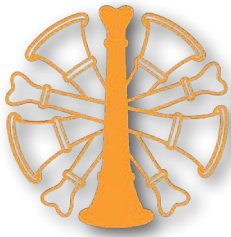


Fall 2025



CHIEFS

The Official Magazine of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



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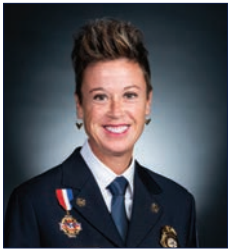
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Moving Forward

The journey has just begun for my time as President, but the work continues for all of us!

I made my first international trip to Winnipeg, Manitoba, for the Fire-Rescue Canada 2025 conference. It was an excellent reminder of our strong international community and why we maintain our global partnerships. Our Canadian International Association of Fire Chief (IAFC) members and friends were incredibly hospitable, and being able to connect in person and hear directly from members is invaluable.

Along with Canada, I was in Minnesota for their Fallen Firefighter Memorial, a trip to Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin, for a stair climb to support the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and a trip to Pierce Manufacturing in Appleton, Wisconsin, to follow up on apparatus production and delivery times. It has been a very successful six weeks since being installed as your President.

Probably the biggest moving part of the IAFC is the search for a new CEO. I want to thank the IAFC staff for handling the day-to-day business with incredible grace, professionalism, and dedication. They're the engine that keeps this organization running smoothly every day. I will continue to be transparent and update the membership as the CEO search and hiring process evolves. It has been my primary focus as your President. In the meantime, my promise to you, the membership, is simple: I'm going to steady the ship, and make it ready for onboarding a new leader.

The road ahead for the fire and EMS service has some rough spots and some uncertainties, but it is also full of ripe opportunities. I am confident in the talent, dedication, and leadership we have across our Association, and I will continue to work in the best interest of the membership. Until next time, stay safe and treat everyone with compassion and respect.

Fire Chief Trisha Wolford
IAFC President & Board Chair





Tech Adoption



By Chief Scott Roseberry,
IAFC Technology Council

The fire service has long been one of the slowest adopters of technology in the public sector.

For many of us, the landscape can feel so overwhelming that we hesitate, or fail, to act. But there is a cost to inaction. The tools

available to us today have the power to make us safer, more efficient, and more effective in our mission to protect our communities.

To help departments move forward with confidence, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Technology Council has developed the following roadmap any fire chief or department can follow when considering new technology. Our goal is simple: to take the overwhelming feeling out of the process and help you succeed in adopting and implementing technology that truly adds value.

STEP 1: START WITH A NEEDS ANALYSIS

The first, and most important, step in the process is conducting a proper needs analysis. Many departments waste precious resources adopting tools without a clear purpose or alignment. If you

have icons on your desktop from tools you no longer use, you've already experienced this firsthand.

This is where you define the problem you are trying to solve. A simple SWOT analysis can be a great place to start, identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the situation; the most fertile ground for technology-driven improvement often lies in the *weaknesses* and *threats* columns.

It's equally important to engage your people at this stage. Start by talking to those closest to the work, firefighters, paramedics, mechanics, dispatchers, administrative staff. Ask them about the barriers they face in delivering high-quality service to the community. These conversations will surface real pain points that leadership may not see from the top down.

Finally, use your data to sharpen and validate the problem definition.

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- What are we trying to fix or improve?
- What does our data tell us about this problem?
- How does this tie into our department's strategic goals?
- What technology are we currently using? Is it meeting expectations?
- What gaps or redundancies exist in our current workflows?

A strong needs analysis ensures that technology adoption is driven by outcomes, not by shiny tools. If you can't clearly define the problem and the desired improvement, it's too soon to move forward.

STEP 2: DEFINE CLEAR OBJECTIVES

What does success look like? Using the data and insights gathered in Step 1, it's now time to establish what you are trying to achieve. These objectives must be specific and measurable so that you can later determine whether you've been successful, need to make adjustments, or, in some cases, need to change course entirely.

A common trap at the implementation stage is falling victim to *escalation of commitment*. This occurs when all evidence points toward the need for a major course correction, or even starting over, but leaders have become so emotionally or politically invested in the project that they fail to pull the plug. The result is not only wasted fiscal resources, but also significant wear and tear on the morale of your people. Defining success at the stage helps identify this trap.

