

This issue is dedicated to Andrew Cross, 27, of the Morrill Volunteer Fire Department — a machinist, a trucker, a neighbor, and a firefighter who gave everything he had to protect those he served alongside.

"He was a good, bright young man. He'd do anything for anybody." Jethro Pease, former chief, Morrill Volunteer Fire Department

And we continue to keep in our thoughts every injured responder who ran toward the smoke and chaos of that Friday morning and to the families, departments, and communities who bear the weight of what happened that day.

You did not hesitate. Maine will not forget.

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SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee Meeting

The next meeting of our SMCC-MFSI Advisory Committee will be held on **June 5, 2026, at 10AM at MFSI headquarters in Brunswick.**

The SMCC/MFSI Advisory Committee plays a vital role in shaping the future of fire training in Maine. Comprised of Fire Chiefs in good standing and seasoned subject matter experts from key fire service agencies, including the State Fire Marshal's Office, the Chief of the Maine Forest Rangers, and representatives from the Professional Firefighters of Maine and the Maine State Federation of Firefighters, this committee provides critical guidance on training standards, programs, and statewide fire service needs.

The Advisory Committee's mission is to ensure that Maine's fire training remains effective, relevant, and aligned with both professional expectations and public safety demands. We encourage participation from anyone with a vested interest in the advancement of fire service training across our great state. All meetings are open to the public.

Letter from MFSI Director

I hope this message finds you well, and that you're enjoying the return of green leaves, open ground, and the unmistakable promise of a Maine summer. As we enter this season, and as our nation marks its 250th year, I find myself reflecting not only on where we are, but where we've come from. I think back to 1976, the Bicentennial, when I was just a kid, playing baseball in my hometown and riding atop fire engines in the Fourth of July parade. Those memories remind me that this profession has always been bigger than the job itself. It's been about community, identity, and something deeply rooted in who we are.

Reflection, while valuable, is not where our responsibility ends. It must inform us how to move forward. After 41 years in the fire service across Maine and northern New Hampshire, I can tell you with certainty: something is changing. You can see it on the training ground. You can feel it in the classroom. You can hear it in the conversations we're having, and sometimes, the ones we're not. The core of this profession, tradition, pride, and an unwavering commitment to one another and to those we serve, remains intact. But the world around that core has shifted.

We are no longer defined solely by the fires we extinguish. We are EMS providers, technical rescuers, educators, leaders, and problem-solvers. We operate in a space that is more complex, more demanding, and more visible than ever before. Every action, every decision, every moment of leadership carries weight, often far beyond the scene itself. In this era, professionalism is not optional; it is expected, observed, and remembered.

For many of us, especially those who came up in a different time, that change can feel unsettling. It can feel like the ground beneath long-held traditions is moving. But we need to be clear about something; this is not erosion. This is evolution.

The next generation entering our ranks is not lacking in toughness or commitment. They are stepping forward in a world that has shaped them differently, but they are answering the same call we once did. Our role is not to measure them against the past, but to prepare them for the future. That means holding the line on what matters most:

- ✓ Discipline
- ✓ Pride in the Craft
- ✓ Accountability
- ✓ Sense of duty

We also need to embrace what strengthens us:

- ✓ Greater focus on mental health
- ✓ Higher expectations in training and education
- ✓ Demand for professionalism at every level

These commitments are not threatening our culture; they are reinforcements that will carry them forward. Culture is not preserved by resisting change; it is preserved by leading through it. It is not written in policy manuals or dictated from any one office. It is built, call-by-call, shift by shift, decision by decision. It lives in what we tolerate, what we correct, what we teach, and what we model when no one is watching. Every one of us, regardless of rank or years of service, has a hand in shaping culture.

This is a defining moment for the fire service in Maine. Not because we are at risk of losing who we are, but because we are being asked to decide who we will become.



If we meet this moment with humility, with purpose, and with a willingness to lead, not backward, but forward, we will not lose our identity. We will strengthen it. We will build a fire service that honors its past, stands firm in its values, and is fully prepared for the challenges ahead.

We owe that to those who came before us. We owe it to those who will come after us. And most importantly, we owe it to the people who trust us on their worst day.

If we move forward together, as one fire service, with one shared commitment to excellence, there is no question that Maine's future will be strong, resilient, and worthy of the traditions we carry.

Stay safe. We need you all. Have a happy and safe 4th of July, and Happy Birthday, America.

