

All Hands Herald

Massachusetts Department of Fire Services February 2026



New Bridgewater Burn Building

A First Responder's Reflections on Family

Boiler Explosions in Massachusetts History

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The *All Hands Herald* is published three times per year by the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services. Our title incorporates the traditional fire service meaning of all hands working to extinguish a fire.

Let us know how you like the *All Hands Herald* and what we can do to make it more useful to the Massachusetts fire service and other interested parties.

If you have suggestions, ideas, or questions — or if you'd like to contribute an article, photograph, or other submission — please contact the editor:

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On the Cover: DFS Crib Support Staffer Rich Smith checks the temperature of a seasoning fire in the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's new burn building prior to its September dedication.

Back Cover: 2026 DFS Licensing Exam dates

Special thanks to: Mark Daly, Derryl Dion, Ryan Houle, Ed Kawa, Chief James Martinez, Mark McCabe, Christina Mitchell, Tim Moore, Josh Shanley,

From the Fire Marshal

Fire Prevention — As Vital Now As Ever: On the afternoon of November 26, 2025, a massive fire broke out at the Wang Fuk Court apartment complex in Hong Kong. Several blocks of high-rise buildings were engulfed in flames that burned for two straight days. Nearly 170 people died, most of them inside their apartments.

Just over a month later, a fire at Le Constellation bar in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, claimed 41 lives and injured 116. Half of the victims were under the age of 18.

The Wang Fuk Court structures reportedly had no working smoke alarms or sprinklers, and they were wrapped in flammable material used for impact protection during construction work. The fire at Le Constellation broke out in a crowded club with a single exit where sparklers were in use during a New Year's Eve celebration. Both fact patterns are sadly familiar, and deeply frustrating: if the reporting is accurate, they could so easily have been prevented.

It is often said that our life safety codes are written in blood. The painstaking work of the Board of Fire Prevention Regulations members, local fire prevention officers, and others is a vital part of our safety in homes, schools, and businesses across Massachusetts. I want to recognize all those whose mission is to ensure that we learn from — and do not repeat — the tragedies of our past.

Career Recruit Application Process: A few weeks ago, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy launched a new online application form for the Career Recruit Training Program. I am pleased to report that the system is working smoothly and streamlining what had been a cumbersome process for the MFA's Registration team. While no change comes without an adjustment period, the switch from faxing and mailing documents to an online platform was, frankly, overdue. By the time this issue went to press, we had not received a single incomplete application, the accuracy rate was much higher, and the process was moving much faster overall.

State agencies have had to tighten their collective belts over the past year or so, and DFS is no exception. With fewer personnel available, the Academy staff are working extraordinarily hard to meet the needs of the fire service under a growing workload and adjustments like this one are helping to ease the strain.

Firefighter Safety Equipment Grants: I am deeply grateful to the Healey-Driscoll Administration for funding the Firefighter Safety Equipment Grants again in FY26. As

many readers are aware, the original five-year grant program was funded by a \$25 million bond bill and delivered \$5 million per year until the last installment in 2025. The flexibility of these grants allowed local fire departments to choose turnout gear, hose lines, rescue tools, communications equipment, gas meters, and other purchases based on their unique needs. Governor Healey, Lieutenant Governor Driscoll, and their team worked very hard to find a way to fund the program in FY26, and their success will once again help our firefighters protect themselves, each other, and their communities.

DFS Transitions: The past few months have seen several significant personnel moves across the agency. First and foremost, I am pleased to announce that I have appointed **Timothy Gallagher** as director of the Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Division. As deputy director since 2017, Tim has applied more than two decades of relevant experience to improving Massachusetts' Hazmat and CBRNE response capabilities. Please join me in congratulating him on his new role.

Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Director **JP Seivane** returned to California so he could meet his family's needs full-time, and I both understand and appreciate his decision — even if we are all disappointed that his time with us was so short. We are currently recruiting for candidates to fill this important position. Fire Safety Division Director **Brian Ingram** and Code Compliance Officer **Joe Townsend** also moved on, and I wish them both the very best as they embark

on new challenges. And **Mary Joslin** of our Fiscal office retired after almost 15 years helping DFS staff procure the goods, services, and resources that allow us to support Massachusetts fire departments and the communities we all serve. Thank you for your service, Mary!

Finally, all of us were sorry to learn that **Edward T. Loder** passed away in January. Following a heroic and highly decorated 43-year career with the Boston Fire Department, Eddie served with the DFS Crib Support team for nearly 20 years, playing a vital role in training for new and veteran firefighters across Massachusetts. He was an extraordinary man with a remarkable life, always humble, and the font of a thousand good stories. He was beloved by all his colleagues, and we will miss him deeply.



Edward T. "Eddie" Loder, 1948-2026



State Officials Dedicate New Bridgewater Burn Building

On September 25, 2025, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey joined State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine, Massachusetts Firefighting Academy staff, fire service leaders, and local and state officials from across Massachusetts at the Department of Fire Services' Bridgewater campus.

The occasion was a defining moment for the growing campus — the dedication of a new Class A burn building that will serve Academy recruits and veteran firefighters for decades to come.

The day got off to a damp start, with heavy rain moving a planned reception and ribbon-cutting ceremony indoors.

“People have asked me if I could do something about the weather this morning,” Rev. Gary Blume of the Massachusetts Corps of Fire Chaplains said. “Sorry, I’m in sales, not management.”

State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine recounted the growth of the Bridgewater campus.

“Five years ago, the Legislature authorized DCAMM to transfer this 18-acre site from the Department of Correction to the Department of Fire Services,” he said. “Back in 2020, this campus was just a grassy field and a handful of dorms and administration buildings. Today, we have modern classrooms for the Academy, offices for the Fire Safety Division’s inspectors and code compliance team, and State Police fire investigators and K9 trainers. And now we’re celebrating the latest addition — a dedicated burn building that will set the standard for live-fire

training in Massachusetts.”

Academy Instructor Jim Hagerty took Governor Healey on a guided tour of the three-story structure, explaining its features and their value for realistic firefighter training.

The 5,400-square foot building features 11 interior burn rooms, he explained, and was designed to simulate a wide range of fire scenarios commonly encountered in Massachusetts. Training exercises will cover fires on triple-decker porches, interior and exterior fire extension, garage fires, basement entry through a bulkhead, standpipe operations, roof ventilation, and more. As with the Academy’s other burn buildings, firefighters will train utilizing straw and food-grade wooden pallets to ensure consistent temperatures and reduce toxic products of combustion.

“Every day our firefighters put their lives on the line to protect the people of Massachusetts,” Governor Healey said later. “They deserve the very best training to prepare for the dangers they face. This new burn building provides exactly that. It’s a critical investment in their safety, their readiness, and their ability to return home to their families. Whether they’re just starting their careers or have decades of experience, this facility will help ensure they’re equipped to meet any challenge.”

“This new facility offers a wide range of training scenarios to make sure that our firefighters are prepared to respond no matter what emergency they face,” said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. “We’re grateful for the leadership of Fire Marshal

Davine and his team at the Department of Fire Services for their efforts to ensure that our firefighters have the very best training available to serve the people of Massachusetts.”

“The Massachusetts fire service is a fundamental part of our homeland security infrastructure,” said former Public Safety & Security Secretary Terrence Reidy. “Our firefighters are on the front lines – not just at fires but at explosions, building collapses, mass casualty incidents, hazardous materials events, and more. Investing in this new burn building is an investment in safer communities across the Commonwealth.”

The Bridgewater campus is one of the three Department of Fire Services facilities dedicated to supporting local fire departments statewide. Primarily serving Massachusetts’ six southeastern counties, the campus supports more than 100 local fire departments and houses personnel from the DFS Code Compliance & Enforcement Unit, Boiler & Pressure Vessel Safety Program, and State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit in addition to the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy.

About 120 career, call, and volunteer recruits graduate from the Bridgewater campus each year. Prior to the new burn building’s opening, they conducted live fire training in a multi-purpose Search & Rescue prop. Veteran firefighters also train at the Academy to hone and maintain their perishable skills, and the Bridgewater facility is the focal point for its Structural Collapse Rescue Technician program.

“Opening the Bridgewater burn building is a major milestone in the development of a site that supports more than 100 local fire departments in southeastern Massachusetts,” said State Fire Marshal Davine. “In just a few short years since it opened in 2020, it’s grown into a full-service facility that offers a full array of fire training, protection, and investigation resources for the region.”

The structure is part of an \$18 million infrastructure investment for the 18-acre campus. The project also includes paving to the far end of the campus, where the building is located; a water reclamation system designed to reduce overall water use; and upgraded utilities to support future growth. The facility was designed by Dore & Whittier out of Newburyport, constructed by Bond Building, and funded through the Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance’s capital budget.

State Fire Marshal Davine thanked DCAMM Commissioner Adam Baacke, former State Fire Marshal Peter Ostroskey, Deputy State Fire Marshal Maribel Fournier, Director of Administrative Services Sheila Remondi, Director of Capital Asset Management Fred Corazzini, Bridgewater Facility Manager Dan Quinn, and others who helped bring the plans to fruition.

“As I mentioned, this project began years ago, and I’ve been extremely lucky to have their continued commitment to its progress,” he said. “Finally, I want to highlight the folks who work here and across DFS and the Academy every day. As most of you know, our program coordinators, instructors, and Crib support are all experienced firefighters – some on the job and some retired after years of service. As a graduate of the Academy, I know how valuable it is to have instructors with decades of lived experience. They’ve chosen to share their wisdom with the next generation of firefighters, and I’d like to give them all a round of applause.”



