a critical role in preparing fire service leaders, and its continued operation remains vital to the strength of the American fire service.

We will keep you all posted on the situation.



Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training (RAFT) taught a two-day Incident Safety Officer Pro Board program at MFSI in March, bringing together thirty fire service professionals from departments across Maine.



MFSI PROGRAMS

Written & Skills Certification Exams

2026 is already off to a flying start. We currently have 27 firefighter programs underway, all making good progress toward completion this spring and summer. For those programs, 25 written exams have already been scheduled, with more expected to be added in the coming weeks.

These programs will participate in their skills exams at several locations across the state, with the majority scheduled on the following dates:

- June 6 - 7 [Hollis]
- June 27 [Ellsworth]
- August 22 [Bangor]

Certification testing has been completed in Fire Officer I classes for Cumberland County and will be conducted in Penobscot County later this spring. There are Fire Instructor I & II programs currently underway in Franklin and Oxford Counties, with both programs scheduled to test later this spring.

We currently have 10 makeup exams scheduled at MFSI, and 5 makeup exams scheduled at EMCC. For more information on makeup exams or upcoming classes, please visit our website at mfsi.me.edu.



Hancock County Fire Academy utilizes one of the dollhouses to teach fire behavior, 2026. Photo from Hancock County's FA Facebook page. Dollhouses are limited to one per municipal department for Basic Fire School and Fire Fighter I & II programs. Plans for building them can be found online ([link](#)).

Fire Instructor I & II

We have two programs currently running, Oxford County (Oxford) and Franklin County (Farmington). We want to express our sincere appreciation to both Chief Armstrong-Wax and Chief Hardy for hosting.



Candidates from both Fire & Emergency Services Instructor I & II programs completed 15-minute presentations. Photos provided by State Fire Instructor Chief Howard Rice.

FIRE OFFICER I

SCARBOROUGH 2026

Maine Fire Service Institute

MFSI
FIRE TRAINING

MFSI Instructors Bill Dingee and Chief Nathan Schools

Departments represented Auburn, Brunswick, Buxton, Gorham, Kittery
Old Orchard Beach, Portland, Saco, Scarborough
South Portland, West Gardiner, Westbrook, Windham

Pro Board Accreditation

MFSI is currently working on the application of extension of accreditation on Fire Instructor I & II. With the recent changes in the NFPA 1020 Standard along with NFPA 1400, we will also be reviewing and upgrading our Live Fire Instructor/Instructor In-Charge program to make sure we are on the cutting edge of these important professional credentials. The plan is to attempt to gain Pro Board accreditation with the Live Fire Training program as soon as we have had time to review, upgrade, and exercise the program.



VFIS EVDT Curriculum: Important Update

VFIS updated their EVDT (EVOC) course in late 2024 and released it in 2025. The major update to the program is that course set-up, course administration, and issuance of completion certificates have been transitioned to an online Learning Management System (LMS), called VFIS University. There are also some smaller content changes in the curriculum.

How This Affects Program Delivery

In implementing the new curriculum, VFIS has made the following changes, which will affect both MFSI and municipal instructors (not all-inclusive):

ALL VFIS qualified **instructors** must:

- ❑ Complete online update training via VFIS University before instructors can teach the course. This is *not* a repeat of the initial instructor training course.
- ❑ Be affiliated with a VFIS authorized training organization to teach the course.
- ❑ Set up the class and enroll students in their VFIS University Instructor Portal.

All course **students** must:

- ❑ Have VFIS University accounts to be able to enroll in a course and access the EVDT course page online.
- ❑ Successfully complete an online quiz (via the online course page on the LMS) to complete the classroom course module.

Course certificates are no longer issued by course instructors or by MFSI. Course completion certificates are issued to students on the LMS EVDT user portal once the course has been completed.

EVDT Course Policy Changes

This EVDT course is a *commercial* program, which is owned and copyrighted by VFIS. This means that MFSI or any other organization using the curriculum must abide by VFIS's policies to teach it. In addition, MFSI or any other organization and its instructors must sign an agreement saying that they will do so. To best adapt to the program updates and provide the greatest amount of flexibility to fire departments and municipal instructors, MFSI has made the following policy changes.

- MFSI will no longer issue certificates of completion for EVDT courses, whether delivered by MFSI or municipal instructors.

- VFIS EVDT instructors who are not MFSI instructors cannot teach the course through MFSI. MFSI will only pay for and facilitate VFIS curriculum/instructor update training for MFSI instructors
- MFSI will continue to facilitate initial VFIS Train-the-Trainer courses for those wishing to be instructors for VFIS EVDT programs. MFSI works with VFIS to deliver the program.
- MFSI will continue to make available EVDT trailers and equipment to municipal VFIS instructors wishing to teach the course or conduct EVDT refresher or proficiency training.
- MFSI will continue to deliver EVDT courses to departments who would like to request one.
- MFSI will continue to support municipal instructors as needed by being available to answer questions, give guidance, and assist in learning the LMS.