Sincerely,
Jim Graves, MFSI

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

National Fire Academy (NFA)

The Maine Fire Service institute is excited to announce that the National Fire Academy has offered Maine three (3) additional programs to help offset the training opportunities lost earlier this year during the federal shutdown. As a result, we are proud to host five outstanding National Fire Academy programs at MFSI in Brunswick on the weekend of September 19 & 20, 2026. **Register by August 1, 2026, to ensure programs run.**

This is more than just another weekend of training. This is an opportunity to learn from some of the finest National Fire Academy instructors from across the United States while building connections with fellow firefighters, officers, instructors, and emergency service professionals from every corner of Maine.

- Best Practices in Community Risk Reduction
- New Fire Chief: Contemporary Issues
- Exercising Leadership Within Communities
- Preparation for Initial Company Operations
- Youth Firesetting Intervention Specialist

MFSI Programs

Due to high demand, Fire Instructor and Officer programs have been placed on an annual schedule. **Applications will open July 15** for the following programs running Fall/Winter 2026.

- Fire Instructor I/II – Knox County (Camden)
- Fire Instructor I/II – Kennebec County (Augusta)
- Fire Officer I – Franklin County (Farmington)
- Fire Officer I – Oxford County (Oxford)

Live Fire Instructor/Live Fire Instructor In-Charge (Bangor) State Certificate Only. **Application opens June 12.**

External Training Agencies

Regional Alliance for Firefighter Training (RAFT)

Candidates will have the opportunity to seek Pro Board certification at the end of the program. As of June 1, these programs are *tentative*.

- Fire Officer III – Augusta (Dec 7–10, 2026)
- Fire Officer IV – Brunswick (Jan 25–27, 2027)
- HSO/ISO Program – Augusta (Feb 20–24, 2027)

[York County Regional Training Center](#) ([link to schedule of programs](#))

MFSI PROGRAMS

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) program in late 2024/early 2025. The biggest change: course administration has moved to an online Learning Management System (LMS) called *VFIS University*.

What's Changed for Instructors & Students

- All qualified instructors must complete an online update of training through VFIS University before teaching (this is not a repeat of the full course).
- Instructors must be affiliated with a VFIS-authorized training organization.
- Instructors must set up classes and enroll students through their Instructor Portal.
- Students must have a VFIS University account to access course modules and complete a required online quiz.
- Completion certificates are now downloaded directly from the LMS. Instructors and MFSI no longer issue certificates.

MFSI Policy Changes (effective February 1, 2026)

- MFSI will no longer issue EVDT certificates.
- Non-MFSI VFIS instructors cannot teach through MFSI.
- MFSI will only fund curriculum/instructor update training for MFSI state instructors.
- MFSI will continue to facilitate initial Train-the-Trainer courses, deliver EVDT courses upon request, loan trailers/equipment to municipal instructors, and provide LMS guidance and support.

These changes were made effective on **February 1, 2026**. For further questions, refer to the EVDT page on the MFSI website and/or contact MFSI directly.

Fire Instructor I & II

Thank you to State Fire Instructors Brooks, Dingee, McLaughlin, Rice, and Tracy for their commitment to advancing the fire service. After completing all assignments and classroom instruction, 33 candidates were eligible to test for Pro Board certification.



Congratulations to the recent classes of Fire & Emergency Services Instructor I/II graduates from the Oxford and Farmington programs (*pictured above/below*).



Written & Skills Certification Exams

There are currently 27 Fire Fighter I & II programs underway across the state, all making good progress toward completion this spring and summer.

For those programs, 20 dates for written exams have already been scheduled, with more expected to be added in the coming weeks. There are currently ten (10) makeup exams at MFSI, and five (5) makeup exams at EMCC. These programs will take their skills exams at several locations across the state:

- Farmington May 20
- Hollis June 6-7
- Ellsworth June 27
- Bangor August 22.

For more information, visit the MFSI website under Upcoming Events/Written Exams.

State Fire Service (MFSI) Instructor Recruitment

The recruitment process is back in motion and progressing well. We initially paused to ensure we could stay focused on the high operational demands in the field, but with one program opting to defer until next year, we've been able to re-engage with renewed focus. Evaluations will take place over the coming months, and we're on track to have these individuals onboarded by the fall. This approach positions us to bring in strong candidates while maintaining our commitment to quality and readiness.

Propane Prop Safety Notes

MFSI officially wrapped up our first month of propane prop usage for 2026. We have identified heat damage on several props:

- ✓ SUV Prop
- ✓ Tutor Prop
- ✓ System 64

These props are vital for trainings across the state.

