

# All Hands Herald

Massachusetts Department of Fire Services September 2024

## Tier 2 Hazmat Incident *in North Andover*

Lithium-Ion Battery Fire  
Tracking Tool Update

New RIT Prop and  
Incident Support Trailers

Sharp Drop in 2023–2024  
Winter Heating Fires

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The *All Hands Herald* is published three times a year by the Department of Fire Services. Our title incorporates the traditional fire service meaning of all hands working to extinguish a fire. In this publication, all hands is DFS staff providing information, training, and assistance with issues that affect all levels of the fire service.

Let us know how you like the *All Hands Herald* and what we can do to make it even more useful to you – our dedicated fire service members and customers.

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Photos by DFS staff.

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# From the Fire Marshal

## ASIM Training

Last month, the Executive Office of Public Safety & Security, Department of Fire Services, and Municipal Police Training Committee hosted an Active Shooter Incident Management training course for more than 60 public safety professionals from across Massachusetts. Led by C3 Pathways, this three-day class was geared toward senior officers and focused on applying Incident Command System and National Incident Management System principles to Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response.

Students were drawn from more than 40 different fire/rescue, law enforcement, dispatch, and emergency management agencies. DFS staff were among those who took part, and by every account it was a valuable experience that brought our integrated training deliveries to a new level. EOPSS has shown an abiding commitment to supporting ASHER education statewide, and we're grateful for their ongoing efforts. Look for an article on the Active Shooter Incident Management training next issue, and in the meantime please contact [william.s.cluett@mass.gov](mailto:william.s.cluett@mass.gov) with questions on ASHER offerings for the fire service.

## Smoking Fire Fatalities

So far this year, the unsafe use or disposal of cigarettes and other smoking materials has been a known or suspected factor in 11 fire deaths in Massachusetts. That represents a significant jump from 2023, when smoking was a known or potential cause in seven fire deaths in the entire year.

Smoking has been the #1 cause of accidental fire deaths nationwide for decades. In Massachusetts, fatal smoking fires remain a leading cause but have been trending generally downward with occasional tragic spikes. The victims tend to be older adults, who are already at disproportionate risk of death or serious injury in a fire. There is no truly safe way to smoke, but you can help community members to minimize the risks: recommend using a heavy ashtray, not smoking in bed, and stepping outside when someone in the home uses medical oxygen. Visit [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs) and search for *Smoking Fire Safety*.

## Former Hood Cleaner Gets Jail Time

Antonio Borges, the Fall River hood cleaner who was barred for life from performing commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning and inspection, will serve up to a year behind bars for continuing this activity in violation of state law. After a series of license suspensions and a permanent surrender, Borges was found guilty in July of performing

regulated work without a license, at times using other cleaners' tags, in Fall River, New Bedford, and Westport. Borges' history was detailed in the January 2024 issue of the *All Hands Herald*.

Training and certification requirements for commercial hood cleaning were established after Boston Firefighters Paul Cahill and Warren Payne lost their lives in a 2007 restaurant fire that started with a buildup of grease in the kitchen exhaust system. As Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III noted, Borges "jeopardized the lives and safety of [restaurant] operators, their staff, patrons, and firefighters who may respond to dangerous grease fires caused by the lack of proper cleaning."

I want to thank members of the DFS Code Compliance & Enforcement Unit, State Police Fire Investigation Unit, local police and fire departments, and District Attorney Quinn's office who worked on this case for helping to hold the defendant accountable.

## Deadly White Powder

More than 2,000 people in Massachusetts have lost their lives to drug overdoses every year since 2016. That's more than the combined total of homicides, suicides, and fatal motor vehicle crashes for eight consecutive years. In 2023 deaths where toxicology screens were performed, fentanyl was present in 90% of deaths, xylazine nearly doubled to 9%, and cocaine and amphetamines were also on the rise.

This is the context for *Deadly White Powder: A Symposium on Illicit Narcotics*, which will be held at Gillette Stadium on November 15, 2024. Subject matter experts from a variety of disciplines, including our own Hazmat Division and Bomb Squad, will provide guidance on these substances and other emerging hazards, testing protocols, and responses. Through the support of EOPSS, MPTC, and DFS, the symposium is free for all fire service, law enforcement, EMS, public health, and service provider personnel. Registration info will be coming soon, but you can reserve a spot today at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/deadly-white-powder-a-symposium-on-illicit-narcotics-tickets-925582320637>.





On the morning of May 16, 2024, contractors working in the basement of North Andover Middle School cut into a series of disused containers holding waste chemicals from the school's science lab. These waste chemicals then combined in a container vessel in a below-grade room with no ventilation.

The smoking, gurgling, exothermic reaction that followed prompted a Tier 2 Hazmat incident in a 135,000-square foot municipal building bordering a state highway that, at the time, held more than 1,200 students, staff, and faculty. Local, state, and federal authorities converged on the scene, working in concert throughout the day to mitigate the hazard and ultimately make the scene safe again.

That morning, North Andover Fire Chief John Weir was hosting a symposium for regional fire departments. He had vendors onsite presenting on a new pre-planning software that his department was adopting. More than two dozen fire chiefs from Essex and Middlesex counties were in attendance, and the meeting had his full attention—until 9:50 am. That was when the 9-1-1 call from school personnel came in.

"I had the volume on my radio down, but I heard bits and pieces of radio traffic," Chief Weir said. "I stepped out of the room and heard everyone signing in, and I jumped in the car."

While en route, he called in and asked whether the school had been evacuated. It hadn't.

"I said, alright, instruct the caller to pull the fire alarm,"

he said. "Get the building evacuated."

The school was just a mile away and a straight shot down Route 125, so Chief Weir was on scene within a few minutes of the notification and assumed incident command on the A side of the school.

Deputy Chief Graham Rowe responded moments later on the C side and saw students exiting the building calmly, just as they do when they drill four times a year. One student with limited mobility needed assistance leaving the building, but he was quickly located and removed by North Andover Engine 2 and Ambulance 1 personnel—a process made much easier because of pre-planning that North Andover's fire and police departments conduct with school leaders.

With a Hazmat call involving unknown chemicals, Chief Weir had several early concerns once the children were out of the building.

"We were watching the wind," he said. "Even though we didn't have any major releases and it was contained in the building, I didn't want anything moving toward the students or first responders. And I started thinking about vehicles and staging. I called the first due companies to give them a heads up on the students leaving the building—because, typically, by the time we get there, the building's already evacuated. Obviously, everyone was going to exercise caution, but I wanted them aware of the students actively exiting the building as the apparatus was pulling in."



After consulting with Chief Weir, North Andover Police took over coordinating with school leaders to bus students to North Andover High School. That process was “seamless,” he said. “Everybody was on the same page.”

Deputy Chief Graham Rowe was assigned as the operations officer and had previously worked with fire department personnel and school officials on evacuation plans.

“Everybody moved, everybody was counted, everybody was orderly,” he recalled. “It really showed that the drills and the practice work.”

### Hazmat Activation

Based on the information available, Chief Weir declared a Tier 1 Hazmat incident and soon spoke with North Reading Firefighter Jon Burt, who serves on the District 6 Hazmat Team and acts as its training coordinator. He and Boxborough Fire Chief John Kivlan—who was at the time a Chelmsford firefighter and the District 6 Hazmat team coordinator—began relaying information to Jeff Winn, director of the Department of Fire Services’ Hazardous Materials Division.

“We started getting our processes in motion rapidly,” Winn said. In light of the potential for an explosion at a school, he also reached out to the State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Section, which is assigned to the State Fire Marshal’s office down the hall from the Hazmat Division. “They have the experience with energetics, obviously, and they got a couple of Bomb Squad members rolling as a precaution.”

Because of the sensitive nature of the school environment, the incident was soon escalated to a Tier 2 response. The chief also spoke with municipal leaders, who drafted an announcement that would inform parents and the public of the emergency, reassure them that all children had been safely moved to a separate location, and advise motorists to avoid the area. The message was sent out by email and social media.

Under the direction of Deputy Chief Rowe, Engine 1 had proceeded to the A/D corner of the school to establish water supply. Engine 2 responded to the A/B corner and stretched a line from Engine 1 to the front door in case a fire attack or decontamination was necessary. Engine 1 personnel wearing SCBA and carrying four-gas meters made an initial entry to ensure that the workers—who had no personal protective equipment—had safely left the hot zone. After confirming that the basement was empty, they reported that the chemical vessel was no

longer smoking and that their meters hadn’t detected any hazardous gases. Ladder 1 set up at the C/D corner of the building.