These changes are effective February 1, 2026.

For further questions, refer to the EVDT page ([link](#)) on the MFSI website and/or contact MFSI directly.



Basic Fire School in Millinocket and East Millinocket is being instructed by State Fire Instructor Chief Cote. Photo from Millinocket FD Facebook page.

STATE & FEDERAL UPDATES

NFPA 1400 Standard on Fire Service Training aka NFPA 1403

The NFPA 1400 Standard on Fire Service Training represents the current consensus on how fire departments should design, operate, and deliver live fire training safely, effectively, and consistently. It codifies best practices gathered from decades of hands-on experience, research, and incident reviews to reduce risk and protect both trainees and instructors. At its core, **NFPA 1400 emphasizes risk management, operational controls, qualified supervision, site safety, and accountability during live fire training evolutions.** It covers how training structures should be constructed, how burn plans are



developed and executed, how firefighters are tracked on the fireground, and how hazards are identified and mitigated before they become injuries or worse.

For our Live Fire Training Facilities and Evolutions, adherence to NFPA 1400 is critical. It ensures that training replicates real-world fire behavior without needlessly exposing personnel to uncontrolled danger. It strengthens command and control during evolutions, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and aligns Maine Fire Service practices with nationally recognized standards, all while preserving the realism vital to competent and confident fireground performance.

In recognition of this new standard and the evolving expectations for safe live fire training, **MFSI will be reworking its live fire training policy.** This update will align our procedures with NFPA 1400 requirements, reinforce consistent safety practices across all training locations and departments, and demonstrate our commitment to protecting firefighters while delivering the high-quality live fire experiences the Maine fire service expects and deserves. After a review, MFSI will make recommendations to the SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee on what pieces of the new standard shall be enacted. We will share more as soon as we can. *This is a high priority.*

Maine Fire Chiefs' Annual Professional Development Conference Recap

MFCA's 2026 conference delivered an exceptional lineup of learning and resources for fire chiefs and officers across the region. Chief Paul Doughty, a 40-year fire service veteran and licensed attorney, led the keynote and covered critical topics, including command accountability and negligence and due process protections in termination and discipline. Friday morning's session with the Resilient Responder's Jason Mills and Jodi Cummings McGary, presented an in-depth outlook on building comprehensive wellness and resilience programs tailored specifically to fire service culture.

Beyond the educational sessions, the number of vendors for attendees to visit with offered a growing number of equipment and services available to Fire/EMS departments. Kicking off the experience was a SAFER Grant-funded Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment Workshop and the popular New England Barbecue and Live Auction, which raised around \$10,000 for Shriner's Children's Boston Hospital - Pediatric Burn Care Unit. A tremendous success!

STATE FIRE INSTRUCTOR SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to MFSI State Fire Instructor Ben Harris! Deputy Chief Harris of Goodwins Mills Fire-Rescue has been named the 2026 recipient of the **Captain Joel Barnes Community Service Award.** He was honored during the Maine Mariners' First Responders Night on March 1st at Cross Insurance Arena. The Captain Joel Barnes Community Service Award recognizes first responders who reflect the legacy of Captain Joel Barnes, who died in 2019 while rescuing a fellow firefighter. Harris joins a respected list of past recipients. ([Source](#))



Harris is a third-generation firefighter who started at 14 and worked his way up to Deputy Chief. He's logged over 5,500 calls, more than anyone in his department's

history. Beyond the fire service, he wears a lot of hats: elementary school principal, instructor for Fire Officer I & II, evaluator for Fire Instructor I & II testing, CPR/First Aid instructor, and leader in community risk reduction. He also serves as Dayton's Town Office Manager.

In addition, Ben Harris, Principal of Jameson Elementary School, has been named **Maine's 2026 National Distinguished Principal by the Maine Principals' Association.** He'll be honored on May 21 in Brewer. The award recognizes his strong leadership, focus on student success, and the positive school culture he's built, centered on high expectations, teamwork, and relationships. Under his leadership, the school has strengthened academic support systems, improved learning outcomes, and built partnerships with universities to support both students and future educators. ([Source](#))

Steady leadership, high standards, and a "all-in" mindset for students, that's what earned him the nod.

Thank you for reading this issue and staying informed. Stay safe, stay trained, and keep up the strong work protecting your communities. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming training events!