Establishing clear, measurable objectives up front provides a guardrail against this trap. If the technology isn't helping you meet your stated goals, you'll have the discipline and framework to make an informed decision about what to do next.

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- What measurable outcomes are we trying to achieve?

"The tools available to us today have the power to make us safer, more efficient, and more effective in our mission to protect our communities."

- How will we know if the technology is helping us reach those outcomes?
- How does success align with our department's mission and strategic plan?
- What does a successful implementation look like at the user level?
- What metrics will tell us when it's time to adjust, improve, or stop?

STEP 3: PERFORM MARKET RESEARCH

This is the step where all those conferences you've attended and contacts you've collected in your network start to pay off. Now is the time to leverage those connections.

Reach out to your network, fellow fire chiefs, tech council members, vendors you trust, and neighboring departments. Find out what others are using, what's working, and what isn't. Don't be afraid to ask about lessons learned; often, these are more valuable than the success stories.

The IAFC KnowledgeNet is another great resource where you can quickly tap into the collective experience of departments across the country (<https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/resources/resource/iafc-knowledgenet>).

Be sure to assess the total cost of ownership, not just the upfront purchase price. Factor in:

- Licensing fees;
- Maintenance costs;
- Replacement cycles;

- Training requirements;
- Support availability; and
- Integration costs with your existing systems.

One often overlooked cost driver is application programming interfaces (APIs). APIs allow different software systems to communicate and exchange data. While they are critical for building an integrated, future-ready technology stack, they are not always included in base pricing. In some cases, APIs can be as expensive, or more expensive, than the solution itself. Make sure you understand not only whether APIs are available, but also what they will cost to implement and maintain.

Compare solutions side by side. Write down the pros and cons of each. And as always, engage your stakeholders in this process. Different roles in the organization will view the same product through very different lenses. A tool that seems perfect to administration might create frustration for front-line users (or vice versa).

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- Who owns the data? Can we export it if we switch vendors?
- What other departments are using this solution, and what has their experience been?
- How easily does this integrate with our existing systems?
- What is the full life-cycle cost (purchase, maintenance, training, support)?
- What is the vendor's reputation for support and product updates?

- Will this product scale with us as our department grows or changes?
- What are the pros and cons of this solution compared to alternatives?

STEP 4: PILOT AND TEST

Now that you've identified the problem, defined your objectives, performed your research, and selected a solution, it's time to test it before launching it department-wide.

This phase is where you validate how the technology integrates with your existing systems, workflows, and hardware. It's your opportunity to uncover unforeseen issues while the risk is still contained.

Be intentional about who participates in the pilot. Invite not only your early adopters, but also your skeptics. The wider the range of users, scenarios, and use cases you expose the system to, the better your chances of identifying potential problems before going live across the department.

And don't overlook APIs during the pilot. This is the time to confirm whether integrations between your new system and existing platforms function as intended, before those integrations become critical to daily operations.

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- What works well? What doesn't?
- Will this solution meet the objectives we established?

- Do the APIs work as intended, and are they reliable under operational load?
- How do frontline users perceive the solution? Is it intuitive or cumbersome?
- What issues surfaced during the pilot that must be addressed before full rollout?

A well-run pilot increases your odds of success dramatically. It's also a valuable opportunity to build credibility with your workforce by showing that leadership is taking a thoughtful, phased approach, not forcing change without listening.

STEP 5: DEVELOP AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND IMPLEMENT

Any technology implementation requires changing the way we've done things. And this is not the time to manage change through email alone.

During this phase, it is critical to apply a formal change management model to guide your rollout. There are many different models out there, but most share three basic stages:

- 1. Readiness Stage:** Prepare the department for the change. Communicate why this matters, how it will improve service, and what's expected. Build understanding and buy-in early. Clear, consistent communication is key.

2. Implementation Stage:

Strategically implement the solution — not all at once, but in phases. Ensure training is in place, support resources are ready, and key users are prepared.

3. Evaluation Stage:

Actively evaluate the change as it's rolled out. Gather user feedback, monitor outcomes, and be ready to make adjustments. Treat this as an iterative process, not a "one and done."

Work toward one solution at a time. Resist the urge to roll out too much at once. Many solutions come with multiple modules or features — implement just one at a time. Evaluate its impact and make necessary corrections before moving to the next. This phased approach also creates small wins, which helps maintain momentum and confidence in the process.