The Tier 2 drew District 6 Hazmat technicians from as far away as Barre and Holden, as well as a dozen cities and towns closer to the incident. By mid-day, Winn special ordered 10 more techs from District 2 to the south. As Hazmat personnel started to arrive, so did resources from the Department of Fire Services. A Technical Operations Module (TOM) arrived first on scene as part of the Hamzat response. The TOMs contain equipment and technology for immediate needs, such as personal protective equipment, analytic tools, and reference materials. Team Leader Jon Burt requested the Gas Chromatograph/Mass Spectrometer, which would allow technicians to identify liquid, solid, and gas hazards with the highest possible levels of precision and certainty. The GCMS was loaded into H1—a specially outfitted Chevrolet Suburban assigned to the DFS Hazmat director—and transported to the scene

As part of the Tier 2, the DFS Operational Response Unit (ORU) also responded to replace and restock consumables. Members of the State Police Bomb Squad brought two robotic platforms for use in the hot zone. A DFS Rehab unit was deployed to give firefighters and techs a place to cool off and rehydrate, joining the North Shore’s own Rehab Five, which had arrived to serve food and drinks to first responders at the scene.

It’s important to note that DFS Hazmat teams have extensive training, subject matter expertise, and specialized equipment, but their mission is to support local fire departments—not take over the response. As part of his

*Continued on page 11*



# New Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Tracking Tool

## Identifies More Than 100 Fires in 9 Months

A new tool for tracking lithium-ion battery fires and explosions in Massachusetts helped to identify 101 incidents in its first nine months, more than five times the annual average detected through the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS).

The Department of Fire Services launched its Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Investigative Checklist in October 2023. It immediately went into use by the State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, and local fire departments were urged to adopt it as well. Developed by the DFS Fire Safety Division, the checklist can be used by fire investigators to gather basic information about fires in which lithium-ion batteries played a part. The information is entered into a database to identify patterns and trends.

"We knew anecdotally that lithium-ion batteries were involved in more fires than the existing data suggested," said State Fire Marshal Davine. "In just the past six months, investigators using this simple checklist have revealed many more incidents than we've seen in prior years."

Prior to the checklist, the state's fire service relied on battery fire data reported to MFIRS, a state-level tool that mirrors and feeds into the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). NFIRS tracks battery fires but does not specifically gather data on the types of batteries involved. Some fields do not require the detailed information that Massachusetts officials were seeking, and some fires may be coded according to the type of device involved rather than the type of battery. Moreover, MFIRS reports sometimes take weeks or months to be completed and uploaded.

"Investigators using the Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Checklist are getting us better data faster," said State Fire Marshal Davine. "The tool is helpful, but the people using it are the key to its success."

From 2019 to 2023, an average of 19.4 lithium-ion battery fires per year were reported to MFIRS—less than one-fifth of the 101 identified by investigators using the checklist over the past nine months. The increase could be due to the growing number of consumer devices powered by these batteries, increased attention by local fire

investigators, or other factors. For example, fires that started with another item but impinged upon a battery-powered device, causing it to go into thermal runaway, might not be categorized as a battery fire in MFIRS or NFIRS.

Lithium-ion battery fires were reported in 67 cities and towns. Twenty of these fires started with micromobility devices such as battery-powered scooters, e-bikes, and hoverboards, making them the most commonly involved devices in fires, according to the data. Another 15 fires involved laptops and 16 involved cell phones, tablets, or similar devices. Power tools were involved in 15 fires. The device's charging status could be determined in 87 of the 101 fires: surprisingly, 51% of these devices were not charging at the time of the incident.

### Everett Lithium-Ion Battery Fire

On July 3, a two-alarm fire injured a three-year-old girl and the Everett firefighter who rescued her from the burning home. Both were transported from the scene and fortunately survived their injuries.

Based on an examination of the scene and witness interviews, the Everett Fire Department and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office determined

that the fire started with a lithium-ion battery, most likely from one of several power tools stored in the area of origin.

### Battery Safety

Lithium-ion batteries power everything from small devices like e-cigarettes and smartphones to scooters, e-bikes, and electric vehicles. If they are overcharged, overheated, or abused, they can fail rapidly and without warning. A lithium-ion battery that goes into thermal runaway will erupt in an explosion of toxic gases and flames that will ignite nearby furnishings. Water and traditional fire extinguishers are significantly less effective against lithium-ion battery fires.

Public education about the dangers of lithium-ion battery fires can make communities safer. Consider sharing these safety tips for preventing lithium-ion battery fires with your community:

1. Be sure you have working smoke alarms installed on every level of your home.

The image shows a screenshot of the 'Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Investigative Checklist (FP-031)' form. The form is titled 'Department of Fire Services Commonwealth of Massachusetts'. It includes fields for 'Fire Date', 'Fire Time', 'FDID #', 'Incident #', and 'Fire Location'. There is a section for 'Equipment Information' with checkboxes for various devices like Laptop Computer, Micromobility Device, Cellphone, Tablet, or eReader, Power Tool, Uninterrupted Power Supply, Toy (RC car, drone), Vehicle (car, truck, boat, plane), Energy Storage System, and Battery Charger. It also has a section for 'Battery Information' with checkboxes for 'Did the battery cause the fire?' and 'Where was battery or equipment purchased?'. There are sections for 'Casualties' (Civilian, Fire Service) and 'FIU Case #'. At the bottom, there are instructions on how to submit the form (by email, fax, or mail) and contact information for the Department of Fire Services.

Continued on page 7

# New Rapid Intervention Prop & Incident Support Trailers for Local Delivery

## Rapid Intervention Prop Trailer

The Massachusetts Firefighting Academy received its new trailer-based Rapid Intervention Prop on June 20. The prop will greatly expand local access to the MFA's most popular Rapid Intervention courses by making critical training components available at any firehouse.

The *Rapid Intervention* and *Saving Ourselves* courses are both highly sought-after field deliveries. These two-day programs require set-up of various skill stations at the training facility or host firehouse. Some skill stations, such as wire entanglement, are easily portable. Others require very specific building features. For example, training for ladder bailouts, rope bailouts, and using the Weymouth Carry for an unconscious firefighter all require a second-floor window that can be safely removed, as well as a belay anchor. Training for the Nance Drill to rescue a firefighter who has fallen through the floor requires access to a lower level through a hole, hatch, or other opening.

The Rapid Intervention program staff make every effort to overcome these challenges during local deliveries, but the fact is that many firehouses and training facilities lack one or more of the structural features to train realistically in rapid intervention and self-rescue.

The Rapid Intervention Prop trailer was purpose-built with these features. Constructed from a Conex box, a simulated "second floor" with a standard residential-sized window and anchor points folds up from the roof, allowing firefighters to conduct bailouts and carry-downs. A basement-sized window is built into the side of the trailer to simulate removal of a firefighter below grade. The roof of the trailer also has a built-in hatch, allowing firefighters to

Incident Support Trailer



practice various methods of removing a firefighter through a hole in the floor.

"This will be the first time in the RIT program's history that we're able to do the 'firefighter in the basement' drill, where we teach the students how to rescue a fellow firefighter with a hose line and some rope," said Rapid Intervention Program Coordinator Brad Kwatcher. "Prior to this, if we went on the road, if they didn't have a hole in their firehouse to use, we couldn't show them this technique. We could talk about it, but we couldn't practice it."

The Rapid Intervention Prop trailer will also hold all the portable skill station props, and it will be delivered along with the RIT trailer to host communities to provide a full complement of training tools. Look for course deliveries this fall.

## Incident Support Trailer

On June 4, the Department of Fire Services' Special Operations team took delivery of a new Incident Support Trailer. As the name suggests, this new asset is a trailer-mounted version of the Incident Support Units already supporting fire departments at large-scale emergencies and planned events across the Commonwealth. It was fabricated by Nomad GCS.

The Incident Support Trailer is more than 30' long from bumper to bumper, with slide-outs to open up a meeting space with a large-screen television. A conference table in this space is outfitted with four HDMI ports and internet access, and there are four additional workstations with monitors along the interior corridor.

Rapid Intervention Prop Trailer



*Continued on page 21*



# Sharp Drop in 2023-2024 Winter Heating Fires

## *Cooking Fires, Injuries Remain Steady*

Early data based on reports to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS) show a decline of nearly 20% in residential heating fires last winter, falling from 963 in the winter of 2022-2023 to 776 in the winter of 2023-2024.