Governor Maura Healey tours the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's new Bridgewater burn building with Instructor Jim Hagerty (in blue), Deputy State Fire Marshal Maribel Fournier (left) and State Fire Marshal Jon Davine (right).



Christina Mitchell Photo

“I’m in sales, not management,” joked Chaplain Gary Blume when asked if he could do anything about the rain. With him are (left to right) Governor Healey, State Fire Marshal Davine, Rep. Dennis Gallagher, DCAMM Commissioner Adam Baacke, Westborough Fire Chief Patrick Purcell, and Deputy State Fire Marshal Fournier.



Christina Mitchell Photo

DFS Crib Support staff prepare to attack a fire during a demonstration for local and state officials at the new burn building in Bridgewater.

An Unspoken Sacrifice: A First Responder's Reflections on Family

By Mark Daly

First responders are everyone's heroes, but that title can be a lot to live up to – especially at home. Those of us with children have all felt the pain of missing out on once-in-a-lifetime experiences with their kids.

This article came about because my daughter asked me one day, out of the blue, if anyone had written a book from the child's perspective of having a first responder parent. I thought about it and answered no, not in the way she meant.

I can only speak from my experience as a firefighter, but I have a sneaking suspicion that the similarities cross all professions of first responders. These are great and rewarding professions that can be incredibly fulfilling. And while it's generally recognized that the career is stressful, it can be especially tough on families.

Whether you are a police officer, firefighter, in the armed forces, or in private EMS, a good part of your career is spent "paying your dues" to get years under your belt. Most of our pay schedules and vacation accruals are based on length of service, so we try to race through months and years hoping to speed up time and get to the next benchmark.

If you're a parent, this is a paradox. As much as you want the years to advance quickly in your professional life, you want to slow them down and cherish the moments you have with your family and loved ones.

This can cause tremendous internal tension because it's nearly impossible to do both. Rather than family-centered planning in terms of school milestones, big games, performances, and wedding anniversaries, your thoughts can be dominated by the fiscal or calendar year, promotional cycle, contract negotiations, and all the benchmarks along the way. This isn't selfish thinking – the medical plan sign-up, the next raise, and all the other aspects of managing your career directly affect your loved ones. But at the same time, they can squeeze out momentous birthdays, holidays, family vacations, and even just a few hours with the people who love you.

It's easy for us as adults to write off Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, or even St. Patrick's Day as "Hallmark holidays" that don't mean too much in the grand scheme of things. But they can mean the world to our families – and especially our children. And the sad fact is that the more kids you have, the more special days you'll miss as a first responder.

I think when we downplay the importance of these events to make them feel better, we're really trying to make ourselves feel better. It's what we have to do sometimes to let ourselves off the hook for missing yet another moment.



That's why impromptu birthday parties at the station can be so much more meaningful than they appear from the outside. It's why a quick holiday drive-by or drop-in can be so important – if you're lucky enough to live and work in the same community. For those who don't, it means the spouse loading the kids up for a visit to the firehouse to see their parents, adding to their stress instead of easing it.

When kids walk in off the street, visiting the firehouse or police station is the most exciting place on earth. For the children of a working firefighter or police officer, though, it can represent the place that takes their dad or mom on some of the biggest days of their young lives. It's the place you go instead of being with them.

We often talk about the holidays we miss, the weekends we're at work, and other sacrifices that first responders make. The more I speak to my children, the more I realize that, as proud as they are of what we do, they're the ones who make sacrifices for us. After all, it's their birthday, their big game, their concert, their accomplishments – not ours – that we're not present for.

They also see us when we finally let our guard down after a long shift. Children soak up feelings and experiences like sponges. They're a lot smarter and perceptive than we might give them credit for. And I regret that they were probably more aware when I had a tough time at work than I recognized. "Your job can be very exciting at times," one of my daughters recently observed, "but you see a lot of bad things too, don't you?" Of course she knew this. Even though we try to shield our families from what goes on at the job, they know us well enough to see when something is wrong.

The flip side of this is that calls involving children take on a personal significance. As a parent, you might bring a comfort level to these incidents based on practical experience, but you can't help but see your own kids in the ones you rescue, treat, or interview. And when you're driving back from the scene, you're left wondering – "What went wrong to bring this event on this family? How do I prevent this from happening to mine? Is that even possible?"

When my daughter was 10, she asked me "Daddy, do you think you've worked half my lifetime?" I reassured her that I hadn't, but I also knew her question revealed a perception of how often I was away from home.

We miss a lot. It's great to be able to zip over to a sporting event and see your child beam as you pull in with the engine, ambulance, or cruiser. (Of course, you must hit the lights and siren to announce yourself – it would be rude not to.) But it's painful to think that they'll look for you when they score a goal, get a hit, or perform their solo and realize you had to leave for a call and miss that irreplaceable moment.

A lot of us grew up in an age when you were lucky if one parent made it to a game, recital, or school function. It's a different time now. We're trying to raise better kids and make better families, so the "back in my day" mentality doesn't help anyone.

I can see my children growing up in the pictures taped up in my locker at work. Adding to them over time is such a small thing to do, but you'll come to value it deeply – and I think every first responder should take the time to do it. More than once, I've found myself in a mood that wasn't conducive to kindness, but those photos in my locker reminded me why I was there and who I was doing it for.

We do a tough and dangerous job not for ourselves but for others. And most of all, we do it to support and provide for the people we love. We spend so many hours, days, and weekends away from home in hopes that we'll be able to make it up later and enjoy our time together. With a little luck and a lot of effort, we'll have made the right kind of impact in their lives and they'll accept the sacrifices – theirs and ours – as worth it in the end.

Lieutenant Mark Daly is a 23-year veteran of the Bedford Fire Department. He is the father of two daughters and one son and the husband to his wife, Hilary, who is the foundation that keeps it all together. He has also been an Assistant Coordinator of the Support Branch at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy for nine years.



Mark Daly Photo

The Impact of Boiler Explosions on Industrial Safety Regulations in Massachusetts: A Historical Review

By Josh Shanley

The Industrial Revolution brought significant changes to manufacturing in the United States, including Massachusetts. The rise of factories and mills led to an increased reliance on steam power, produced by steam boilers and steam engines. These powerful devices were a boon for manufacturing, but the young technology was unregulated and the devices themselves were often poorly constructed and maintained, leading to frequent and deadly explosions that destroyed lives, homes, and businesses. Massachusetts, like many other states, experienced a series of catastrophic boiler explosions throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, resulting in significant casualties, property damage, and financial losses.

What set Massachusetts apart was its determination to impose stricter safety regulations to protect people and property. By the turn of the century, the Commonwealth led the nation in boiler safety, establishing the Massachusetts Board of Boiler Rules and promulgating regulations for the construction of boilers and pressure vessels that would later be adopted by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).

Early Boiler Explosions and the Call for Reform

The early years of industrialization in Massachusetts were marked by a series of devastating boiler explosions, highlighting the dangers of unregulated steam power. In 1875, three major explosions occurred within months of each other, causing multiple fatalities and extensive damage. These incidents exposed the lack of adequate safety measures and regulatory oversight, prompting initial calls for reform.

On January 4, 1875, a boiler at the Franconia Iron Company's mill in Wareham exploded, killing one worker and injuring four others. Another explosion occurred on April 15, at the Renfrew gingham works in South Adams, Massachusetts. The incident resulted in the deaths of two workers and severe damage to the mill. And less than two months later, on June 9, another catastrophic explosion occurred at the Smith Paper Company's Housatonic Mill in Lee, causing two fatalities, 14 injuries, and \$25,000 in damages.

These early explosions exposed the lack of standardized safety practices and the urgent need for government oversight in boiler

operation. The investigations and inquests that followed these incidents played a crucial role in raising awareness about boiler safety issues and advocating for stricter regulations.

Massachusetts Becomes a Leader in Boiler Safety

In the years following the 1875 explosions, the call for stricter boiler safety regulations grew louder. In 1894, a representative from a major New England ironworks met with Chief Rufus R. Wade of the Massachusetts District Police, the predecessor of today's Massachusetts State Police, to propose a revision of boiler inspection laws and regulations on steam boiler fittings. The proposal emphasized the need for regular inspections by trained professionals and argued that faulty fittings were a primary cause of explosions.

This proposal led to the passage of new boiler safety laws in 1895, marking a significant step toward industrial safety reform in Massachusetts. Known as "An Act to Regulate Steam Engineering," the legislation established a system for regular boiler inspections by trained professionals and mandated the licensing of boiler operators. They also aimed to ensure that boilers were operated and maintained by qualified personnel, reducing the risk of negligence and mechanical failures.