Maintain open feedback loops with all levels of the organization throughout implementation. And remember: sometimes the right move is to pause, regroup, or readjust — staying flexible is a mark of strong leadership during change. Expect road bumps; technology implementation always comes with unforeseen issues, no matter how well you plan. The key is not to avoid problems entirely (you won't), but to be prepared to identify them early, adapt quickly, and maintain trust and transparency with your team throughout the process.

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- Have we clearly communicated why this change is happening and what success looks like?
- Are we prepared to support users through this change?
- Is our implementation phased and realistic?
- Are we collecting feedback and evaluating progress in real time?
- Are we prepared to pause or adjust the rollout if needed?
- If we are six months down the road and this implementation has failed, how did it fail? (Asking this question now will help surface known risks and potential pitfalls before they become real problems.)



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STEP 6: MEASURE THE IMPACT, SUSTAIN, AND SUPPORT

Congratulations, you've implemented a new solution that will improve your department's ability to protect its community. Now it's time to measure its impact.

Go back to the data and objectives you identified in Steps 1 and 2. Is the technology delivering the outcomes you were hoping for? Be transparent in reporting results to all stakeholders, frontline users, department leadership, elected officials, and even the community. This transparency builds trust and reinforces the value of the investment.

Remember: adoption is just the beginning; long-term success depends on sustainability. Provide ongoing training for both new hires and existing personnel. Schedule refreshers as needed to reinforce best practices and prevent drift in usage.

Updates will be required over time. Make sure they are implemented on a regular basis, and actively seek user feedback afterward. Sometimes updates introduce unintended consequences that must be addressed quickly.

Finally, assign internal champions to monitor and drive continuous improvement. In the fire service, turnover is constant, and current champions will be promoted or transferred. Without someone to carry the torch, even great technology can wither on the vine. Always be developing the next generation of champions who can sustain and evolve your solution over time.

Key questions to ask at this stage include:

- Is the solution delivering the outcomes we set out to achieve?
- Are we transparently reporting results to all key stakeholders?
- Do we have a plan for ongoing training and support?
- Are we monitoring for unintended consequences after updates?
- Have we identified (and are we developing) internal champions to sustain this solution over time?

FINAL THOUGHTS

Adopting technology doesn't have to be overwhelming, not with a proper plan and strong support from your stakeholders. The roadmap outlined here will help you avoid common pitfalls and turn technology into a true force multiplier for your department and your community. 🌱

Chief Scott Roseberry, EFO, MPA, CFO, is a Battalion Chief with over 25 years of service at

the Garland Fire Department. He currently serves as Chair of the IAFC Technology Council, Co-Host of Tech Talk Tuesday, and Co-Producer of Technology Summit International. In addition to his operational leadership, Chief Roseberry is an Adjunct Instructor at Tarrant County College and a frequent speaker at both national and regional conferences, where he shares expertise on fire service leadership, technology, and innovation.

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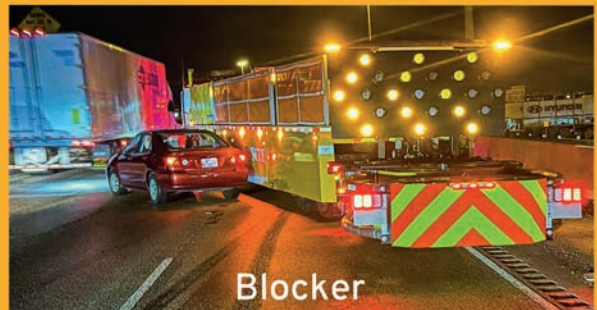
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New Ways to Recruit and Retain Volunteer Firefighters



By Ellen Lemieux,
IAFC Senior Program Manager

This past year, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Workforce Solutions team partnered with Indiana Fire Chiefs Association through a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant to explore ways to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters in Indiana. Through this process, we have learned that departments need all different types of support to help them step up and respond to their communities.

Departments need to get creative in today's world and establish new roles, including new front-line positions such as EMTs, Emergency Response Support, but also administration positions such as maintenance positions, fundraisers, grant writers, and fire prevention educators. These types of members are essential to the team and can help alleviate the burden from those going on runs and responding to emergencies.

A HIGHER CALLING

One department in Indiana is truly thinking outside the box about

what a volunteer looks like for their fire department. Three brothers are stepping up to help run their hometown fire department from afar.

