



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!