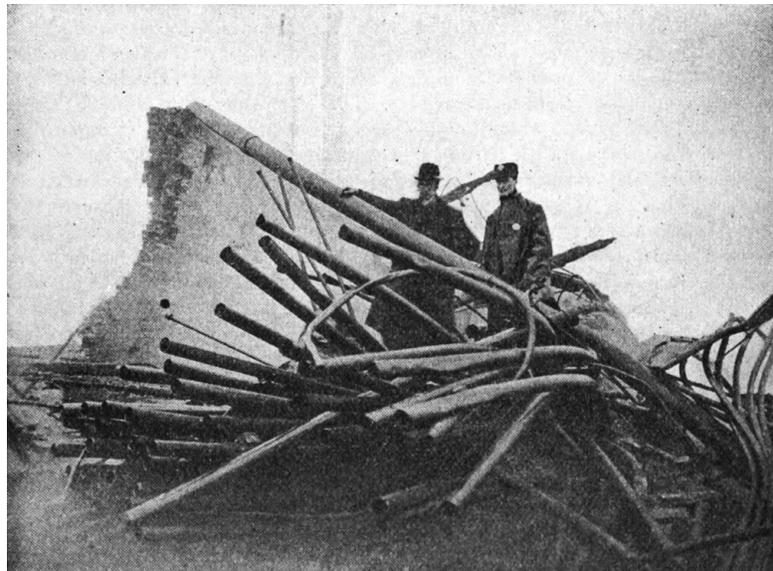
Despite challenges in implementation, the new laws had a significant impact on boiler safety in Massachusetts. By 1899, the number of boiler explosions had decreased dramatically, demonstrating the effectiveness of proper training and certification in boiler

operations. This success reinforced the need for proper oversight and contributed to further refinements in boiler safety regulations. It also helped the state achieve a remarkable safety record compared to other states: in 1900, Massachusetts recorded zero boiler explosions, a remarkable accomplishment in an era defined by steam power.

A 1902 report by Chief Wade highlighted Massachusetts' continued success in preventing boiler explosions. The report attributed the state's safety record to its strict licensing requirements, ensuring that only competent individuals operated boilers. The report also emphasized the importance of regular inspections and the enforcement of pressure limits and safety devices.



Aftermath of the 1905 boiler explosion at Brockton's Grover Shoe Factory.



Investigators at the scene of a 1906 boiler explosion in Lynn.

Explosions in Brockton and Lynn Lead to Greater Oversight

The relative calm in boiler-related incidents in Massachusetts was shattered in 1905 with the devastating explosion at the R. B. Grover & Co. shoe factory in Brockton. The March 20 explosion triggered a massive fire, resulting in at least 50 deaths, the destruction of multiple buildings, and an estimated \$200,000 in financial losses — more than \$7 million in today's dollars, adjusted for inflation.

The Brockton explosion exposed a major flaw in the existing boiler safety regulations: privately insured boilers, such as those at the Grover factory, were not subject to the state's strict inspection requirements. This incident served as a wake-up call, prompting discussions about expanding state oversight to cover all industrial boilers, regardless of insurance status.

The following year, another major explosion occurred at the P. J. Harney Co. shoe factory in Lynn, Massachusetts. The December 6, 1906, explosion injured 12 people and ignited a fire that destroyed four large factory buildings and seven nearby homes, bringing renewed attention to boiler safety issues.

The investigations into these incidents revealed that both blasts were likely caused by an opened seam, or lap crack, in the boilers. This finding led to increased scrutiny of riveted lap seam constructed boilers, which were common at the time but known for their tendency to fail under pressure. They also fueled a movement to phase out lap seam constructed boilers and replace them with more structurally sound designs.

A few weeks later, the Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection & Insurance Company published an article likewise that criticized the use of lap seams in boilers, suggesting that these seams were inherently flawed and prone to failure. It further argued that the primary issue in boiler explosions was the construction materials used, specifically impurities in the steel that contributed to weakness. The author called for stricter government oversight and more thorough inspections to prevent future disasters.

The Brockton and Lynn explosions prompted more than a dozen bills in the Legislature. In 1907, Governor Curtis Guild signed "An Act Relating to the Operation and Inspection of Steam Boilers," which required annual internal and external inspections of most boilers, mandated the reporting of unsafe boilers, and established the Board of Boiler Rules to set safety standards — a duty it carries out to this very day.

Specifically, the Board was created "to formulate rules for the construction, installation and inspection of steam boilers, and for ascertaining the safe working pressure to be carried on said boilers, to prescribe tests, if they deem it necessary, to ascertain the qualities of Material used in the construction of boilers; to formulate rules regulating the construction and sizes of safety valves for boilers of different sizes and pressures, the construction, use and location of fusible safety plugs, appliances for indicating the pressure of steam and the level of water in the boiler, and such other appliances as the board may deem necessary to safety in operating

steam boilers; and to make a standard form of certificate of inspection." It was granted the authority to hear petitions for rule changes, to make changes on its own initiative, and to take other related actions.

The 1907 Act marked a significant step forward in boiler safety regulation in the United States. The ASME would later use Massachusetts' regulations to develop its Boiler & Pressure Vessel Codes, which helped to create a safer industrial environment for workers and the public far beyond the Commonwealth.

Conclusion

The period from 1875 to 1910 was a critical period in the development of boiler safety regulations in Massachusetts. The catastrophic explosions that occurred during this time exposed the dangers of unregulated steam power and prompted a series of legislative responses aimed at improving safety standards.

The investigations and inquests that followed these explosions played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing policy changes. The findings of these investigations often highlighted specific safety issues, such as faulty fittings, inadequate inspections, and improper maintenance, leading to targeted regulations to address these problems.

The duty and responsibility for boiler inspections was transferred from the Massachusetts District Police to the Department of Public Safety in 1919. Nearly 100 years later, in 2017, Massachusetts' Boiler & Pressure Vessel (BPV) Program became a branch of the Department of Fire Services, where it continues to uphold these critical safety measures. Today, it is responsible for ensuring that all non-residential boilers and pressure vessels in the state are registered and inspected in accordance with Massa-

chusetts law. Facilities under its jurisdiction include power plants, hospitals, nursing homes, and schools — locations where safety and operational reliability are paramount.

In the modern era, the BPV team conducts more than 60,000 Boiler & Pressure Vessel inspections and issues or renews more than 6,000 licenses in an average year, reflecting the ongoing commitment to maintaining industrial safety and ensuring that only qualified professionals inspect, operate, and maintain these systems. BPV's district engineering inspectors also remain actively involved in investigating boiler and pressure vessel incidents, determining causes, and holding violators accountable when safety regulations are breached.

The state's leadership in boiler safety regulation has not only shaped Massachusetts' industrial landscape but has also served as a model for national safety standards. The work of early reformers—inspectors, policymakers, and engineers—continues to protect workers and the public from the devastating consequences of boiler and pressure vessel failures. Today, through comprehensive inspections, licensing programs, and enforcement of strict safety protocols, Massachusetts remains at the forefront of boiler and pressure vessel safety, ensuring that the hard-fought reforms of the past remain an enduring safeguard for the future.



The Department of Fire Services' Boiler & Pressure Vessel Program is responsible for more than 60,000 inspections a year to protect people and property from the types of explosions that injured and killed dozens of workers in the 19th and 20th centuries.



36th Annual Firefighter of the Year Awards

On September 25, 2025, Governor Maura Healey, Public Safety & Security Secretary Gina K. Kwon, and State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine honored firefighters from 15 local fire departments and two state agencies for acts of lifesaving heroism and community service at Massachusetts' 36th Annual Firefighter of the Year Awards.

"These awards reflect selfless acts of courage and skill that saved lives, protected homes, and delivered our most vulnerable residents from danger," said Governor Healey. "To every firefighter who puts on the gear and answers the call, you have my gratitude and the gratitude of our entire state. We are so proud to support you as you support our safety every day."

"Massachusetts firefighters are our first line of defense against countless hazards," said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll. "It's an honor to recognize the breathtaking courage that the Firefighter of the Year awards reflect, and to thank these brave professionals for the work they do to protect our communities every day."

"The stories behind the awards took place at fires outdoors, in homes, and at businesses," said Secretary Kwon. "But they also took place at medical emergencies, technical rescues, and car crashes, in icy water and on ladders high above city streets. If there is one common theme, it's the members of our community who never hesitate to help people in danger."



"A force of nature:" Chicopee Fire Capt. Katie Collins-Kalbaugh received the Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service.

"We have a saying in the fire service – you risk a little to save a little, and you risk a lot to save a lot," said State Fire Marshal Davine. "In big cities and small towns, these firefighters risked everything when lives were on the line. The physical, mental, and technical skills they bring to this demanding job are second to none, and the Firefighter of the Year awards are a small way of recognizing their singular value to our Commonwealth."

As the ceremony began, emcee Doug Meehan asked for a moment of silence for two Massachusetts firefighters who died in the line of duty during the previous year.

"Firefighter Jeffrey Albanese of the Brockton Fire Department and Firefighter Jeffrey Deschenes of the North Andover Fire Department both gave about a quarter of a century to protecting their communities," he said. "Their courage, service, and sacrifice define the heroism of the Massachusetts fire service. And as we recognize them, please also recognize the loved ones at home who cherish their memory."

Captain Katie Collins-Kalbaugh of the Chicopee Fire Department received the Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service, named for the beloved philanthropist and founder of the Hundred Club. Collins-Kalbaugh was recognized for her work as a longtime fire safety and prevention advocate.

"Whether she's on camera for an interview, testifying to the City Council, at a fire scene in the midnight hours, or working with the Western Mass Safety and Fire Education Association to protect and inform residents and families, she is nothing less than a force of nature," Meehan said.

State Fire Marshal Davine presented the Stephen D. Coan Fire Marshal's award to two groups. The first was Chief Fire Warden David Celino and the Department of Conservation & Recreation's wildland firefighters for their work during the wildfires that raged across Massachusetts during the fall of 2024.