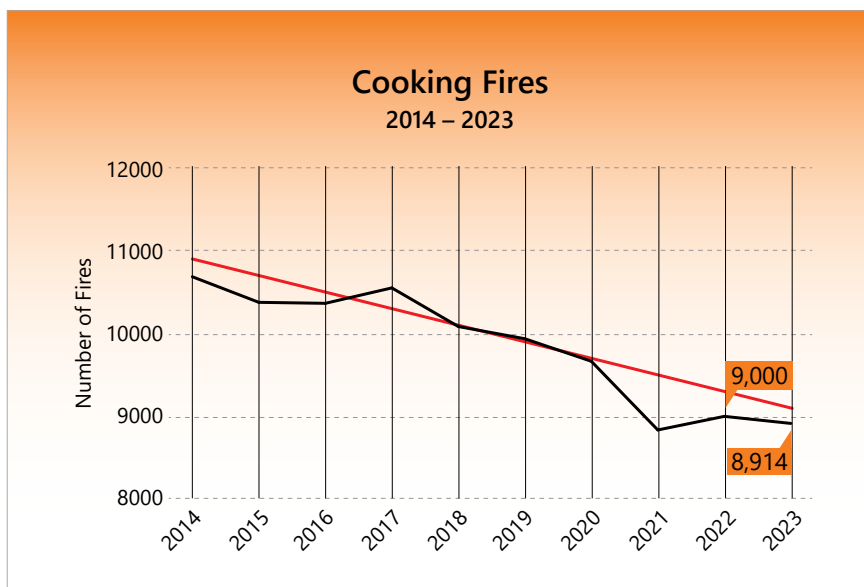
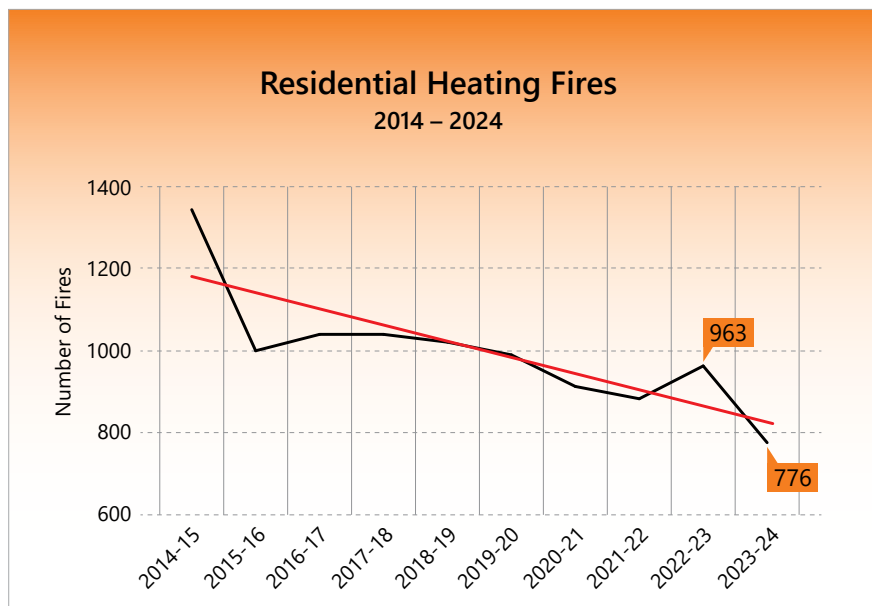
The decline is part of a 15-year trend during which heating fires also fell as a percentage of residential fires. Heating fires accounted for about 24% of winter home fires in the late 2000s and have declined to about 13% each year for the past nine years.

Heating fires remain among the top three causes of fire deaths in Massachusetts, however. In the past decade, winter heating fires have accounted for two firefighter deaths, 18 civilian deaths, and more than 200 injuries—nearly 60% of which were suffered by firefighters.

Cooking fires held nearly steady last year, dropping from 9,000 fires, 35 firefighter injuries, and 39 civilian injuries in 2022 to 8,914 fires, 36 firefighter injuries, and 38 civilian injuries in 2023. Tragically, however, four people lost their lives.

As they are almost every year, more than 90% of these fires were confined to ovens and other noncombustible containers. Unsafe cooking practices remain the leading cause of residential fires, but they have dropped by nearly 17% over the past 10 years.

The Department of Fire Services has several tools to help local fire departments promote fire-safe heating. Visit [www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe](http://www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe) for winter heating safety tips, printable flyers, and links. As we enter the fall, Thanksgiving and Christmas won't be far away—and these are the busiest times of the year for residential fires, most of which start in the kitchen. You can promote cooking fire safety with DFS tips, flyers, and other resources. Visit [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs) and search for *Cooking Fire Safety*.





# Fire and Life Safety Education Grants Awarded

## \$1.58 Million for 204 Departments

In May, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced \$1.58 million in grants to 204 municipal fire departments across Massachusetts to support fire and life safety education for school-age children and older adults. The departments will split \$1,105,514.93 in SAFE funding and/or \$474,617.97 in Senior SAFE funding in FY24. Another seven departments will share funding for regional SAFE and/or Senior SAFE programs.

Since 1995, the Department of Fire Services' Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) grant program has supported firefighter-educators who deliver age-appropriate fire safety education to kids and teens across Massachusetts. In that time, the number of children who die in fires has dropped to historically low levels, from two dozen or more per year to zero for nearly three consecutive years. In 2014, DFS launched the Senior SAFE program, which is geared toward another vulnerable population—older adults, who face a disproportionate risk of death or serious injury in a fire.

"Fire safety education is a smart investment in the safety of our residents and the livability of our communities," said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy. "Children and older adults are historically the most at risk in a fire, but the SAFE and Senior SAFE grants are helping to provide them with the tools to protect themselves and their families."

"I'm deeply grateful to the trained firefighter-educators who are the backbone of the SAFE and Senior SAFE programs," said State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine. "They've reached hundreds of thousands of youngsters and seniors with lessons that have prevented untold tragedies. I truly believe these grants are a key factor in making Massachusetts one of the most fire-safe states in the nation."



The SAFE and Senior SAFE programs are made possible through the support of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, the Legislature, and the Massachusetts insurance industry.

For more fire service grant opportunities, visit [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs) and search for *Grants for Fire Departments*.

### Lithium-Ion Battery Fire Tracking Tool, *continued from page 4*

2. Use only the original equipment manufacturer's batteries and charging equipment. Aftermarket or generic batteries and chargers may be cheaper but are more likely to pose a burn, fire, or explosion hazard.
3. Store scooters and e-bikes outdoors if possible. If you must store them indoors, keep them and their batteries clear of doors, windows, and stairways.
4. Charge the battery directly from a wall outlet, not an extension cord or power strip. Place it on a hard and stable surface, not a bed, couch, or pillow.
5. Charge only one battery or device at a time and unplug it when it's fully charged. Don't allow a charged battery to continue charging.
6. If you notice changes to the battery or the device, including damage, an unusual odor, a change in color, too much heat, change in shape, leaking, smoking, or not keeping a charge, stop using it right away.
7. If and when it's time to dispose of the battery, don't put it in the trash. Lithium-ion batteries should be recycled, and you can find a location to take them at [www.call2recycle.org/locator](http://www.call2recycle.org/locator).

Fire officials and residents can learn more about lithium-ion battery safety at the Department of Fire Services' *Lithium-Ion Battery Safety* web page. Visit [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs) and search for *lithium-ion battery safety*.

# The Call to Service

## *Lifelong Volunteer Graduates from MFA at Age 58*

Volunteering has always been a vital part of American life, and it is woven into the rich tradition of the American fire service. The nature and importance of firefighting, firefighters' roles and responsibilities in the community, positive experiences in a junior firefighter program, and a desire to continue service after a military career are just some of the motivations that bring call and volunteer firefighters into the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy.

For Bruce Katz, a volunteer firefighter with the Swansea Fire Department, the decision to serve is a combination of all of these reasons. What makes his story unique is that it began later in life: he may be the oldest recruit to complete the MFA's Call/Volunteer Recruit Firefighter Program, graduating as a member of Class #111 at Bridgewater on May 1, 2024, at 58 years, 8 months and 25 days old.

