



FASNY 2025 Year End Update

For more than 200 years, volunteers have been the backbone of providing fire and emergency response to communities across New York. FASNY's role in that proud history has consistently been to advocate for, inform and train those dedicated individuals. As the only Association that represents the interests of the actual men and women who respond when called, we take this role very seriously every day. When we take a position on a statewide issue that affects our membership, we must ensure that it impacts all of them equally regardless of their geographic location or department size.

As we close out 2025, we wanted to update you on several issues of importance that affect the health, safety and viability of the volunteer fire and EMS services statewide.

Proposed Federal OSHA Emergency Response Standard (1910.156)

In February 2024, the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) proposed a comprehensive replacement for the current Fire Brigade Standard. This Federal regulation requires emergency response agencies in several states, including New York, to comply with numerous health and safety standards. The current Fire Brigade Standard treats all agencies equally regardless of the size of the population they serve. Upon receiving notice of the new proposed standard, FASNY analyzed the document and charted a course to respond. After an initial review, it was apparent that many of the newly proposed requirements would be technologically and/or economically infeasible for departments to achieve. At the same time, FASNY reached out to the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) to alert them of our concerns. As a result of this action, FASNY worked with the NVFC to establish a working group of affected organizations and interested individuals from across the country. The group held virtual meetings for over a year to review, discuss and develop potential ideas to modify the OSHA standard as proposed so it was achievable by all covered departments. As part of the federal regulatory process, OSHA held public evidentiary hearings on the proposed new rule. Based on our extensive review of the rule, and our participation in the NVFC Work Group, FASNY delivered testimony during the hearings and filed supplemental testimony during the allowable post hearing period. FASNY representatives also monitored every day of the virtual public hearing and even questioned witnesses to clarify or rebut points being made. New York's volunteers came out in force at this hearing. They echoed many of the concerns raised by other States and OSHA itself regarding the unintended, harmful impact the proposed rule would have on volunteer fire and EMS providers. From our initial review of the proposed new rule, FASNY expressed concerns that the rule as written was technologically and economically impossible for



many departments to comply with. Several other state organizations agreed with this position which is reflected in the evidentiary record. If OSHA is unwilling to change the rule as proposed, we asked them to exempt the volunteer fire service from it, allowing the proposed rule to be non-mandatory and nonpunitive for volunteers. Most importantly, we committed to working with OSHA in a new rulemaking process to develop a rule that volunteer departments could meet. The request for an exemption from the rule as proposed was also the position of the Association of Fire Districts of New York State, the New York Association of Fire Chiefs and the New York State Fire Coordinators Association and is part of the official evidentiary record. The evidentiary record closed in January 2025. This means that OSHA can only act on the information that was provided up to that point. They can alter their original proposed rule based on testimony that was in the evidentiary record prior to January 2025 through a narrow process called “logical outgrowth”. Any ideas, proposals, suggestions or revisions made by anyone after January 2025 have absolutely no bearing on OSHA’s ultimate decision, and OSHA is not allowed to consider any such submissions.

We continue to monitor OSHA and await its decision.

New York State Issues

FASNY has been approached by Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray on two issues that would impact the volunteer fire service. These two issues are (1) the ability to form county-wide fire departments and (2) to allow authorities having jurisdiction (AHJ’s) to pay volunteer firefighters for their service. At a recent meeting of the four state associations, FASNY suggested that a working group be established to discuss and flesh out these concepts. The working group was formed, has met several times and continues to work on these concepts.

County Fire Departments

With respect to the establishment of county fire departments, we have informed Commissioner Bray that we cannot take a position on this vague concept until we see a specific, detailed proposal. To simply empower counties to establish their own fire departments without providing any uniform statewide parameters could cause chaos and actually diminish public safety. Issues such as funding, jurisdiction, staffing, resource allocation and many others need to be clearly defined before we are able to develop a position. If not done properly, establishing another layer of emergency response could also add to New York’s affordability crisis by placing additional taxes on residents to fund a countywide fire department.



To date, we have not received a detailed proposal. We look forward to working with the other state fire associations on this concept once we have something to analyze and respond to.

Providing Nominal Compensation For Volunteer Firefighters

This concept has been discussed by the working group. On December 17, 2025, FASNY sent a letter to Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Commissioner Jackie Bray. The letter contained fourteen (14) specific proposals that would provide nominal compensation for service, incentivize volunteer fire and EMS recruitment efforts, and promote public safety. The compensation provided for in these proposals would be available to every volunteer firefighter and have uniform value across the State.

FASNY has serious concerns that providing direct cash payments for service would create inequity and animosity between departments that can afford to do it and those that cannot. It could actually drive potential new firefighters away from smaller departments with less resources and who generally are the ones with manpower challenges. Further, direct cash payments would be devalued because they would be taxed as income just like the State's training stipend program.

FASNY's fourteen (14) proposals protect the full value of the compensation because they provide for the utilization of State tax credits, reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred, reduction or elimination of local property taxes, forgiveness of student loans, exemption from certain State fees or taxes and other similar items.

The proposals suggested by FASNY are straightforward and can be easily implemented. To date, FASNY is the only fire service association to offer concrete proposals to provide nominal compensation to volunteer firefighters. We look forward to hearing back from Commissioner Bray and the other fire service associations.