"Early each morning for a month straight, Chief Celino led calls with fire service leadership, state agency heads, and other stakeholders," State Fire Marshal Davine said. "He drew on decades of experience with wildland fire behavior, a deep understanding of climate and topography, and his personal observations at the scenes unfolding across the state. And he identified the locations to watch, the associated challenges, and



Chief Fire Warden David Celino and DCR wildland firefighters were honored for their work during the fall 2024 wildfires.

the resources that could help – from National Guard water drops to the humble leaf blower.

“Meanwhile, dozens of DCR wildland firefighters lent boots-on-the-ground assistance to local fire departments in every corner of the Commonwealth. They navigated heavy smoke, falling snag trees, and uneven terrain at every step. Seasonal personnel worked weeks past their expected end dates to deliver apparatus, dig containment lines, and help battle the flames that put more than 700 homes and other structures at risk.”

The second Fire Marshal’s Award went to 19 Massachusetts Firefighting Academy instructors and support staff who saved the life of a recruit who went into cardiac arrest during training early last year.

“The Academy’s Stow campus was busy on the morning of January 29,” the Marshal recounted. “It was Training Day 23 and Burn Day 2 for members of Class #328. At about 10:00 am, just after the first burn of the day, one of the recruits appeared to be in distress. In the span of just a few moments, he lost consciousness and went into cardiac arrest. Fortunately, the on-duty personnel immediately sprang into action. They quickly took his vitals and applied oxygen, a defibrillator, and

CPR while calling 9-1-1. They got the recruit’s pulse back, got him breathing on his own, and he was conscious and alert when he was transported – with an instructor riding next to him in the ambulance. I’m very happy to report that he made a full recovery.

“Medical emergencies are part and parcel of a firefighter’s day-to-day work, but let’s be honest – a crisis like this is different when the patient is someone entrusted to your care. Fortunately, as active duty and retired firefighters, they demonstrated the mental clarity and technical skill necessary for the urgent work at hand. Each and every one of these personnel played a key role in the chain of care that saved this recruit’s life. I am deeply grateful to them for their rapid, professional, and ultimately life-saving work that morning.”

More than 80 other firefighters from Brockton, Canton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Framingham, Lowell, Marlborough, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Rockland, Stoneham, and Yarmouth were honored for their actions. The awards included two individual citations for meritorious conduct, 10 group citations, and 13 Medals of Valor. For a full list of the recipients and their awards, or to watch video of the ceremony, visit www.mass.gov/dfs and search for *Firefighter of the Year*.



Massachusetts Firefighting Academy personnel were recognized for lifesaving actions during a medical emergency on campus last year.

DFS Cancer Screenings Doubled in 2025

More Massachusetts Firefighters Taking Advantage of Early Detection Programs

Nearly 1,400 Massachusetts firefighters took part in free occupational cancer screenings through the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in 2025 – a record for the Department of Fire Services' Firefighter Cancer Program and nearly double the number from 2024.

Because firefighters are at greater risk of developing certain types of cancer than the public they protect, DFS coordinates free skin cancer screenings, chest CT scans, PSA blood tests, ultrasounds, and mammograms for eligible firefighters through the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. Skin cancer screenings are performed by volunteer dermatologists, while the other screenings are performed by contracted vendors across the state.

"Whether you're a call, volunteer, or career firefighter, active duty or retired, our cancer programs are available at no cost to you or your department," State Fire Marshal Davine said. "The worst cancer diagnosis is a late one, so please take advantage of these resources."

The number of firefighter cancer screenings provided through the program nearly doubled from 2024 to 2025, State Fire Marshal Davine said. Skin cancer screenings, which have been offered since 2018, rose from 612 to 785. Newer programs saw sharper increases: CT scans increased from 99 to 168; PSA blood tests from 44 to 160; ultrasounds from 91 to 255; and mammograms from two to nine.

"This may be due to increased familiarity with the screening options, or the steps we took to make them more accessible, or word of mouth in the fire service," said State Fire Marshal Davine. "Whatever the reason, it's a great result and we want to see those numbers continue climbing. Do it for yourself, do it for your family, or do it for your career – just do it!"

Also in 2025, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy rolled out a new instructor-led cancer awareness presentation in partnership with the Firefighter Cancer Support Network.

The new presentation, "Doing it Right: Reducing Cancer in the Fire Service," updates an earlier cancer prevention program and highlights cancer prevention best practices on and off the job. It also promotes the benefits of early detection through screenings and awareness of baseline health. By late 2025, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy had delivered it to about 600 new recruits, almost 50 chiefs and senior officers, and about 230 firefighters at various ranks in between. Another 25 firefighters have taken a train-the-trainer course that empowers them to deliver the presentation effectively at local and regional fire departments.

You can learn more about Massachusetts' firefighter cancer programs at the Department of Fire Services' website. Visit www.mass.gov/dfs and search for *Firefighter Cancer*.

Special Operations Debuts Interior Drone Program

The Department of Fire Services has added three new drones to its Special Operations fleet that allow fire/rescue personnel to view footage from hazardous indoor environments.

Until recently, the Special Operations team used drones primarily to provide local aerial footage from outside a structure or above a large wildfire or search area. The new drones can operate reliably inside a building, which will be especially valuable for Hazmat, structural collapse, and other dangerous calls. The inaugural mission took place at a fatal fire with partial collapse in Oakham on January 21.

DFS tested the drones over the course of 2025 and procured three of them during the fall. The Special Operations team demonstrated the drones for DFS Hazmat technicians, State Police fire investigators and bomb technicians assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, and the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's senior leadership for input before announcing the new program publicly.



An interior drone flies below decks on the USS Massachusetts last fall.

"We try to gather as much information on the hot zone environment as we can before sending a Hazmat technician downrange," said Timothy Gallagher, director of the DFS Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Division. "The real-time footage from these drones could help us identify hazards or threats, allowing us to form an entry plan that's safer for our personnel."

"Fire investigators are often called to structures that are badly damaged and unsafe for entry," said Lt. Marc Reidy, commander of the State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office. "Bomb technicians frequently have to assess suspicious devices and energetic materials in homes, businesses, and other buildings. Streaming a live feed from

these environments to a safe location is a smart use of technology to keep first responders and the public out of harm's way."

Local fire departments can request the new drones 24 hours a day by calling the MEMA Dispatch line at 508-820-2000.

Coming This Spring: Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Updated Trench Rescue Technician Program

After more than a year of focused curriculum development, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Technical Rescue Group will begin delivery of its updated Trench Rescue Technician program this year.

What started in November 2024 culminates in an immersive hands-on program available to firefighters across the Commonwealth starting in the spring of 2026. The new Trench Rescue Technician program utilizes the most current skills, techniques, and equipment for mitigating a trench rescue incident while exceeding the Job Performance Requirements found in the 2021 edition of NFPA 1006, *Standard for Technical Rescue Personnel Professional Qualifications*, Chapter 12.

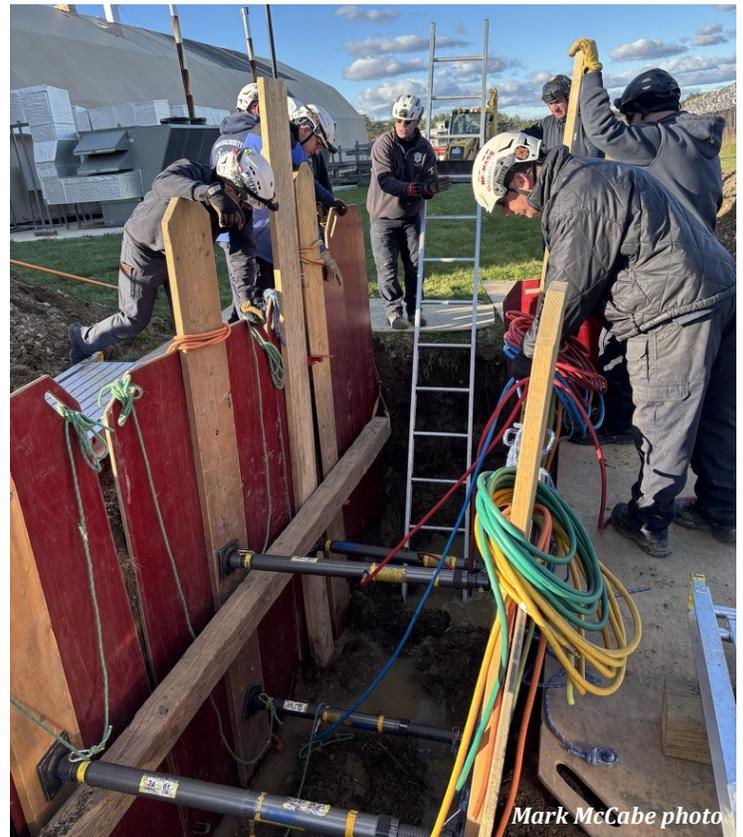
The development team of Jesse Phelps, Jason Saunders, Michael Caddell, and Mark McCabe undertook the monumental task of research, development, training, equipment purchasing, and preparing the Technical Rescue Group instructor cadre in delivering this new program. Students will have the opportunity to hone their trench rescue skills while shoring a minimum of six real-world trenches over four intense training days and be prepared to sit for the written ProBoard Certification examination.

The new four-day Trench Rescue Technician program follows the crawl-walk-run model found in all of the MFA's Technical Rescue programs. Students begin with classroom learning on



Mark McCabe photo

The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Technical Rescue Group spent more than a year updating its Trench Rescue Technician program.