"In my professional role, I deal with a lot of emergency management and community response scenarios through training exercises and real-world responses," says Katz, who serves as the public information officer at Naval Station Newport, RI. "Becoming a volunteer firefighter was not a goal or ambition I had for a long time, but when I saw a notice that our town was seeking volunteers to serve in the fire department and emergency management, I thought of how my training and experiences could help me serve my community in another way."

Katz served on active duty in the United States Marine Corps for 20 years following his graduation from high school in 1983. His military career spanned from the Beirut Marine Barracks bombing to just after the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

"When I retired from military service, I decided to continue service to others and my community through active participation in organizations I was particularly invested in and whose causes I was committed to," he explains. "I began serving in the Marine Corps League and the American Legion. I am a life member in these organizations and a few others today."



Swansea Firefighter Bruce Katz.

**"Being part of the fire service connects me with my community and its residents. It provides a vital service, and the people who deliver that service are making a real difference across Massachusetts."**

Helping and advocating for veterans was the beginning of his post-military service in 2003. Ten years ago, in 2014, Katz became an adult volunteer in the Young Marines, a youth program founded by the Marine Corps League in Waterbury, CT, in 1959. The national organization has 280 units in 46 states with 2,500 volunteers leading nearly 9,600 young people aged 8 to 18. In 2024, he was named the Young Marines' Adult Volunteer of the Year for the district that includes Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and the New England states.

"Sharing my experiences, helping young people see the value of service, and supporting them as they achieve their goals is very rewarding," he shares. "It is one of the best ways to have a positive impact not only on our youth but also on our communities, through instilling responsibility and accountability in the next generation of leaders."

"The reason I joined the Swansea Fire Department as a volunteer was because of the mission and the importance of these people to our community," he shares. "Our community is served by

a department that is almost all volunteers. Without these volunteers and the services they provide, there could be an extremely detrimental impact on residents and the town."

Swansea is not alone: more than 250 Massachusetts communities are protected at least in part by call and volunteer firefighters. That's nearly 70% of the Commonwealth's cities and towns—a figure that emphasizes the urgent statewide need for volunteers.

Katz states he does not know how long or where his fire service career will lead, but he hopes his example of service is something that inspires community members equally, whether young or old.

"Becoming a volunteer firefighter has its challenges and rewards," he explains. "Choosing to be part of the fire service connects me with my community and its residents. It provides a vital service, and the people who deliver that service are making a real difference across Massachusetts. I am so glad to be part of it. I strongly encourage others to seek out opportunities to volunteer in their community."



# MFA Updates Rope Rescue Training

Starting this fall, the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy will be delivering a new version of its most popular technical rescue offering. The *Rope Rescue* curriculum has been totally revamped to meet the evolving needs of the fire service and to also meet and exceed the job performance requirements in the 2021 edition of NFPA 1006, *Standard for Technical Rescue Personnel Professional Qualifications*.

Senior instructors from the MFA's Technical Rescue Group (TRG) began the arduous task of redeveloping the Operational-level and Technician-level rope rescue classes back in the fall of 2023. Countless hours of research, meetings, and “rope days” at the Department of Fire Services' Bridgewater campus led to what they believe is one of the best fire academy rope rescue courses in the country.

In keeping with recent updates and additions to the TRG's course offerings, the new rope rescue program follows the crawl-walk-run format. Students begin in the *Operational Level* class with an introduction to the fundamentals: rope and software, hardware and equipment, personal protective equipment, building and operating rope systems, and more. A full day and a half are spent in classrooms and in ground school stations giving students ample hands-on time to learn how to operate equipment and build systems. The *Operational* course has a strong focus on team-based rope rescue for the fire service and ends with students beginning to work on individual rope skills, spending a full day learning how to ascend rope, rappel, and save themselves in the event of a device malfunction.

The new *Technician Level* course picks up where *Operational* leaves off, with students expanding on their individual skills and getting into the physics and conceptual understanding of how we do what we do in rope rescue. Students again spend a full day and a half in the classroom and in ground school stations becoming familiar with more advanced techniques. They are then tasked with building their own rope systems to overcome challenging rescue scenarios throughout the remainder of class. The *Technician* class ends with a full day of learning several systems to package a rescued patient and move them along any directional plane—not just up and down, but also left to right and diagonally.

By adopting advances in equipment and techniques in the rope rescue world, these revised courses will provide MFA students with the safest, most up-to-date way to mitigate even the most challenging rope rescue incidents they may be called to. These courses will also serve as a strong foundation for other Technical Rescue program offerings such as the *Water Rescue*, *Ice Rescue*, *Confined Space Rescue*, and *Structural Collapse Rescue Technician* courses.

The new *Rope Rescue: Operational Level* and *Rope Rescue: Technician Level* deliveries are expected to begin this fall. Watch for updates through the DFS Learning Management System.





# 2024 Burn Awareness Video Contest Winners



First place video: "The 3 C's of Burn Safety."

A Springfield Central High School student won first prize in the Department of Fire Services' annual Burn Awareness Video Contest, while Eastham and Dartmouth students took second and third place honors this year.

"In an average year, people under 18 account for more than 20% of burn-related emergency department visits in Massachusetts," said State Fire Marshal Jon Davine. "Many of these serious and even life-changing injuries can be prevented through awareness, education, and avoiding risky behavior. Our annual Burn Awareness Video Contest gives young people the chance to spread a positive safety message to their peers. I want to congratulate our winners and thank everyone who participated for supporting such an important cause."

Mateo Cintron, a senior at Springfield Central High School, took top honors for his entry, "The Three C's of Burn Safety," which co-starred fellow SCHS students. The video advises viewers of what to do in the event of a serious burn: *Cool* the burn with cool water for 20 minutes, *Call* 9-1-1 for a severe burn right away, and *Cover* the injury in loose cling film.

The grand prize, a 4K Ultra HD digital video camera, was presented to Mateo by Michael Bonina of the Massachusetts Property Insurance Underwriters Association at a brief ceremony at SCHS on May 9. Also on hand were State



Third place video: "DHNIN Starts Now."

Fire Marshal Davine, Springfield Fire Commissioner Bernard J. Calvi, Springfield firefighters, and Erin McDonald of Shriners Children's Boston, a contest co-sponsor and the longest running exclusively pediatric, verified burn center in New England.

"The Massachusetts Property Insurance Underwriters Association is proud to sponsor the Department of Fire Services' annual Burn Awareness Video Contest," said MPIUA President and CEO Barbara Peterson Law. "We would like to congratulate all the high schools that participated, and especially all the contest winners. Education is the key to prevention, and each of their videos was both educational and informative."

"Burn injuries can be devastating and education is the key to prevention," said Frances Marthone, Ph.D., RN, Shriners Children's Boston Administrator. "A pillar of the Shriners Children's mission is education, including



Second place video: "Idiot's Guide to Fire Safety."

teaching the public about ways to minimize burn injuries at home, school and in the community. The DFS Burn Awareness Video Contest aligns with our mission and we are honored to celebrate the creativity of our Massachusetts high school students."

The second-place entry was "Idiot's Guide to Fire Safety," submitted by Gianna Casale, Sophia Cole, Patrick Ellsasser, Troy Gregory, Andrew Kean, and Tyler Smith of Nauset Regional High School in Eastham.

The video reminds viewers to change the alkaline batteries in their smoke alarms twice a year, unplug heating devices like curling irons when you're done using them, and keep lit candles away from curtains or anything else that can burn. They received a \$100 gift card from Best Buy courtesy of Shriners Children's Boston.



Continued on page 20

## Tier 2 Hazmat Incident, continued from page 3

incident command structure, Chief Weir designated Jon Burt as the Hazmat team leader. In this role, he would coordinate the team's entry, decon, science, logistics, and other functions while keeping the incident commander informed and making recommendations as events unfolded. They huddled with Deputy Chief Rowe, DFS Hazmat Director Jeff Winn, Hazmat technicians, and Department of Environmental Protection personnel in the TOMs to go over what they knew.

Based on information from school officials, vendors, engineers, and the work crew, they learned that the tanks contained sulfuric acid and sodium hypochlorite. Several years earlier, these tanks had been used to collect and neutralize waste chemicals from the science lab but they were slated for removal. The work crew hired to remove these tanks believed they were empty and began using a reciprocating saw to cut into them—only to realize that the tanks were still full. Fortunately, the first cut was near the top of the tanks, meaning the spillage was limited. Even so, the sudden mixture of concentrated acid and caustic substances caused a violent reaction when they mixed in the surrounding vessel.