A critical reminder for all operators and lead instructors:

- Props must be operated with continuous and adequate water application *at all times*.
- Do NOT run any prop for more than 10 seconds without water.
- After shutdown, additional cooling must be performed to protect the prop and its components.
- At the end of each evolution, the operator or lead instructor is responsible for confirming sufficient water has been applied to maintain safe temperatures and protect the equipment.

Thank you for your continued attention and commitment to keeping the equipment operational.

STATE & FEDERAL UPDATES

Live Fire Operations in support of a Basic Fire School in Machiasport

The Maine Fire Service Institute was requested to assist with a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1403 compliant live burn in an acquired structure located in Machiasport. This training evolution was conducted in support of a Basic Fire School serving multiple Downeast Maine fire departments.

The operation provided essential, hands-on live fire experience under controlled conditions, ensuring adherence to NFPA 1403 standards while strengthening regional training capacity and interdepartmental cooperation.



NFPA 1400 Standard on Fire Service Training – Formerly NFPA 1403

For Maine's live fire training facilities and evolutions, alignment with NFPA 1400 is a priority. It ensures training replicates real-world fire behavior without exposing personnel to uncontrolled danger, strengthens command and control during evolutions, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and brings Maine fire service practices in line with nationally recognized standards, while creating a program that fits the specific needs essential for Maine responders.

MFSI is actively working to update its live fire training policy to reflect NFPA 1400 requirements. Progress on this initiative will be presented later this year as part of our program, which includes updated progress charts. This is a high priority for MFSI, and we are committed to keeping the Maine fire service informed every step of the way.

Maine Fire Protection Services Commission

On April 16, 2026, Governor Janet T. Mills signed LD 679, "An Act to Increase the Funding to the Live Fire Service Training Facilities Fund," into law. Sponsored by Sen. Chip Curry, D-Belfast, the legislation provides \$500,000 in one-time funding to support the construction, repair, and replacement of regional live fire training facilities across Maine. The funding will be administered by the Maine Fire Service Institute and awarded through the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission.

The Fire Commission will be making plans for the future of these funds after the current projects are completed in the City of Auburn and Bangor.

Emerging Energy Committee with the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission

As the fire service continues to evolve, we find ourselves at a moment in time that is both exciting and challenging. New technologies, including energy storage systems, rooftop solar panel installations, residential battery backup systems, and electric vehicles, are becoming part of our communities, businesses, and infrastructure at a rapid pace. As firefighters, inspectors, code officials, and emergency responders, we have always adapted to change, and this is no different.

While these technologies bring new opportunities in energy efficiency, sustainability, and resiliency, they also introduce hazards and operational considerations that require education, planning, and preparation. Solar panel systems on residential and commercial buildings can create unique firefighting challenges involving electrical hazards, roof access, ventilation operations, and system shutdown procedures. Home energy storage systems and battery backup units introduce concerns related to thermal runaway, off-gassing, explosion potential, and prolonged fire suppression operations. Likewise, electric vehicle incidents continue to raise important operational questions surrounding battery fires, reigniting risks, towing, storage, and responder safety.

One important resource available to departments and stakeholders is the National Fire Protection Association's National Fire Protection Association Standard 855, the Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems, 2026 Edition. This standard provides guidance on the safe installation and protection of these systems and will continue to shape discussions around fire prevention, inspection, suppression, and emergency response. Additional standards, including NFPA 70, NFPA 70B, NFPA 70E, and NFPA 1, also play important roles in addressing electrical safety, inspections, and emergency operations involving these technologies.

Here in Maine, the Maine Fire Commission is actively working with partners and stakeholders to identify the best path forward for our state. These conversations are ongoing and productive, with a strong focus on firefighter safety, community protection, code compliance, public education, and practical training solutions. The best thing we can do as a fire service is prepare ourselves through education, awareness, pre-incident planning, and training. Training in these areas is complex and costly, and it will take time to fully build and deliver programs statewide. However, planning

efforts are already well underway. There are many dedicated leaders within Maine's fire service working behind the scenes to ensure departments receive the information, guidance, and training they need to safely respond to incidents involving these evolving technologies. The fire service has always risen to meet new challenges, and with collaboration, professionalism, and a commitment to learning, we will continue to do so here in Maine.

Stay safe, stay trained, and keep up the strong work protecting your communities. We look forward to seeing you at upcoming training events!