Mark McCabe photo

Even under controlled training conditions, working in and around trenches is inherently dangerous. The Trench Rescue Technician course builds firefighter awareness of these hazards and how to mitigate them.

the different types of trenches, soil types and classifications, applicable laws and standards, and equipment — and how to apply this knowledge to mitigating trench hazards and shoring a trench collapse incident. From the classroom, students move to multiple ground school stations to become more familiar with the tools and equipment. Before each trench shoring evolution, students learn how to safely size-up the incident, develop a plan, and get to work on implementing it.

Over the course of the program, students learn how to shore up a basic straight wall trench collapse using pneumatic, mechanical, and lumber struts. They move onto increasingly difficult scenarios involving end wall shoring, large void shoring, and finishing with shoring deep and intersecting trenches. All of this is accomplished safely and efficiently using the best common practice rescue techniques and equipment. Once the trench is safely shored, students are shown several methods to extricate an injured or incapacitated victim.

The Technical Rescue Group is proud of its newest course and the hard work and dedication of the development team in giving Massachusetts firefighters the knowledge, skills, and abilities to handle the difficult task of trench rescue. Watch the DFS Learning Management System for course openings in the months ahead.

Fire & Life Safety Education Conference Celebrates 30 Years



Each year, the Department of Fire Services' Public Fire & Life Safety Education Conference delivers dynamic speakers and timely workshops to a network of highly motivated professionals from the fire service and beyond. On September 17 and 18, 2025, the annual event celebrated a major milestone — its 30th anniversary.

In remarks praising the conference, the Fire & Life Safety Task Force, the attendees, and their shared mission, State Fire Marshal Jon Davine noted that fire deaths and injuries have been falling in Massachusetts since the first conference in 1995.

“After the public education push that began in earnest 30 years ago, fire-related injuries began a decline that continues to this day,” he said. “Advances in medical treatment, firefighter training, fire protection technology, and other factors have all helped to drive down fatalities. But the overall reduction in injuries – to civilians and firefighters – means that our residents are better equipped to respond appropriately to a fire emergency at home. To install, test, and maintain smoke alarms. To plan and practice home escape plans. To get out, stay out, and call 9-1-1 in an emergency. To do all the things you’ve taught them, day in and day out for 30 years.”

Deputy State Fire Marshal Maribel Fournier noted that the inaugural conference followed a tragic year that saw 93 fire deaths in Massachusetts — including 25 children.

“There was a sense of urgency in the State Fire Marshal’s office

that we had to do more to teach fire prevention and life safety,” she said.

The first Pub Ed conference followed and has become the premier event for Massachusetts’ fire and life safety education community every year since then — with one exception during the COVID-19 pandemic. After the first annual conference and the Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) program that began a few months later, fire deaths in Massachusetts never again reached 1994 levels — and child fire deaths never even reached half that number, falling to historically low levels in recent years.

The 2025 conference theme was *Stay the Course*, affirming the successful strategies that have helped to make Massachusetts one of the most fire-safe states in the nation. Featured speakers included not one but two state fire marshals — Lauri Volkert from Connecticut and Michael Desrochers from Vermont, who also serves as president of the National Association of State Fire Marshals — as well as an array of workshops led by professionals from the fire service, public education, public health, community risk reduction, and related fields. More than 250 fire and life safety professionals took part on each day, making it one of the best attended in recent memory.



Lt. Matthew Bearse of the Yarmouth Fire Department (third from right) was named the 2025 Fire & Life Safety Educator of the Year. With him are (from left to right) DFS Public Education Coordinator Sheryl Hedlund; FF James Sorenson, Lt. Sean O'Neill and Captain William Paskiewicz of Billerica FD; FF Melvin Pichardo of Chelmsford FD; and State Fire Marshal Jon Davine. Also nominated but not shown is FF Anthony Leite of Lowell FD.



CT Fire Marshal Lauri Volkert

The high point of the event was the Educator of the Year Award, which was presented to Lt. Matthew Bearse of the Yarmouth Fire Department.

Coming out of the COVID pandemic, fire safety education was on hiatus in Yarmouth and countless other communities, State Fire Marshal Davine said during the presentation. Lt. Bearse recognized the need to bring it back to prominence and started with the 6th grade. His plan was to start small and expand the program from there one step at a time.



VT Fire Marshal and NASFM President Michael Desrochers

“He couldn’t have made a better decision at a better time,” the Marshal said. “A few months later, a fire broke out in a Yarmouth home occupied by two people. One was a sixth grader who had learned to ‘Get low and go’ through the SAFE program at her school. She was able to escape the home as a direct result of Lt. Bearse’s renewed attention to school-based fire safety, and firefighters were able to rescue the remaining adult occupant.”

Also nominated for the Educator of the Year Award were:

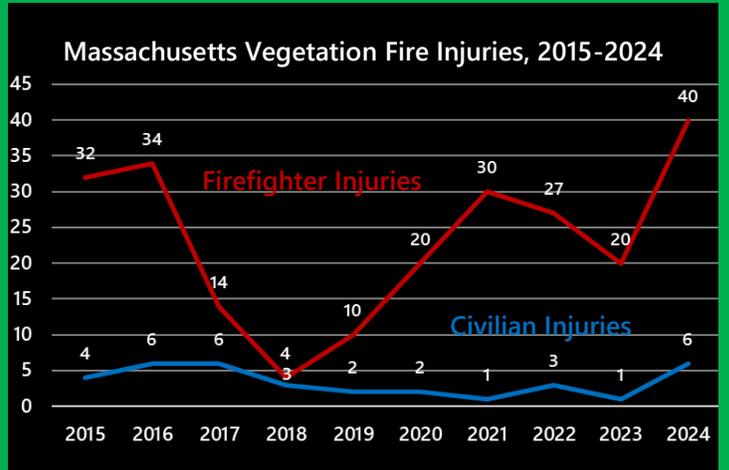
- Captain William Paskiewicz of the Billerica Fire Department;
- Team Billerica from the Town of Billerica;
- Firefighter Melvin Pichardo of the Chelmsford Fire Department; and
- Firefighter Anthony Leite of the Lowell Fire Department

“The days, months, and years you put into fire and life safety education have life-saving value,” Deputy Fournier said. “It’s deeply appreciated by your colleagues, your communities, and all of us at DFS. And most of all, it has a lasting impact on the health and safety of our residents – especially the most vulnerable among us.”

“It seems like every month there’s a flashy new solution to all our problems,” said State Fire Marshal Davine. “But you can tell the value of a thing by its staying power. And bringing a crowd like this, from all over Massachusetts, together almost every single year for 30 years — well, that’s the definition of staying power.”

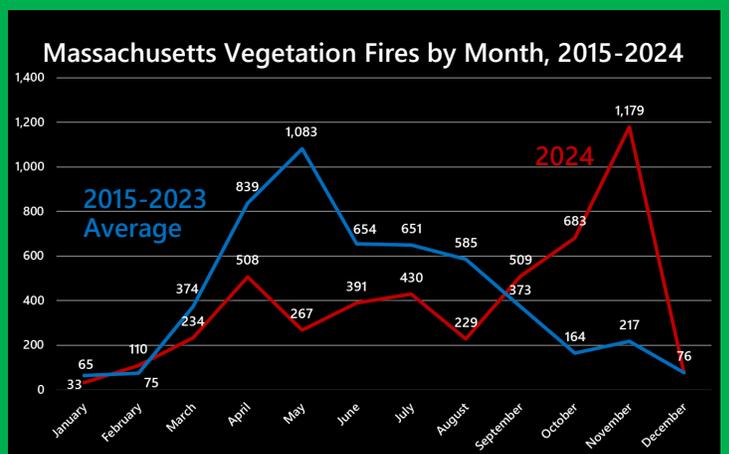
Seasonal Safety Spotlight: Outdoor Fires

From 2015 to 2024, there were more than 51,000 natural vegetation fires in Massachusetts, burning about 22,000 acres of land. These fires caused 231 firefighter injuries, 34 civilian injuries, and seven civilian fatalities. Outdoor fires pose significant challenges for firefighters, not the least of which are the off-road and often remote locations. It can be difficult if not impossible to stage apparatus in these areas, meaning water supply issues, overexertion, and falling snag trees all pose common hazards.



Massachusetts’ traditional brush fire season begins in the late winter and tends to peak in the spring, falling off as fresh grass pulls water from the ground and green leaves fill out overhead, providing cover from direct sunlight. The fall 2024 wildfires turned that pattern upside down, but the fire service should still be aware of the historical trends and prepare for outdoor fires this spring.

Open burning, including unlawful burning of trash, leaves, grass, and other prohibited materials, is a factor in these fires each year. It can be helpful to emphasize for residents that a permit is always required in advance — or that open burning is prohibited in your community. An adult must always be present with tools to extinguish the fire at all times. For more open burning safety messaging from DFS and Mass DEP, visit www.mass.gov/dfs and search for *Open Burning*.





Fire & Explosion Investigation News

Yarmouth: On June 17, 2025, residents of an Old Colony Way home were alerted by smoke alarms, safely escaped, and called 9-1-1. The Yarmouth Fire Department responded and extinguished the fire, which started in the basement. With State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, they determined that the fire had been intentionally set using an open flame to combustible materials. Based on interviews and other evidence, the Yarmouth Police Department obtained a warrant charging a resident with arson and other offenses.