"We had a very strong acid and a very strong base at opposite ends of the pH scale," Jeff Winn explained. "You combine those two and you get an exothermic reaction—heat, smoking, whooshing, gurgling. And we believed that only a small amount of those two substances had reacted so far. We still had two nearly full tanks, and they were in an unventilated room in the basement of a school."

"If he had cut two inches lower, the chemicals would have poured out," said Chief Weir. "The workers were really lucky. We were all really lucky. Two inches lower and it would have become a recovery mission."

With students, staff, and work crew out of the school and the hot zone secure, the next step was to determine how hazardous the environment was. To assist in this process, the State Police Bomb Squad deployed two robotic platforms—a PackBot, which maneuvers on six sets of treads, and the four-legged Spot robot. Both are mounted with cameras, and the video fed to tablets monitored by Bomb Squad and Hazmat techs, and they were additionally outfitted with a four-gas meter to provide data on environmental hazards in the basement. While the meter couldn't feed directly back to incident command, State Police were able to use one robot's video to relay images of the meter.

"Before you go downrange, you try to gather as much



information as you can," Jeff Winn said. "That's coming from the workers, the first due engine company, the pre-plans, the facility manager, everyone who can provide some knowledge about the hazard and the environment. And the robots helped with that—if you can send a robot in, you don't have to risk a person being injured, incapacitated, or worse. The info we were getting back was that it was safe enough to enter."

### Hazmat Entry

Based on all the available information, it was determined that the first Hazmat entry team would wear Level A suits. Two techs with a photoionization detector, chlorine monitor, and other tools made their way to the basement, with two more techs in Level A protection on standby at the door in the event of an emergency. The entry team surveyed the atmosphere and found that the spilled chemicals were no longer reacting but the tanks were still very hot, measuring over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

"The challenge with that room was that there's absolutely no ventilation whatsoever," Jeff Winn said. "There's nowhere for that heat to go."

Before exiting the building, the entry team had one more task. Spot, the four-legged State Police robot, had fallen down a stairwell that wasn't represented in the building's as-built plans. Though Spot's gyroscopes normally allow it to right itself, it had gotten wedged into a stairway railing. One tech, John Kivlan, freed it from the obstruction only to find that it had run down its battery attempting to stand. So he heaved the 70-pound robot over his shoulders in a fireman's carry and brought it back to surface level, where additional techs could safely retrieve it.

Hazmat techs made five entries through the day and into the evening hours, with the second and subsequent

*Continued on page 12*

# Fireworks Round Up

The fireworks season kept Department of Fire Services personnel busy this year, starting well in advance of the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

The DFS Code Compliance & Enforcement Unit (CCEU) set the stage for a successful season with a series of orientations on fireworks details for local fire prevention officers. These sessions were delivered statewide and attended by about 250 local firefighters. They addressed many of the factors that DFS code compliance officers would be looking for during inspections of permitted displays. As a result, many of the fire officials detailed to displays in their communities were familiar with the items that code compliance officers would be looking for, and those inspections went quickly and smoothly. All told, CCEU conducted 87 inspections during the height of the season, from June 22 through July 8.

Not everything went so smoothly, however. In the early morning hours of July 4, a fire broke out on the barge from which Marblehead's permitted fireworks display was to be shot. The fire consumed much of the equipment needed to shoot that evening's show, resulting in its cancellation. The preliminary evidence suggests that the fire started with smoldering debris from a July 3 show in Lynn, but CCEU is still examining the matter with the vendor's cooperation.

Between July 1 and 5, State Police assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office responded to a car fire in Pepperell, a brush fire in Rockport, and a boat fire in Harvard, all of which were related to illegal fireworks, as well as an illicit fireworks display with unexploded fireworks in Marlborough. Local officials in Fall River and



*Aftermath of the Marblehead fireworks incident.*

Everett reported to State Police that they had handled a dumpster fire and household trash fire, each of which also started with illegal fireworks. The State Police Bomb Squad was called to Falmouth for an unexploded commercial-grade shell that may have come from an earlier permitted show.

Fortunately, there were no preliminary reports of serious injuries caused by fireworks this year, a sign that Massachusetts' common-sense legislation and consistent public safety messaging is having an effect. Please keep spreading the messages that: *Fireworks are illegal in Massachusetts because they're dangerous!* and *Leave fireworks to the professionals!*

## **Tier 2 Hazmat Incident**, *continued from page 11*

entries made by three-tech teams with additional three-tech teams on standby. Addressing the greatest hazard first, they pumped the contents of the acid tank to a secure vessel and brought it outside. The same team then decontaminated the pump and transferred the contents of the base into another container and removed it from the building.

### **End of Operations**

The substances were secured in a locked location on-site overnight and a private cleanup company was contracted to take custody of the chemicals for disposal. Small amounts of chemicals in the tanks and minor spillage in the basement were mitigated using acid and base neutralizers, which eliminated any hazard in the former hot zone.

"I've got to say, the Hazmat techs, DEP, everyone who needed to be there—they were there as long as we needed

them," said Chief Weir. "We didn't clear the scene until late that night."

In an abundance of caution, air samples were taken at multiple locations in the school and run through the Gas Chromatograph/Mass Spectrometer.

"Everyone working in conjunction in a joint effort was able to alleviate any fears that the school was contaminated or hazardous in any way," Jeff Winn said. "We were able to provide an industrial hygienist with readings showing the environment was 99.999% clear. The one chemical they did find was Pine Sol in a hallway."

School leaders and town officials were relieved and grateful for the results. As for the students? Not so much—the school opened on time with no delays the next morning.



# Massachusetts Fire Deaths in 2023

## All Fires

25,643 Fires - Down 12% From 2022

45 Civilian Deaths

0 Fire Service Deaths

212 Civilian Injuries

405 Fire Service Injuries

\$320.2 Million in Property Damage

606 Reported Arsons

## Motor Vehicle Fires

2,315 Fires - Down 2%

6 Civilian Deaths

21 Civilian Injuries

9 Fire Service Injuries

\$34.4 Million in Property Damage

40 Arsons Reported

## Structure Fires

15,264 Fires - Down 2%

37 Civilian Deaths

0 Fire Service Deaths

168 Civilian Injuries

347 Fire Service Injuries

\$282.3 Million in Property Damage

149 Arsons Reported

## Other Fires

8,064 Fires - Down 28%

2 Civilian Deaths

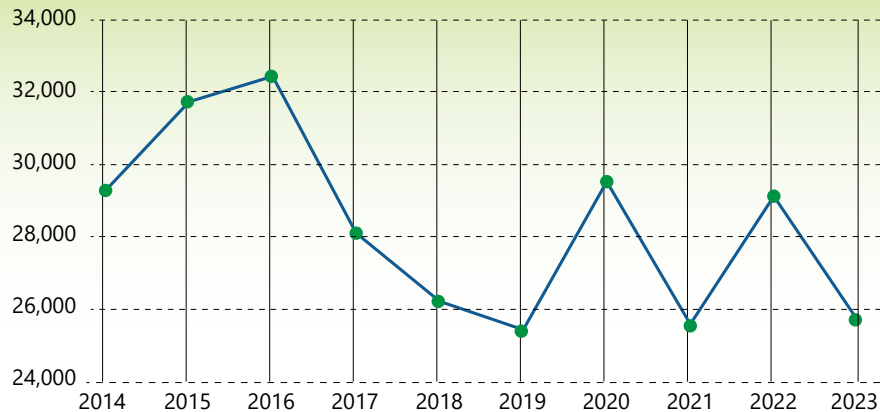
23 Civilian Injuries

49 Fire Service Injuries

\$3.5 Million in Property Damage

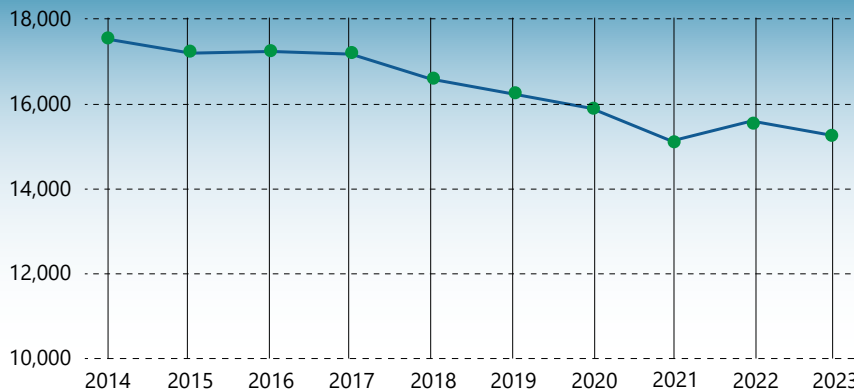
417 Arsons Reported

### Massachusetts Fires by Year



Fires of all types declined in 2023 and remained below the 10-year average of 28,299.