For the Wineland brothers, service to their community is their higher calling, and volunteering to help run their hometown fire department is a no-brainer for the brothers who deeply desire to give back. Today, they can be seen as models of the modern-day volunteer firefighter, proving to the public that there are endless opportunities to put your unique skill set to work through service to your community.



Michael, Matthew, and Nicholas (left to right) help run their hometown fire department.

Matthew, Michael, and Nicholas were raised in northwest Indiana with servants' hearts, joining scouts as kids and eventually achieving the rank of Eagle Scouts as teens and playing active roles in their church community. That heart of service stuck. Even as these now adult brothers followed careers across the country, they continue to donate hours of their time each week to the Liberty Township Volunteer Fire Department in their hometown of Valparaiso, IN.

"Our family has roots in the department, as my great uncle was

Assistant Chief of the department in the 1970s," says oldest brother Michael, who is currently the Assistant Fire Chief and is focused on fire prevention and training. This is on top of his full-time job outside of the fire service.

"I started with the department in March of 2009. I spent numerous late nights going to training each week. All during this time, I was a full-time college student and working full time. It was a lot to take on, but after 16 years, it was well worth it."

A JOB FOR EVERYONE

Following in their older brother's footsteps, twin brothers Matthew and Nicholas joined the department as volunteers in 2011, even as both of their full-time careers took them across the country. Matthew lives in New Mexico and works full time for the National Parks Service, yet he continues to serve his hometown department by handling administrative duties like grant writing, IT, and serving as the department's Public Information Officer (PIO).

"Having spoken with several new recruits over the years, I have always said there is a job for everyone," says Matthew. "Everyone brings unique experiences and skills that we need to function."

Nicholas also works as a park ranger for the National Park Service, but in Colorado. Still, Nicholas gives back hours of his week to his hometown of Valparaíso by developing policy, organizing events, and coordinating projects to ensure deadlines are being met.

The two brothers, while out of state, have been able to secure funding for equipment through grants and have grown their department's social media following, where they engage with media and members of the community.

"The fire service has had tremendous impacts on my life, such as being more social and pushing myself to learn new tasks," says Nicholas.

"Since serving as the Corporation President for the majority of my time, it has taught me invaluable skills that I use in my full-time employment,

such as people skills, working with outside stakeholders, and improving services for our service area."

INSPIRING OTHERS

As the Winelands each give roughly 40 volunteer hours a week back to Liberty Township, they not only help service a growing population in Valparaíso, but they also save the taxpayers money by not staffing career firefighters.

"When I first started volunteering as a firefighter, the department responded to around 500 calls a year," says Michael. "That number is now up to around 1,100."

Across the country, especially in states like Indiana, where nearly 80% of first responders are volunteers, finding the right folks to do the job is a great challenge. Liberty Township Volunteer Fire Department is one of more than 800 volunteer fire and rescue departments in Indiana. Keeping the trucks fully staffed helps make sure all families, including ones in rural areas, can get help when they need it most — which is especially important in emergencies, when every minute matters.

The Winelands provide a powerful blueprint for the next generation of volunteer firefighting, showing that heroism encompasses far more than running into burning buildings.

Essential contributions can come from many different roles performed both at the fireground and far from it.

Like Liberty Township Fire, the IAFC Workforce Solutions team continues to look for creative and innovative ways to support recruitment and retention efforts for volunteer and combination fire departments in this new era. Recently, the IAFC Workforce Solutions team launched a new National Recruitment and Retention Toolkit through a national FEMA SAFER grant that provides fire departments with free data-driven information about their own community demographics as well as tailored resources that support strategic planning, recruitment, and retention initiatives. The toolkit is available on IAFC's website (<https://www.iafc.org/topics-and-tools/national-volunteer-firefighter-recruitment-and-retention>).

By having fire departments take a short self-assessment survey to evaluate leadership, workforce, infrastructure, and experience, these departments will receive a customized action plan that provide suggestions and resources to help these departments sustain a strong volunteer workforce through data-driven tools and tailored resources. 🔥

Ellen Lemieux is the IAFC's Senior Program Manager.



Turning Professional Training into Higher Education



By Keith Padgett, Columbia Southern University

Fire professionals are always seeking ways to improve their skills to prepare not only for the job but also for the next step in their careers. Professional development programs such as the International

Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Officer Development Program (ODP) offer structured leadership training focused on the unique challenges of the fire service.