Brimfield: The State Police Bomb Squad responded to a Palmer business in May 2025 after an employee's notebook was found to have documents related to explosive device construction. The employee was on probation after prior convictions for possession of explosive devices. State Police fire investigators and bomb techs assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office located the employee at his Brimfield home and obtained his consent to search it. They located cardboard tubes, funnels, and other materials used in M-Class device construction. Investigators notified the Probation Department and on July 25 arrested him on a warrant charging violation of his probation.

Holyoke: On August 10, 2025, the Holyoke Fire Department extinguished a vehicle fire on Maple Street. Based on evidence at the scene and supported by video evidence, State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office determined that the fire had been intentionally set. Holyoke Police were able to identify an individual who appeared in the video and, with State Police fire investigators, began canvassing the area. They located him on August 14 at a coffee shop about half a mile from the scene of the fire and placed him under arrest.

Huntington: On August 25, 2025, the Huntington Fire Department and State Police assigned to the Russell Barracks responded to Goss Hill Road for a fire and learned that a person known to the resident had attempted to enter the home. No injuries were reported but the fire caused significant damage to the building's exterior. Uniformed troopers located the suspect nearby and she was transported to an area hospital for evaluation. State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office determined the fire had been intentionally set. The suspect was charged with six counts of attempted murder, arson of a dwelling, violation of a restraining order,

and other offenses.

Dartmouth: On September 2, 2025, State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, the State Police Bomb Squad, and the Department of Fire Services' Joint Hazard Incident Response Team were called out to a Sagamore Drive home after multiple explosions and an active fire left a resident with serious injuries. First responders observed what appeared to be a large quantity of fireworks at the scene. Bomb techs in the appropriate protective equipment confirmed the presence of precursor materials during a safety assessment. Following the issuance of a search warrant, Bomb Squad and JHIRT techs recovered numerous substances used in the creation of fireworks and other explosive devices. The resident was charged with unlawfully possessing explosives and components, as well as other offenses.

Gloucester: In the span of 90 minutes on September 3, 2025, the Gloucester Fire Department responded to five fires reported



A neighbor's doorbell camera captured a September 2, 2025, explosion in Dartmouth. Investigators believe it started with illegal fireworks manufacturing.

ed in and around commercial dumpsters in a one-mile radius. Gloucester Police arrested a suspect in one fire and requested the State Police Fire Investigation Unit. Investigators determined that all five fires — as well as two prior fires — had been intentionally set by the same person using an open flame to combustible materials. The suspect was charged with seven counts of burning property.

Holyoke: The Holyoke Fire Department extinguished a dumpster fire in an alley behind Sargent Street on September 22, 2025. This was one of several similar fires in the area during a period of a few weeks. Based on interviews, video footage, and other evidence gathered by Holyoke Fire, Holyoke Police, and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, a suspect was identified and a warrant for his arrest was obtained. He was taken into custody on October 27.

Marblehead: Small fires were reported in a bathroom at Our Lady Star of the Sea Church on September 14, 21, and 28, 2025. None caused serious damage. Marblehead Fire responded to the Sept. 28 fire and requested State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, who confirmed it was intentionally set. A parishioner came forward to explain that a young family member had set the fires. Investigators

Continued on p. 22

Chelmsford FD Launches Targeted Smoke Alarm Installation Program

After a fatal fire last year in a mobile home without smoke alarms, the Chelmsford Fire Department launched a voluntary program that dramatically increased fire and life safety in the surrounding area.

The Chelmsford Commons manufactured home community has historically had a disproportionately high number of fires and fire deaths for a neighborhood that comprises just 2% of the town's housing stock. It also has a documented history of missing or non-functioning smoke alarms in homes that experienced fires. Officials said this is likely a symptom of federal regulations on HUD-certified manufactured homes that supersede Massachusetts' strong requirements for smoke and carbon monoxide alarm protection.

The October 4, 2025, fire that claimed two men's lives at Chelmsford Commons was the catalyst for "Get Alarmed Chelmsford," a partnership among Chelmsford FD, Chelmsford Firefighters Local 1839, the American Red Cross, 3M, Merrimack Valley Realty, and Christopher's Towing.

Driven by raffles, gift cards, and an extensive public outreach campaign, Chelmsford FD signed 25% of Chelmsford Commons residents for free, professional smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in their homes. These included bed shakers and visual alerts for hearing- and visually-impaired residents.

Chelmsford firefighters deployed in several installation teams, installing detectors in participating homes and canvassing the community to get more residents signed up. Raffle prizes were given to encourage participation and winners were announced for residents who registered for the program.

"We are working with our community partners to ensure every home has working detectors," said Fire Chief Gary Ryan.



Chelmsford FD Photo

Chelmsford FD Captain Josh Abbott, Deputy Chief Ryan Houle, FF/Union President Rob Albon, FF Casey Phelan, Chief Gary Ryan, FF Melvin Pichardo, Captain Jeff Cancelli, FF Derek Hamilton, and FF Brandon Higgins promoting the "Get Alarmed Chelmsford" program.

CHELMSFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT

SMOKE ALARM INSTALLATIONS



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14TH

270 LITTLETON ROAD

10AM - 2PM

- Scheduled installations
- Home safety inspections
- Registration and Information

CONTACT:

Deputy Chief Ryan Houle

(978) 250-5268

RHoule@chelmsfordma.gov

Personnel will be on site at the Park Office to answer questions and register additional residents

"The response has been strong, and we will continue these events until we reach everyone in the Chelmsford Commons community who needs this service."

Deputy Chief Ryan Houle coordinated the program, and Firefighter Melvin Pichardo — nominated as a 2025 Fire & Life Safety Educator of the Year — helped to recruit residents and served as liaison with the Red Cross. Local 1839 used their charitable fund to solicit donations for carbon monoxide alarms that complement the smoke alarms supplied by the Red Cross, as well as raffle prizes.

There were four fire deaths in Massachusetts mobile homes last year. Because HUD-certified mobile homes are regulated federally, the Massachusetts State Building Code and Comprehensive Fire Safety Code are both unenforceable in these occupancies. While the federal regulations do require working smoke alarms, states are limited in their ability to enforce stricter standards, such as Massachusetts' requirement that any dwelling be inspected to ensure the alarms are actually in place prior to sale or transfer — making voluntary compliance all the more important.

Massachusetts Firefighting Academy



Career Recruit Firefighter Training

The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's 10-week Career Recruit Training Program provides students with classroom and practical instruction in all basic firefighter skills. Recruits practice first under non-fire conditions and then in controlled, live-fire scenarios. To graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in life safety, search and rescue, ladder operations, water supply, pump operation, and fire attack. Fire attack operations range from mailbox fires to multiple room or multiple-floor structure fires.

Upon successful completion of the Career Recruit Program, all students have met the requirements of NFPA 1010, *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, and are certified to the levels of Firefighter I/II and Hazardous Materials Operational Level Responder. The Career Recruit Training Program is delivered at the MFA's campuses in Stow, Springfield, and Bridgewater.



Class #332 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Stow campus on September 19, 2025. The 19 graduates represent the fire departments of Beverly, Blackstone, Charlton, Dracut, Gardner, Medfield, Medway, Melrose, Northborough, Reading, and Weston. Firefighter Colin King of the Northborough Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.



Class #BW36 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Bridgewater campus on October 3, 2025. The 20 graduates represent the fire departments of Avon, Brookline, Dighton, Hyanis, Kingston, Marshfield, Medford, Middleborough, Orleans, Sandwich, Sharon, Somerville, West Bridgewater, Wrentham, and Yarmouth. Firefighter Joseph Oesterle of the Brookline Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.



Class #S42 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Springfield campus on October 3, 2025. The 22 graduates represent the fire departments of Amherst, Belchertown, Braintree, Falmouth, Greenfield, Hopkinton, Longmeadow, Monson, Northampton, Oxford, and West Springfield. Firefighter Matthew Gardner of the Greenfield Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.



Class #333 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Stow campus on October 4, 2025. The 17 graduates represent the fire departments of Billerica, Brookline, Burlington, Devens, Groton, Leominster, Medford, Milford, Northborough, and Swampscott. Firefighter Sean Halpin Jr. of the Milford Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.

Class #334 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Stow campus on December 1, 2025. The 28 graduates represent the fire departments of Andover, Auburn, Avon, Braintree, Devens, Gloucester, Holden, Ipswich, Lincoln, Maynard, Medford, North Andover, Quincy, Swampscott, Uxbridge, Wellesley, Westwood, and Woburn. Firefighter William Kiley of the Quincy Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.

Recruit class photos by Christina Mitchell

Recruit Graduations

Class #BW37 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Bridgewater campus on December 12, 2025. The 25 graduates represent the fire departments of Brewster, Canton, Cohasset, Dennis, East Bridgewater, Fairhaven, Hingham, Medway, North Attleborough, Norton, Quincy, Sharon, Somerset, Stoughton, Truro, Wellfleet, and Yarmouth. Firefighter Nikola Jovancevic of the Yarmouth Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.

Class #S43 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Springfield campus on December 19, 2025. The 20 graduates represent the fire departments of Amherst, Belchertown, Braintree, Falmouth, Greenfield, Hopkinton, Longmeadow, Monson, Northampton, Oxford, and West Springfield. Firefighter William Kipp of the Southborough Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.

Class #335 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Stow campus on January 9, 2026. The 27 graduates represent the fire departments of Bedford, Belmont, Chelsea, Haverhill, Needham, Peabody, Reading, Sudbury, Sutton, Taunton, Tewksbury, Wayland, and Woburn. Firefighter Danielle Crawford of the Woburn Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.