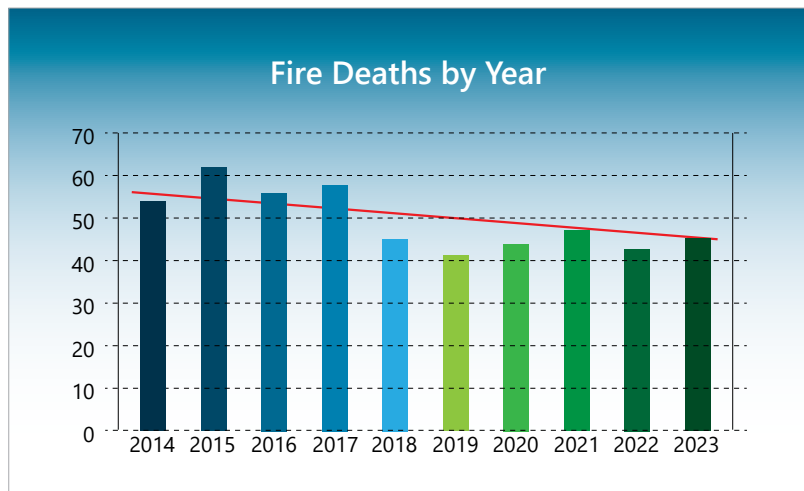
### Structure Fires by Year



Structure fires declined in 2023 after a slight increase in 2022. They remained below the 10-year average of 16,402.

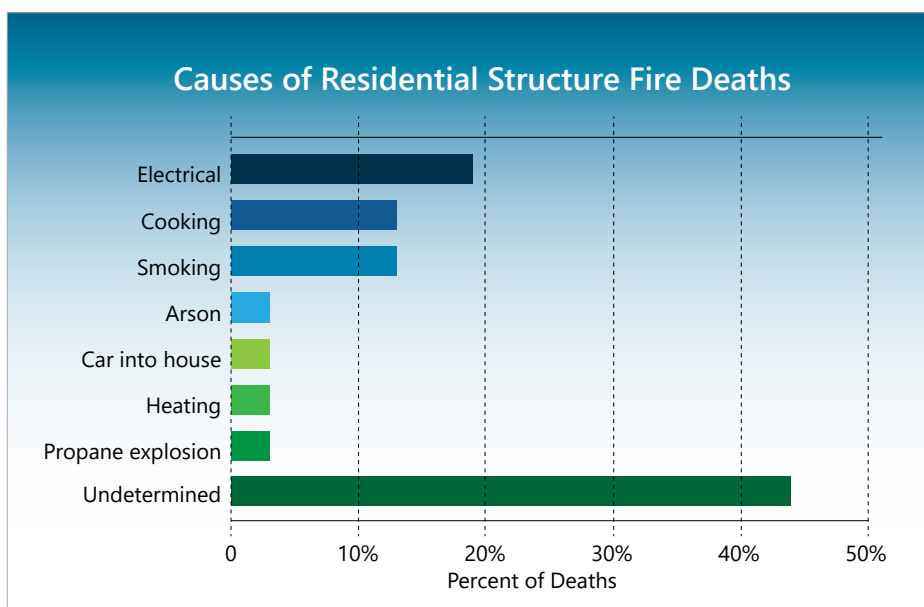
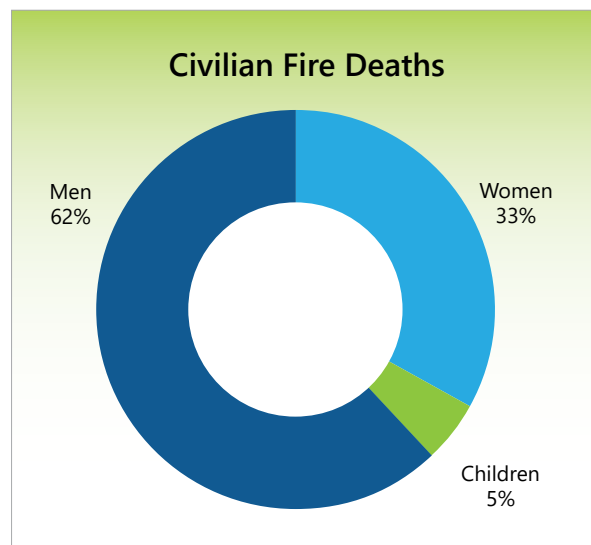


# Massachusetts Fire Deaths in 2023



DFS Code Compliance Officers found working smoke alarms in only about half the fatal fires they responded to in 2023.

- 38 fatal fires killed 45 civilians: 28 men, 15 women, and 2 children.
- 26 of these victims (58%) were age 65 or older.
- 32 of these fatalities (71%) occurred at home.
- No firefighters died in fire-related incidents.
- 5 people died in 5 fires that were intentionally set. All of these were successful attempts at self-immolation.



Be sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home, test them every month, and replace them every 10 years!



# Fire Investigation News

## *Incendiary Fires, May to July*

### **Chelsea**

Two juveniles have been charged with starting a fire at 114 Carter Street in an alleged attempt to break into the commercial building. The Chelsea Fire Department responded to the area to find the wooden door frame of the building on fire with smoke conditions inside. After extinguishing the fire, they notified Chelsea Police and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office. An examination of the scene revealed a propane torch and baseball bat on the ground nearby, as well as damage to the door itself. The joint investigation that followed led to the identification of two juveniles as the responsible parties. Both were charged and are being prosecuted by the Suffolk County District Attorney's office.



### **Hyannis**

On May 5, the Hyannis Fire Department responded to two separate fires about a quarter mile apart, one outside a hotel on Main Street and the other in a trash receptacle near the Hyannis Transportation Center on Iyannough Road. Both fires were extinguished without any injuries, and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office responded to assist in the investigation. On arrival, they were informed that Barnstable Police had taken one suspect into custody on an unrelated warrant. Investigators jointly determined that the fires had been intentionally set and soon recovered some of the suspect's personal belongings near the Iyannough Road scene. She was charged with multiple arson-related offenses.



### **Maynard**

A Little Road resident has been charged with setting a fire in her home that injured a firefighter. The June 5 fire at 1 Little Road broke out shortly before midnight, injuring a firefighter who was transported to an area hospital. The investigation by the Maynard Fire Department, Maynard Police, and State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office continued for nearly two weeks and resulted in her arrest on June 17. She is being prosecuted by the Middlesex County District Attorney's office.

### **Kingston**

On the morning of July 4, Kingston Police responding to a noise complaint observed damage to the First Parish Unitarian Church on Main Street. Officers observed burned Pride and Black Lives Matter flags, broken windows and shutters, and additional vandalism inside. An adult male who had been seen in the area earlier returned while police were present and was detained. State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office responded to assist in the origin and cause investigation, determining that the fires had been intentionally set. Based on evidence gathered by local and state officials, Kingston Police arrested the man, who is now facing federal charges.

### **Medford**

On July 15, the Medford Fire Department responded to Wareham Street and quickly extinguished a fire on a second-floor residential porch that extended to the front of the building. Investigators from the Medford Fire Department, Medford Police, and State Police assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office determined that the fire was intentionally set and identified an occupant as the person who set it. That person was transported to an area hospital for evaluation.



# Thank You, Interns!

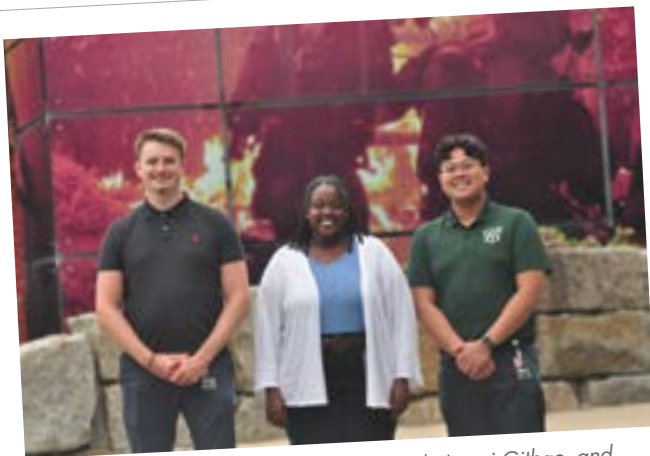
## *EOPSS Interns at DFS*



Assistant Coordinator Mike Gelinas from the MFA describing the combination of classroom instruction and practical exercises that form the backbone of recruit training.