With this also comes an opportunity that some attendees may not be aware of. All their hard work during training doesn't just have to remain in the classroom; rather, through the right process, ODP courses and other certifications can be evaluated for college credit and applied toward a degree program at Columbia Southern University (CSU).

BUILDING BLOCKS

A college degree program is made up of courses that consist of credit hours, typically three credit hours per course. Credit hours are the building blocks of higher education. Think of these as pieces of a much larger puzzle that make up the program. With each course you take in the degree program,

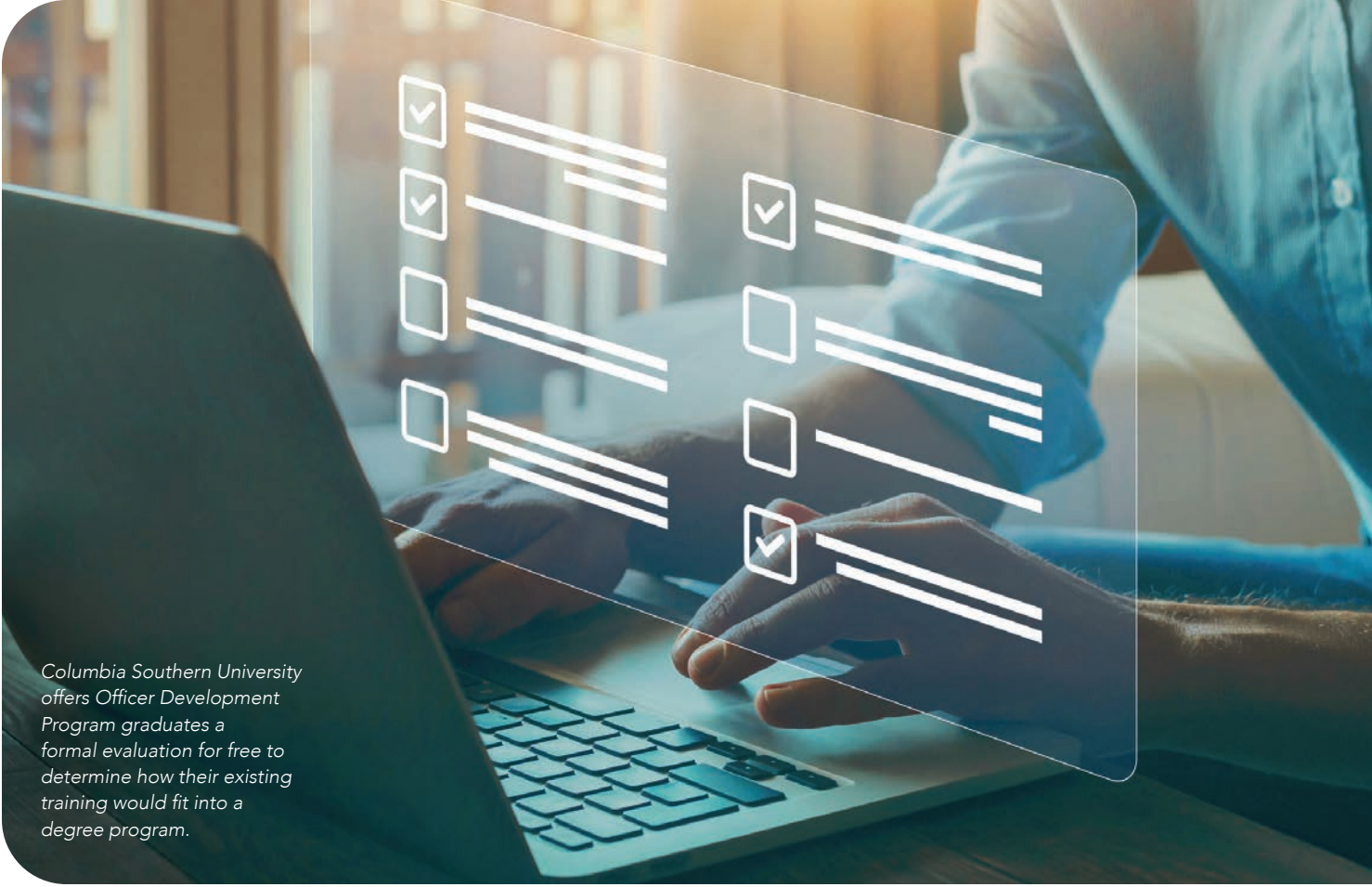
whether it's a general education requirement like math or English, or in program core courses such as fire science or emergency management, you are adding another puzzle piece. After you have assembled enough pieces — generally 120 credit hours for a bachelor's degree or 36 for a master's — the full puzzle of a degree is complete.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Well, here's where it gets even better.