Call/Volunteer Recruit Firefighter Training

The MFA's 15-week Call/Volunteer Recruit Training Program delivers a standard recruit training curriculum, meeting national standards, on nights and weekends. This schedule accommodates the needs of recruits who work or attend school full time but still want to serve their communities.

All graduates of the Call/Volunteer Recruit Program have met the requirements of NFPA 1010, *Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications*, and may seek certification to the levels of Firefighter I/II and Hazardous Materials Operational Level Responder. The Call/Volunteer Recruit Training Program is delivered at MFA campuses and at local fire departments.

Class #122 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Bridgewater campus on November 5, 2025. The 26 graduates represent the fire departments of Acushnet, Dartmouth Fire District 1, Dartmouth Fire District 2, Dartmouth Fire District 3, Dighton, Lakeville, Marion, Plympton, Rehoboth, Swansea, West Bridgewater, and Westport. Firefighter Nicholas Sheehan of the Marion Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.

Class #121 graduated at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy's Stow campus on November 6, 2025. The 23 graduates represent the fire departments of Athol, Blackstone, Grafton, Lancaster, Lincoln, Lynnfield, Middleton, North Brookfield, Rutland, Sherborn, Shirley, Townsend, Tyngsborough, Uxbridge, and Wareham. Matthew Basteri of the Lancaster Fire Department was named the Outstanding Recruit of this class.



Class #BW37



Class #S43



Class #335



Class #122



Class #121



Fire Officials Make Statewide Push on Expiring Smoke Alarms

In 2015, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code set a new requirement that replacement smoke alarms in most Massachusetts homes have a sealed, 10-year battery and a “hush” feature. This requirement reduces the likelihood that residents will remove the batteries after a nuisance alarm or place them in another device.

The change also means that early adopters of the 2015 Code have alarms that are at or near the end of their useful lifespans. The Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts teamed up with State Fire Marshal Jon Davine late last year in a series of press conferences to raise awareness of the issue. The events were strategically planned in central, eastern, and western Massachusetts to maximize coverage in each regional media market.

Westborough Fire Chief Patrick Purcell, who serves as FCAM President, kicked off the campaign on October 7, 2025, at Westborough Fire Headquarters.

“Smoke alarms are like any other appliance – they don’t last forever,” Chief Purcell said. “Right now, the alarms that were purchased and put into service 10 years ago are reaching the end of their useful

lifespans. Our concern is that a wave of smoke alarms in homes across Massachusetts won’t be reliable in the months ahead.”

A few days later, Brockton Fire Chief Brian Nardelli, FCAM’s First Vice President, hosted a similar press conference at Brockton Fire’s Central Station.



Westborough Fire Chief Patrick Purcell, President of FCAM, kicked off last year’s campaign to raise awareness of expiring smoke alarms.



Brockton Fire Chief Brian Nardelli, FCAM 1st Vice President, was joined by regional chiefs as he urged residents to replace outdated alarms.

“Every smoke alarm should have a manufacturing date printed on the back of the device,” Chief Nardelli said “If it’s more than 10 years old, or if it doesn’t have a date, replace it right away. If it’s not 10 years old and it takes alkaline batteries, this is a great time to put fresh batteries in to be sure you’re protected through the winter. Test all your alarms once a month to be sure you and your loved ones are protected.”

The final event was held on October 29 at the Easthampton Fire Department and led by Fire Chief Christopher Norris, FCAM’s Second Vice President.

“Sealed-battery smoke alarms are powered by lithium-ion batteries, so please don’t put them in your household trash or recycling,” Chief Norris said.

“If they’re crushed or punctured in a compactor truck or a transfer station, they could cause a fire that’s very difficult to extinguish. As lithium-ion batteries have become more common, we’ve started seeing more and more of these trash and transfer station fires, and it’s a safe bet that the root cause is battery damage.”

Fire chiefs from near and far attended each of the three press conferences, emphasizing the fire service’s unified voice. State Fire Marshal Davine took part in the events as well, noting the latest smoke alarm recommendations from the Department of Fire Services’ Fire Safety Division.

“When it’s time to replace your smoke alarms, we strongly recommend choosing new alarms that meet UL Standard 217, 8th Edition or later,” State Fire Marshal Davine said. “Look for that language on the packaging or the product specifications. These devices use the latest multi-criteria technology, which helps to prevent nuisance alarms caused by cooking smoke.”



Easthampton Fire Chief Christopher Norris, FCAM 2nd Vice President, holds the melted remains of a disabled smoke alarm found at the scene of a four-fatality fire — it had no batteries and was not operational.

Each spring and fall, the Massachusetts fire service reminds residents to check their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms when they change their clocks. The reminder is especially urgent this year as so many smoke alarms may need to be replaced. Fire officials should remind residents to follow these safety tips:

- Check the manufacturing date printed on the back of your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms
- Replace smoke alarms after 10 years and CO alarms according to the manufacturer’s instructions (usually after 5, 7, or 10 years depending on make and model)
- Choose new smoke alarms from a well-known national brand and look for the mark of an independent testing lab such as UL or Intertek/ETL
- Be sure the replacement alarm has a sealed, long-life battery and a hush feature
- Alarms that meet UL Standard 217, 8th Edition or later, are designed and manufactured to reduce nuisance alarms caused by cooking smoke

For more safety messaging that can help you educate your community’s residents, visit www.mass.gov/dfs and search for *Smoke Alarms*.

Ware Fire Department Receives Red Cross Life Saved Award

The American Red Cross recently presented the Ware Fire Department with an award recognizing a partnership that prevented death or serious injury to a resident.

The Red Cross Home Fire Campaign works with local fire departments to provide fire safety education and smoke alarms, including bed shaker alarms for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, to residents in need. The Ware Fire Department was among the participants — and the first to partner with the Red Cross in Western Massachusetts.

On July 15, 2024, one of those alarms activated during a house fire, alerting the occupant to the danger and allowing a safe escape from the home. This made Ware FD eligible for the award, which was presented on September 2, 2025.

“This was an official life saved,” said Nia Rennix, executive director of the Central-Western Massachusetts chapter of the American Red Cross, at the ceremony. “We want to recognize the outstanding efforts that made a real difference in our community by honoring the Ware Fire Department.”

Ware Fire Chief James E. Martinez accepted the award “on behalf of the membership of the Ware Fire Department and our life safety educator, Lt. Laura Fandrey,” he said.

The Red Cross and its countless volunteers are valued partners to the Massachusetts fire service. It provides food and shelter in emergencies, operates the largest food pantry in New England, teaches lifesaving skills, trains nurses’ aides and certified nursing assistants, serves members of the Armed Forces, and more. All assistance from the Red Cross is free, made possible by voluntary donations of time and money from the American people.



Paula Quimette Photo

Ware Fire Chief James Martinez with Red Cross of Massachusetts Representatives Nicole Barbosa (left) and Nia Rennix (right).

Fire Investigation, continued from p. 16

notified the Essex County DA's office with the intention of seeking a diversion program.

Beverly: On September 29, 2025, the Beverly Fire Department responded to the Pilgrim Cumberland Presbyterian Church and Kenyan Community Gateway Presbyterian Church for smoke showing. On arrival, they found a self-extinguished fire that left heavy smoke but no active fire. They also observed signs of vandalism and Beverly Police detained a teenager who was located near the scene. State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office responded to assist the investigation and located multiple points of origin. The suspect who was detained at the scene — with hands, shoes, and clothes covered in soot — was charged with burning a building, breaking and entering, and causing damage to a house of worship.

Hatfield: After an electronically-communicated bomb threat forced the evacuation of dozens of employees from a commercial warehouse on Chester Street, the State Police Bomb Squad and fire investigators responded to assess and investigate the hazard. They found no threat, but based on interviews and additional evidence they identified a suspect and traveled to his home in Huntington. Following an interview and the collection of evidence, the man was placed under arrest and charged with making a bomb threat causing serious public alarm.

Wareham: An explosion in an Aunt Maryville Lane home drew a full response from Wareham Fire, Police, and EMS on October 3, 2025. One resident was transported for medical care, briefly left the hospital, and was returned for treatment of injuries that were not life-threatening. In the meantime, the Wareham Fire Department, State Police bomb technicians and fire investigators, the DFS Joint Hazard Incident Response Team, and FBI bomb technicians secured the site to ensure no danger to the public. They worked through the night to identify and safely remove a large quantity of energetic material from the residence and a nearby shed. The resident was taken into custody and charged with possession of explosive devices and the materials used to create them.

Southbridge: An early morning fire on November 13, 2024, tore through two large multi-family homes on Union Street, displacing about a dozen families. Southbridge Fire, South-

bridge Police, and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office quickly determined the fire had been intentionally set and sought the public's help with the investigation. Those efforts continued in the days, weeks, and months that followed until September 22, 2025, when a Worcester County grand jury returned indictments charging a Webster man with two counts each of arson of a dwelling and malicious damage to a motor vehicle. Armed with a warrant for his arrest, Southbridge Police soon located him and took him into custody.