Technical Rescue Program Coordinator Mark McCabe discussing the tech rescue courses available to firefighters.



Left to right: DFS interns Alexander Thibeault, Imani Githae, and TJ Sahasakmontri.

From June through August, the Department of Fire Services hosted three members of the Executive Office of Public Safety & Security's summer internship program. The EOPSS program places a cohort of about 50 Massachusetts college students in the Secretariat's agencies, including DFS, to support the Commonwealth's public safety infrastructure.

This year's DFS interns included Imani Githae, who just graduated from Worcester State University and was assigned to the Hazmat Division; TJ Sahasakmontri, who will enter his senior year at UMass Lowell this fall and was assigned to the Fire Safety Division; and Alexander Thibeault, who is entering his senior year at Worcester State University and was assigned to the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy.

Imani, TJ, and Alexander all came to the program with an interest in criminal justice. In fact, only Alexander—who lives in Hudson—was familiar with DFS before submitting his application. But all three soon found themselves performing vital work behind the scenes for the Commonwealth's fire service and engaging with the day-to-day activities of their host divisions. And all three expressed surprise at the depth and breadth of support services that DFS provides.

"I was amazed at the number of teams and units at DFS," TJ said. "You really can't grasp how big it is until you actually come here and take a walk through it."

"I hadn't realized how many firefighters work here," said Imani, who works alongside current and retired fire service personnel in the Hazmat Division.

Alexander, who hopes to become a police officer, was particularly interested in the State Police presence within the agency.

"Getting to see the troopers, watching them train their dogs for fire investigations and find accelerants, that was really interesting," he said.

Throughout the summer, the trio's fellow EOPSS interns visited the various Secretariat agencies—including DFS on July 24. DFS welcomed about 30 students to the Stow campus for a tour of the facility. It started at the Academy, where Assistant Coordinator Mike Gelinas led them through the classrooms and onto the drill yard to demonstrate the combination of classroom instruction and practical exercises that form the backbone of recruit training. Technical Rescue Program Coordinator Mark McCabe took a break from rehabbing the Water Rescue Training

*Continued on next page*

# Merrimac Fire Chief Named BFPR Chair

On February 20, Governor Maura Healey designated Merrimac Fire Chief Larry S. Fisher as chair of the Board of Fire Prevention Regulations (BFPR), the statewide body of fire service leaders and subject matter experts who promulgate the state's fire and electrical codes. Chief Fisher succeeds Anthony Caputo, P.E., who retired after 24 years on the Board and had served as its chair since 2016.

"For more than 75 years, the Board of Fire Prevention Regulations has played a key role in protecting Massachusetts residents from fire and explosions," said Chief Fisher, who has served as a Board member for more than a decade. "I am honored by the Governor's decision, and I look forward to working with my fellow Board members to build upon this important work in the months and years to come."

The Board of Fire Prevention Regulations was established in 1946 after the devastating fire at the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston, which claimed 490 lives after patrons were trapped inside a crowded occupancy with no sprinklers and blocked or locked escape routes. The Board's mandate was to create a statewide fire code—now known as 527 CMR 1, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code—from a patchwork of regulations that had previously been in place. The Board also promulgates 527 CMR 12, the Massachusetts Electrical Code.

Chief Fisher was appointed to the BFPR in 2011 as an electrical contractor with a master electrician's license, one of 16 statutorily defined seats on the Board. He currently serves on several committees and subcommittees, including as chair of the Electrical Advisory Code Committee, and as an electrical investigator for the Department of



Fire Services. He has been a member of the Merrimac Fire Department for more than 40 years, rising through the ranks until his appointment as chief in 2018.

"Chief Fisher's subject matter expertise, leadership experience, and many years of service on the Board make him an outstanding selection as chair," said State Fire Marshal Jon Davine. "I would like to thank Anthony Caputo for his enduring contributions to the interests of public safety, and I look forward to working with Chief Fisher in his new role."

## Interns, *continued from previous page*

trailer to discuss the various tech rescue courses available to local firefighters, demonstrating that learning is a lifetime endeavor. Hazmat Director Jeff Winn and Hazmat Tech Jay Roan gave an up-close overview of the tools and equipment onboard an Operational Response Unit, followed by a chance to cool off and rehydrate on Rehab 7 before Special Operations Acting Assistant Coordinator Shawn Green demonstrated the array of communications resources on Incident Support Unit 1. Troopers John Ragosa and Scott Irish brought out EK9 Pippen and two robotic



*Trooper John Ragosa describing Bomb Squad robotic operations.*

platforms used by the State Police Bomb Squad, and State Fire Marshal Jon Davine and Deputy Marshal Maribel Fournier wrapped it up with a Q&A session.

"It was great to host the interns for the day and open their eyes to our work," said State Fire Marshal Davine, "but I especially want to thank Imani, TJ, and Alexander for their hard work through the summer. They were great additions to the team."



# Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Graduations



## Career Recruit Firefighter Training

In the 50-day Career Recruit Firefighter Training program, students receive classroom training in all basic firefighter skills. They practice first under non-fire conditions and then during controlled fire conditions. 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 multiple-floor or multiple-room structural fires to mailbox fires. Upon successful completion of the Recruit Program, all students have met the national standards of National Fire Protection Association 1001 and are certified to the level of Firefighter I and II, and Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational Level by the Massachusetts Fire Training Council, which is accredited by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications. Training is held at the Stow headquarters of DFS, the Springfield campus, and the Bridgewater campus.

### *Class #320*

On May 10, 2024, members of Career Recruit Firefighter Class #320 graduated at the Stow Campus. The 33 graduates represent the 12 departments of Andover, Auburn, Belmont, Chelmsford, Falmouth, Haverhill, Lynn, Methuen, Nantucket, Norwood, Seekonk, and Yarmouth.

### *Class #321*

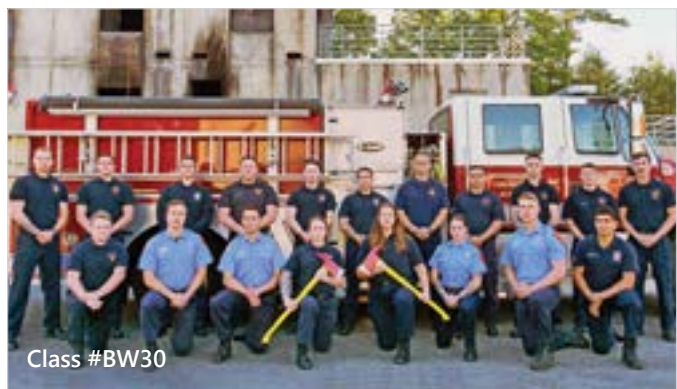
On June 14, 2024, members of Career Recruit Firefighter Class #321 graduated at the Stow Campus. The 31 graduates represent the 14 departments of Acton, Beverly, Boxborough, Gloucester, Haverhill, Ipswich, Natick, Northborough, Plymouth, Randolph, Scituate, Southborough, Wellesley, and Woburn.

### *Class #S37*

On June 24, 2024, members of Career Recruit Firefighter Class #S37 graduated at the Springfield Campus. The 17 graduates represent the 9 departments of Amherst, Athol, Auburn, East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Northampton, Seekonk, West Springfield, and Westfield.

### *Class #BW30*

On June 28, 2024, members of Career Recruit Firefighter Class #BW30 graduated at the Bridgewater Campus. The 19 graduates represent the 9 departments of Avon, Brewster, Bridgewater, Canton, Eastham, Hanson, Hull, Hyannis, Plymouth, Provincetown, Randolph, Scituate, Seekonk, Walpole, Whitman, and Yarmouth.





First responders are on the front lines of any crisis and these newest firefighters are needed now more than ever.

*State Fire Marshal Jon Davine*

#### **Class #322**

On July 26, 2024, members of Career Recruit Firefighter Class #322 graduated at the Stow Campus. The 33 graduates represent the 23 departments of Amesbury, Andover, Bedford, Billerica, Burlington, Charlton, Devens, Falmouth, Foxborough, Groton, Haverhill, Hingham, Leominster, Lexington, Littleton, Marlborough, Maynard, Medway, Nantucket, North Andover, North Reading, Salem, and Westborough.