Not every piece of the puzzle must come from a university. While many credit hours are earned directly from a college, others can be transferred from outside sources such as professional development programs like the IAFC ODP and certifications, all of which can add tremendous value.

ODP AS A PUZZLE PIECE

The IAFC ODP is designed around industry-recognized leadership competencies and instructional consistency, which allows it to be



Columbia Southern University offers Officer Development Program graduates a formal evaluation for free to determine how their existing training would fit into a degree program.

eligible for evaluation as part of the college credit transfer process. With CSU's partnership with the IAFC, ODP graduates can have a formal evaluation at no cost to determine how their training would fit into the degree program they select. Each course in the ODP was developed to be recognized for one college credit once completed (online component and exam) and may be applied as lower-level credit to any CSU degree program.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

1. Gather your professional training documents. This includes the IAFC ODP, Fire and EMS certifications, military training, and any other recognized professional development.
2. Go to Columbia Southern University's website (www.columbiasouthern.edu).
3. Select a degree program that best applies to your career goals.
4. Request a free credit evaluation from CSU. You can upload all scanned documents to your individual private applicant portal.
5. An evaluator will review your training certifications and professional development to determine eligibility for academic credit.
6. Receive a credit award decision. You'll see how many credits are granted and exactly where they fit into a CSU degree plan.

Your ability to turn professional training into college credit is more than just convenient; it's a testament to the value of real-world fire training.

7. Apply your credits toward your program. This will allow you to save time and money by not repeating what you've already mastered throughout your career.

WHY EVERY CAREER PATH LOOKS DIFFERENT

We all know that every firefighter's career path is unique to that individual. One may spend years on an engine company in operations, while others move into fire prevention, EMS, or even administration. Pursuing different career paths means accumulating different types of training and certifications. This also means that no two credit evaluations look the same.

This is why it is vital that a CSU evaluator carefully reviews every puzzle piece you may have. They will look at everything that you can provide, from National Fire Academy coursework such as the Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) to Fire Officer series and EMT/paramedic certifications. Their job is to determine the best place it fits.

Sometimes applicants bring "multiple puzzle pieces" that cover similar credit. An example is two different certifications might both qualify as lower-level electives, but only one can fit or transfer into the degree plan. So, there is just not enough room for both. In other cases, advanced certifications may count toward upper-level credits, which are required for graduation but must balance with general education and electives. The evaluation process ensures that all credits are placed appropriately without duplicating.

LOWER-LEVEL VS. UPPER-LEVEL CREDIT

It's also helpful to understand the difference between lower-level and upper-level credit.

- Lower-level credits (1000 to 2000 level) are considered entry-level training and certifications.
- Upper-level credits (3000–4000 level) are more advanced and focus on leadership or specialized knowledge such as fire investigation

Lower and upper credit are needed to complete a bachelor's degree, but they play different roles. Because each firefighter's professional background is different, CSU's evaluators make sure these pieces balance out to create a degree plan that works.

CREDIT THEY DIDN'T KNOW THEY HAD

Take the case of a deputy fire chief with over 30 years in the fire service who decided to request a free credit evaluation from CSU. To his surprise, not only did he have credits toward his degree, with his Fire Officer I-IV series and his paramedic certification, what he thought might give him a couple of credits ended up adding more than 30 toward a bachelor's degree. That alone shaved off an entire year of coursework.

Another is a captain who spent 20 years developing her career while also focusing on raising a family. She had been reluctant to pursue a degree — she assumed that she did not have any credits and would be required to take all of the courses within the degree from the university. After

an evaluation, she learned that her HAZMAT OPS and TECH certification along with her paramedic certificate reduced numerous credits needed to meet the degree requirements. Her goal of obtaining a degree now appeared to be realistic.

Stories like these are not rare! They are very common, and many take advantage of CSU's free credit evaluation.