North Adams: On the morning of November 24, 2025, neighbors reported a possible fire on Francis Street. The North Adams Fire Department quickly responded and extinguished the fire, locating two older adults deceased at the scene. State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, North Adams Police, and State Police assigned to the Berkshire County District Attorney's office responded and undertook a joint investigation that soon determined the fire had been intentionally set. When a resident of the home could not initially be located, investigators began searching for him and soon found him after his

vehicle was spotted on Route 7. Based on his statements, evidence recovered at the scene, and additional information gathered by investigators, he was initially charged with arson; two additional counts of murder were soon added and he remains held without bail.

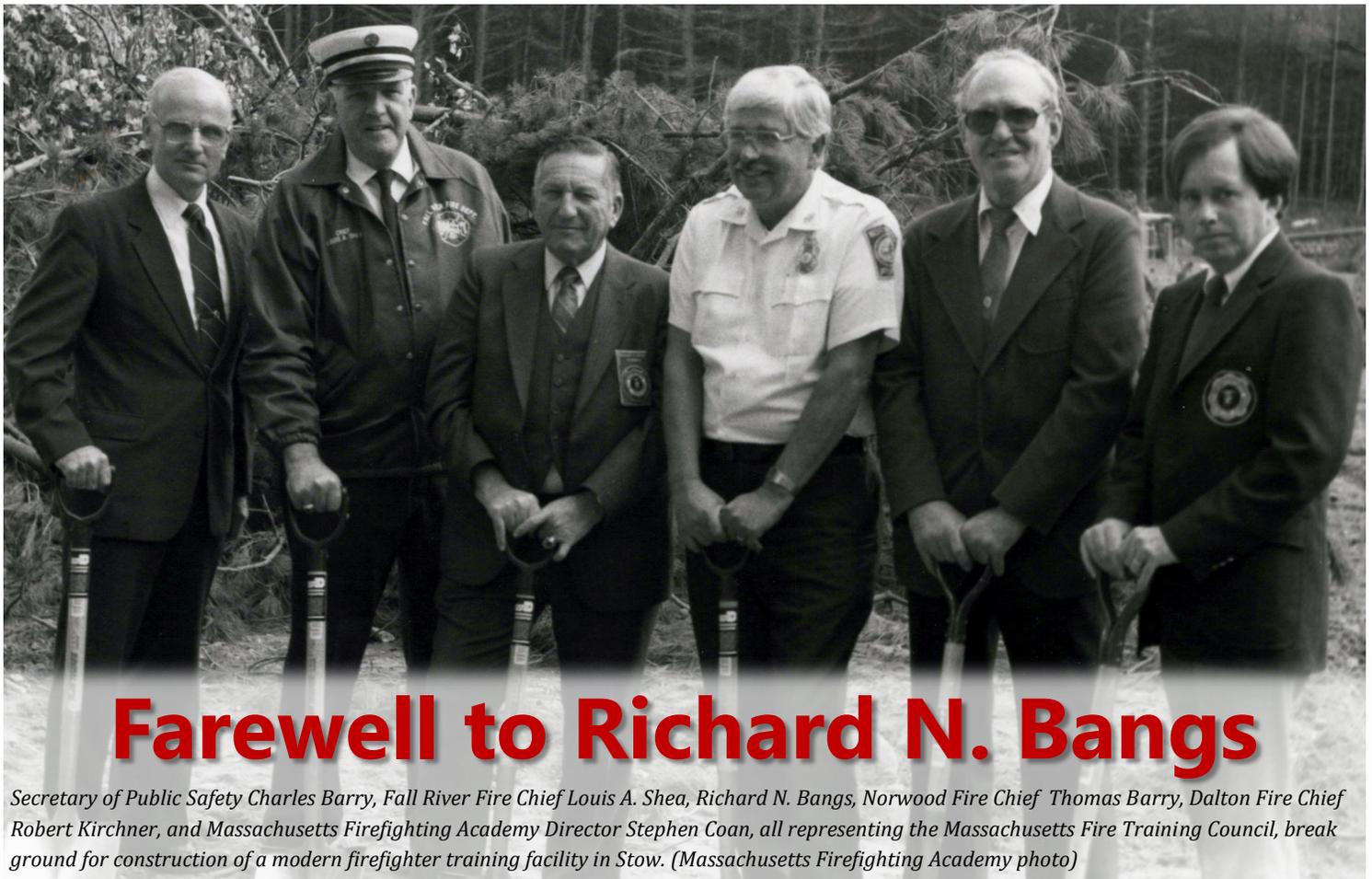
Upton: More than half a dozen illegal fires were reported in the Peppercorn Hill Conservation Area between July 2025 and January 2026. These fires were the subject of an active investigation by the police and fire departments of Upton and Milford, the Department of Conservation & Recreation, and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office. On the night of January 22, an Upton resident observed another fire from her nearby home and alerted her husband, an off-duty Upton firefighter. The firefighter immediately drove to the area of the fire, where he positioned his vehicle to block a possible suspect from escaping and remained at the scene until Upton Police could arrive. They charged him with unlawful burning, disturbing the peace, and disorderly conduct for the fire, plus an additional count of child endangerment reflecting a toddler who was located in the suspect's vehicle. Additional charges are expected to issue.



State Police bomb technicians assisted fire investigators in Wareham.



A Webster man has been indicted for allegedly setting the fire that tore through two multi-family buildings in Southbridge.



Farewell to Richard N. Bangs

Secretary of Public Safety Charles Barry, Fall River Fire Chief Louis A. Shea, Richard N. Bangs, Norwood Fire Chief Thomas Barry, Dalton Fire Chief Robert Kirchner, and Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Director Stephen Coan, all representing the Massachusetts Fire Training Council, break ground for construction of a modern firefighter training facility in Stow. (Massachusetts Firefighting Academy photo)

Richard N. Bangs, one of Massachusetts' most passionate and effective advocates for firefighter training and development, passed away in October 2025, shortly before his 95th birthday.

Mr. Bangs had numerous professional and civic accomplishments, but he was especially dedicated to the fire service. In addition to serving on the Board of Fire Engineers in his hometown of Winthrop and as secretary for the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts, he was appointed by Governor Edward King to the Massachusetts Fire Training Council in 1979. He would go on to serve as chair of the Council for a remarkable 20 years from 1982 to 2002.

Mr. Bangs played a key role in the expansion and professionalization of firefighter training in Massachusetts. In his first year as chair, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy graduated 79 recruits; by the end of his tenure, the number had reached more than 300 — and the Academy's small training site in Stow had grown to a 23-acre complex meeting all the needs of a modern fire training facility.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Mr. Bangs worked closely

with Massachusetts Firefighting Academy leadership to develop and support training programs. When Director Joseph Donovan was selected as superintendent of the National Fire Academy, Mr. Bangs and the Council selected a young MFA staff member as his successor. That staffer, Stephen Coan, would go on to serve not only as Academy director but as the state fire marshal who brought the MFA and many other statewide fire-related functions under one roof through the Department of Fire Services.

"Dick Bangs loved the fire service," said former Marshal Coan. "Using all the levers of state and local government, he worked tirelessly to improve training and workplace safety for the Commonwealth's firefighters. On a personal level, I always appreciated the support that Dick showed to me."



In his private life, he was an enthusiastic fire buff and amateur historian.

Today, the MFA's Career Recruit Program recognizes the top recruit in each class with a unique and distinguished honor — the Richard N. Bangs Outstanding Student Award.

His legacy lives on in each new generation of Massachusetts firefighters.



Richard "Dick" Bangs was a key figure in the development of statewide firefighter training.

MFA Photo

2026 Fire Safety Division Licensing Exam Schedule

Fire Suppression and Commercial Hood Cleaning	
Exam Date	Application Deadline
Wednesday, March 18, 2026	<i>Friday, February 20, 2026</i>
Wednesday, May 20, 2026	<i>Friday, April 24, 2026</i>
Wednesday, July 15, 2026	<i>Friday, June 19, 2026</i>
Wednesday, September 16, 2026	<i>Friday, August 21, 2026</i>
Wednesday, November 18, 2026	<i>Friday, October 23, 2026</i>

Cannon/Mortar, Fireworks, Special Effects, Blasting, and Blasting R&D	
Exam Date	Application Deadline
Wednesday, February 11, 2026	<i>Friday, January 16, 2026</i>
Wednesday, April 15, 2026	<i>Friday, March 20, 2026</i>
Wednesday, June 17, 2026	<i>Friday, May 22, 2026</i>
Wednesday, August 19, 2026	<i>Friday, July 24, 2026</i>
Wednesday, October 21, 2026	<i>Friday, September 25, 2026</i>

BPV Oil Burner Technician, Fireman, & Engineer	
Exam Date	Application Deadline
Tuesday, January 27, 2026	<i>Friday, December 26, 2025</i>
Wednesday, February 25, 2026	<i>Friday, January 30, 2026</i>
Wednesday, March 25, 2026	<i>Friday, February 27, 2026</i>
Wednesday, April 29, 2026	<i>Friday, March 27, 2026</i>
Wednesday, May 27, 2026	<i>Friday, April 24, 2026</i>
Wednesday, June 24, 2026	<i>Friday, May 29, 2026</i>
Wednesday, July 29, 2026	<i>Friday, June 26, 2026</i>
Wednesday, August 26, 2026	<i>Friday, July 31, 2026</i>
Wednesday, September 30, 2026	<i>Friday, August 28, 2026</i>
Wednesday, October 28, 2026	<i>Friday, September 25, 2026</i>
Wednesday, November 25, 2026	<i>Friday, October 30, 2026</i>
Wednesday, December 30, 2026	<i>Friday, November 27, 2026</i>