#### **Call/Volunteer Recruit Firefighting Training**

The Call/Volunteer Firefighter Recruit Training Program is unique in that it delivers a standard recruit training curriculum, meeting national standards, on nights and weekends to accommodate the schedule of firefighters in suburban and rural areas. Making the training more accessible means more firefighters can participate and allows them more time to practice training skills with instructors. The MFA, a division of the Department of Fire Services, has offered the program since 2003.

#### **Class #111**

On May 1, 2024, members of Call/Volunteer Firefighting Class #111 graduated at the Bridgewater campus. The 32 graduates represent the 14 fire departments of Acushnet, Dartmouth Fire District 1, Duxbury, Freetown, Lakeville, Mattapoisett, Medway, Onset, Plympton, Rehoboth, Rochester, Swansea, West Bridgewater, and Westport.

#### **Class #112**

On June 24, 2024, members of Call/Volunteer Firefighting Class #112 graduated at the Springfield campus. The 27 graduates represent the 18 fire departments of Adams, Brimfield, Granby, Hadley, Huntington, Lee, Leverett, Orange, Palmer, Richmond, South Hadley Fire District 1, Southwick, Three Rivers, Tyringham, Warren, Warwick, and Whately.

#### **Class #113**

On June 27, 2024, members of Call/Volunteer Firefighting Class #113 graduated at the Stow campus. The 25 graduates represent the 18 fire departments of Boylston, Carlisle, Grafton, Haverhill, Holland, Hopedale, Lincoln, Millis, Millville, Northbridge, Oakham, Paxton, Rutland, Shirley, Tyngsborough, Uxbridge, Wenham, and Weston.



# Fire Prevention Week is October 6–12, 2024

Fire Prevention Week is October 6–12, 2024. This year's theme is *Smoke Alarms: Make them work for you!* Smoke alarms reduce the risk of dying in a home fire by more than half. Meanwhile, roughly three out of five fire deaths in the U.S. happen in homes with either no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. DFS Code Compliance officers found working smoke alarms in only about half the fatal fires they responded to in 2023.

Smoke alarms serve as the first line of defense in a home fire, but they need to be present and working in order to protect people. This year's Fire Prevention Week campaign helps better educate the public about the steps they can take to make sure their homes have smoke alarms in all the needed locations and that they're working properly.

Use the Fire Prevention Week logo and materials for teaching during Fire Prevention Week. Visit [www.fpw.org](http://www.fpw.org), [www.sparky.org](http://www.sparky.org), and [www.sparkyschoolhouse.org](http://www.sparkyschoolhouse.org) for information. Fire Prevention Week safety messages include:

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area (like a hallway), and on each level (including the basement) of the home.
- Make sure smoke alarms meet the needs of all family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

The Department of Fire Services also has many resources for teaching about smoke alarms. Our smoke



alarm public awareness campaign toolkit includes:

- A logo for use in print or online;
- An educational flyer on smoke alarms in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, with more languages on the way;
- Memes for use on social media;
- An Op-Ed piece for submission to local newspapers;
- A customizable press release;
- Links to TV public service announcements (English and Spanish) that can be used on social media and local cable access;
- General smoke alarm safety and maintenance messages; and
- Smoke alarm safety and maintenance messages for older adults.

Fire departments and the public can find additional information and resources on the *Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms* webpage. Visit [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs). Search for *Smoke Alarms*.

## Burn Awareness Video Contest, *continued from page 10*

Ella Moe and Sierra Hart of Dartmouth High School won third place for “DHNN Starts Now,” which focused on candle safety by reminding viewers never to leave a lit candle unattended. They received a \$50 Best Buy gift card from Shriners Children’s Boston.

Honorable mentions went to Zada Wallace of Boston Latin Academy for “Burn Awareness II;” Isabella Cardoso and Ava Nicholson of Dartmouth High School for “Fire Safety 101;” and Victor Alvarado Colon of Springfield Central High School for “Fire Destroys.”

All six videos can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/dfsosfm](http://www.youtube.com/dfsosfm) in the 2023-24 Burn Awareness Video Contest Winners playlist.

**“Many burn injuries can be prevented through awareness, education, and avoiding risky behavior. The DFS Burn Awareness Video contest gives young people the chance to spread a positive safety message to their peers.”**

*State Fire Marshal Jon Davine*

# 2024 License Examination Schedule

## New Email for FSD Licensing Division

The Fire Safety Division Licensing Office has a new email address: [DFS.FSDLicensing@mass.gov](mailto:DFS.FSDLicensing@mass.gov). The old address ([DFS.Licensing@state.ma.us](mailto:DFS.Licensing@state.ma.us)) is no longer in use.

## Fire Safety Division

The Department of Fire Services' Fire Safety Division issues licenses, permits, and certificates of competency (licenses) to people and companies engaged in fireworks, blasting, explosives, special effects, cannon and mortar firing, commercial cooking exhaust system cleaning and inspection, hood cleaning, special hazard systems, portable fire extinguishers, marine fueling facilities and above ground tanks. Register for exams and see detailed information at [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs). Search for *DFS Licensing*. For

questions, contact the Licensing Desk at 978-567-3700 or at [DFS.FSDLicensing@mass.gov](mailto:DFS.FSDLicensing@mass.gov).

## Boiler and Pressure Vessel Program

The Boiler and Pressure Vessel Program offers monthly license exams for oil burner technician and all classes of fireman and engineer licenses. Register for exams and see detailed information at [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs). Search for *BPV Exams*. For questions contact the Boiler & Pressure Vessel Program at (978) 567-3780 or at [BPV.Exams@mass.gov](mailto:BPV.Exams@mass.gov).

## Licensing Status

To see the licensing status of an individual or company, visit the DFS License Look Up at <https://madfs.mylicense.com/verification/> or go to [www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs) and search for *DFS licensing*.

Examination Schedule	Examination Dates	Deadlines for Applications
FSD Exams	Exams Start at 10:00 am	
Fire Suppression and Commercial Hood Cleaning	October 16, 2024	September 20, 2024
Cannon/Mortar, Fireworks and Special Effects, Blasting and Blasting R&D	September 18, 2024 November 13, 2024	August 23, 2024 October 18, 2024
BPV Exams	Exams start at 9:00 am	
Oil Burner, Fireman & Engineer (all classes)	September 25, 2024 October 30, 2024 November 27, 2024 December 27, 2024	August 30, 2024 September 27, 2024 October 25, 2024 November 29, 2024

## New Rapid Intervention Prop and Incident Support Trailers, *continued from page 5*

**The new trailer-based Rapid Intervention Prop will expand local access to the most popular Rapid Intervention courses by making critical training components available at any firehouse.**

Outside the trailer, an additional large-screen monitor is mounted on the right side of the trailer with HDMI input, internet access, and power. An eight-LED telescopic Night Scan tower is mounted on the roof to light up the night, while a 26' mast-mounted camera with full

zoom capabilities provides 360-degree views of the surrounding area. Roll-out shades on both sides of the trailer offer shelter from the sun and rain.

The IST is expected to go into service this fall and will primarily support planned events, freeing up the ISUs for emergency response. Watch for information on activating this new resource later this year.

**The new IST will primarily support planned events, freeing up ISUs for emergency response.**





Department of Fire Services  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
978-567-3100

[www.mass.gov/dfs](http://www.mass.gov/dfs)

## New DFS Legal Training *Supervisory Liability*

The ability to make tough decisions is one of the most important qualities of leadership. To support fire officers and other leaders, the General Counsel's office of the Department of Fire Services has prepared a presentation on supervisory liability under Massachusetts law.

This presentation is specifically tailored to address the unique challenges faced by fire service supervisors. It examines the intricacies of supervisory responsibilities, legal obligations, and risk mitigation strategies pertinent to fire department operations. It covers key topics such as decision-making protocols, health and safety compliance, discrimination and harassment prevention, documentation requirements, and case studies illustrating legal principles in action.

DFS is committed to supporting the Massachusetts fire service and equipping its personnel with the tools to navigate a complex supervisory landscape. Toward this end, we can deliver the supervisory liability presentation virtually or in-person to accommodate your needs and preferences. Through this presentation, we hope to facilitate an interactive and informative session that empowers fire department supervisors with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively fulfill their duties while minimizing legal risks.

If you are interested in scheduling a presentation or would like further information, please don't hesitate to reach out to the DFS General Counsel's office at 978-567-3181.