WHY IT MATTERS

Your ability to turn professional training into college credit is more than just convenient; it's a testament to the value of real-world fire training. IAFC ODP graduates who leverage their credits toward a degree at CSU position themselves for quicker access toward earning a degree, in turn helping develop a stronger resume that places them in line for leadership opportunities.

Lastly, in today's fire service where training and higher education go hand in hand, this approach supports fire and EMS professionals in reaching their goal. The IAFC ODP isn't just professional development; it can also be a stepping stone toward earning a degree and building a long-term career with the support of CSU. 🔥

Chief Keith Padgett is currently the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Academic Program Director with Columbia Southern University (CSU). Prior to that, he served as the Chief-Fire Marshal for the Fulton County Fire-Rescue Department, a metropolitan-sized department in Atlanta.



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Ken LaSala, IAFC Director of Government Relations and Policy

Legislative Update:

This article was written in early September 2025 and is accurate as of that date. Sign up for IAFC's weekly Washington Update for timely information (www.iafc.org).

An Uncertain Autumn

During the Trump presidency, there always is something new going on. Earlier this year, the National Fire Academy (NFA) was closed for a review of its training and curricula. There were delays in the application periods for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and the Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants and the homeland security grants like the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) and the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP). Now we are waiting to see if the grant funds will actually be awarded. Meanwhile, Congress must

deal with the reality of a government shutdown.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

The good news is that the National Fire Academy is back open. In fact, it is scheduled to host the U.S. Fire Administrator's (USFA's) Summit on October 7, 2025. In addition, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) opened the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 application periods for the SAFER and FP&S Grants from May 23 through July 3. The applications for FY 2025 SHGP, UASI, and the other homeland security grants were released and due in early August.

However, as we reach

mid-September, no awards have been made for the FY 2024 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), SAFER, or FP&S grant nor the FY 2025 SHSGP, UASI, or other homeland security grants. These funds have to be awarded before the October 1 start of FY 2026 or the funds go back to the U.S. Treasury. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) is working to release these funds.

One cause of the delay may be President Trump's new executive order on Improving Oversight of Federal Grantmaking. This executive order requires each agency head to appoint a senior appointee to be responsible for creating a process to review new funding

Figure 1: Funding for Fire Service Programs at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (in Millions (\$))

Program	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026 (President's Request)	FY 2026 (H.R. 4213)
AFG	360	324	324	324	360
SAFER	360	324	324	324	360
USFA	60	71.2 ¹	71.2 ¹	64.166	62.084 ²
UASI	615	553.5	553.5	415.5	615
SHSGP	520	468	468	351	520
US&R	37.832	40.832	40.832	37.832	56

1. This amount includes \$10 million for the development of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) program and \$1.25 million for information technology upgrades at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in the Procurement, Construction, and Improvements (PC&I) account.
2. This amount includes \$60.084 million for USFA and an additional \$2 million for the National Fire Incident Reporting System (presumably they mean the "National Emergency Response Information System") in the PC&I account.

Figure 2: Funding for Federal Wildland Fire Programs (in Millions (\$))

	DOI Wildland Fire Mgmt	DOI Reserve Fund	USDA Wildland Fire Mgmt	USDA Reserve Fund	State Fire Assistance	Volunteer Fire Assistance
FY 2024 (Enacted)	1,113	350	2,313	2,300	76	21
FY 2025 (President's Request)	1,280	360	2,550	2,390	76	21
FY 2025 (CR)	1,147	360	2,426	2,390	76	21
FY 2026 (H.R. 4754)	1,195	370	2,426	2,480	78	23
FY 2026 (Senate)	1,148	370	2,426	2,480	82	23

opportunity announcements and to review discretionary grants to ensure that they are consistent with agency priorities and the national interest.

This process will require review and approval of agency funding opportunity announcements by designated subject matter experts and senior political appointees; review of whether funding announcements are redundant and need to be withdrawn; and review to make sure that the grants meet President Trump's priorities and include clear benchmarks for measuring success.

In addition, there must be pre-issuance review of discretionary awards to ensure that the awards are consistent with applicable law, agency priorities, and the national interest, which shall involve in-person or virtual discussion of

applications by grant review panels or program offices with a senior appointee or that appointee's designee.

Also, the FEMA Reform Council has started to hold meetings and listening sessions to discuss FEMA reform. After the July 4 floods in Texas, the council's focus seems to have focused more on making changes to FEMA rather than abolishing it. There is definite interest in putting more of the responsibility for disaster response and recovery on state, local, tribal, and territorial governments.

The IAFC's DHS/FEMA Review Task Force has met with some of the council members, like Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, to explain the importance of FEMA's resources like the Urban Search and Rescue System, the National

Incident Management System, and the USFA and NFA. Also, the IAFC task force members have explained how the AFG, SAFER, FP&S, and homeland security grants play a major role in helping local fire and EMS departments to prepare for major disasters and national emergencies. The IAFC is scheduled to present at a listening session hosted by the federal FEMA Review Council on September 22.

Also, as part of its FY 2026 budget and a June 12 Executive Order on "Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response," President Trump proposed a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service. The proposal would consolidate the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) and Department of the Interior's (DOI) wildland firefighting capabilities into the new U.S. Wildland Fire Service at the DOI.

The IAFC has met with the U.S. Deputy Secretary of the Interior, Katharine MacGregor, to discuss the implementation of the U.S. Wildland Fire Service and the importance of preserving existing USFS programs like the State and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs.

THE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT (P.L. 119-21)

On July 4, President Trump signed the Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21). The new law extends tax cuts in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (P.L. 115-97) from President Trump's first administration and adds new tax cut provisions. It also increases funding for defense and homeland security. To pay for the new expenses, the bill makes changes regarding Medicaid eligibility but would not affect states' Ground Emergency Medical Transportation programs.

The new law would limit taxes on overtime. A person making under \$150,000 annually (or over \$300,000 filing jointly) can deduct \$12,500 (or \$25,000 for those filing jointly) of their overtime pay from their taxable income. If a person earns over \$150,000, the amount of their deduction will decrease by \$100 for every \$1,000 earned over the limit.

The new law also broadens the exemption for state and local taxation (SALT). The SALT cap will be raised from \$10,000 to \$40,000. However, it will phase out for high earners with modified adjusted gross incomes of \$500,000.

FY 2026 APPROPRIATIONS

After passage of the Big Beautiful Bill Act (P.L. 119-21), the House began to focus on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations bills. The House Appropriations Committee passed the FY 2026 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act (H.R. 4213) on June 26, but the Senate Appropriations Committee canceled its mark-up of a companion bill.

Figure 1 shows the funding levels for fire service programs at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

On July 22, the House Appropriations Committee passed its FY 2026 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 4754). The Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version of the bill (S. 2431) on July 24. Figure 2 shows the funding levels for federal wildland fire programs.

Both bills rejected the Trump Administration's proposal to

consolidate USFS's and DOI's wildland firefighting capabilities into one U.S. Wildland Fire Service located in the DOI. The bills would retain programs like the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) and the State Fire Assistance (SFA) programs.

The House and Senate also are working on passing their versions of the FY 2026 Labor/HHS appropriations bill (H.R. 5304/S. 2587). The Senate Appropriations Committee passed S. 2587 on July 31, while the House Appropriations Committee passed H.R. 5304 on September 9. Both bills would increase funding for the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer by \$1 million to \$6.5 million. Both programs also include funding for the SIREN grant program for rural EMS. The Senate Appropriations Committee proposed \$3.5 million for the Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program (FFFIPP), while the House Appropriations Committee was silent. So, the IAFC will be focused on protecting the FFFIPP.

Unfortunately, Congress did not pass any of the annual appropriations bill by the October 1 start of FY 2026. Instead, the Republicans and Democrats were unable to reach agreement on a continuing resolution,

so the federal government shut down many services on October 1. For example, the NFA was closed, and the USFA's Summit was postponed. The hardest part in shutting down the government is coming to an agreement to re-open it.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, there is a lot of activity in Washington these days. The IAFC also is working to introduce legislation to protect the federal FirstNet Authority by removing the February 2027 sunset date. In addition, we are working to pass legislation to extend the Public Safety Officers' Benefits program to cover families of first responders who die from job-related cancers; improve the nation's wildland fire response; allow fire departments to be reimbursed for treating Medicare patients in place; and regulate lithium-ion batteries in e-mobility devices to make them fire-safe.

You can keep up on everything happening in Washington by following the IAFC's weekly Washington Update on our website (www.iafc.org). It will be a busy fall. 💧

Ken LaSala is the IAFC's Director of Government Relations & Policy.

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19-21

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13-15

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