



**ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION
COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

**Ronnell Higgins, Commissioner
Peter S. Carozza, Jr., Chairman
Kevin J. Kowalski, Vice Chairman
Peter Buonome, Secretary
Jeffrey J. Morrissette, State Fire Administrator**

*Established - 1975 Statutory Authority - Conn. Gen. Statutes. Sec. 7-323
Central Office - Connecticut Fire Academy, 34 Perimeter Road, Windsor Locks, CT 06096
Average number of full-time employees – 10 (General Fund)*

***Organization structure - Office of State Fire Administration, Training Unit and
Certification Unit***

Division Mission

***To prevent or mitigate the effects of fire and disasters through leadership and collaboration
with municipalities, fire departments, and regional fire schools by delivery of quality
consulting services, technical assistance, training, education, and professional competency
certification of career and volunteer fire service personnel.***

Statutory Authority

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §§ 7-323(j) - 7-323(v) the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control is charged with and has primary responsibility for training, public fire and life safety education, and professional competency certification for members of Connecticut's fire service.

COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Appointed members of the Commission represent the statewide fire service organizations and serve to advise the Commissioner. In January 2024, longtime Commission Chairman Peter Carozza retired after 36 years of dedicated service. Daniel Tompkins replaced Peter as one of

two Uniformed Professional Firefighters Association (UPFFA) representatives serving the Commission.

Office of State Fire Administration

The Office of State Fire Administration provides overall coordination, management, and support of division activities and facilities, including the administration of grants. The Office offers consulting services to communities regarding fire department administration and operations. Oversight of the Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Response Plan continues with staff serving as Fire Service Liaisons to the State Emergency Operations Center during statewide emergencies and exercises. A transition to hybrid activations, when feasible, has alleviated concerns related to sustainment of staffing of the Fire Desk for long duration activations. The Office actively supports the Connecticut Fallen Firefighters Memorial Foundation and the Connecticut Statewide Honor Guard, ensuring Connecticut honors its fallen firefighters and their family members consistent with the profession's highest standards. Communication, collaboration, and coordination continue with the nine independent Regional Fire Schools. Further, we coordinate the state's Regional Foam Trailer program with eight local fire departments, hosting these resources and responding to emergencies requiring firefighting foam. In partnership with DEEP, replacement of the foam trailer units neared completion, with 6 of 8 new units placed into operation. Training was provided to host departments, with follow-up training planned. With a \$3 million appropriation, the next phase of the AFFF Take-Back Program was initiated to reimburse municipalities who drained, rinsed, and disposed of AFFF from their fire apparatus. Forty (40) fire departments participated and were reimbursed \$602,723.98 for their efforts in removing 4,320 gallons of AFFF from 104 fire apparatus. Funding was carried over to FY25 to continue this effort.

February 1, 2024, we celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the opening of the Connecticut Fire Academy. A Winter Fire School was premiered and was used to highlight this milestone with numerous free training programs offered to fire service members. Moving forward, this program will now replace the legacy June Fire School that ran for four decades.

In June, ARPA funding for the 3-Year Pilot Fire Service Response Data Collection project was swept by the General Assembly prior to the kick-off of this initiative. Efforts are underway to secure an alternative funding source to keep the effort alive.

A final liquidation of assets from the Geoffrey Nielsen Bequest was made, transferring all funding to a state account solely for use by the Commission for initiatives approved by a standing committee. The balance in the account is approximately \$500,000.

Communications and information dissemination to fire service constituents continued primarily through expanded use of social media and the CFPC email Listserv.

During FY24, with funding received from the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), we were able to provide additional Hazardous Materials training and administered the annual SERC Haz Mat response exercise held in September at the Fairfield Regional Fire School. Dozens of local, regional, state, and federal partners participated. Funding also supported our

reprinting of Traffic Incident Management Field Operation Guides that are distributed during all TIMS training delivered by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

For a third year, administered funding to distressed communities with volunteer fire departments for entry-level Firefighter I and II training. This fiscal year we distributed \$65,806.94 from the \$140,000 appropriation to fund the training of fifty-five newly recruited volunteer firefighters in 9 communities.

FY 2021 and 2022 FEMA AFG Grants were formally closed out, with the final receipt of all equipment items delayed due to supply chain issues. In July, FEMA awarded a FY 23 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) totaling \$517,840 to procure fifty-one replacement SCBA Units, RIT-Pak, and a Pak-Tracker Handheld Receiver. This will enable us to equip our trainees and staff with the most up-to-date safety equipment available. This underscores our dedication to providing the highest level of fire service training, enhancing safety, and supporting our staff and instructors.

Further, we continue to serve as the point of contact with eight fire departments receiving state and ARPA funding for projects ranging from \$25,000 to \$500,000. Administration of the Limited Access Highway program that provides payments to volunteer fire companies for response to emergency incidents on limited access highways continued. Claims exceeded the available appropriation on May 3rd, prior to the fiscal year's end, leaving us unable to pay claims through the remainder of the fiscal year. A total of 3,000 claims were approved for payment totaling \$1.5 million.

A committee was established to develop a scope of work to be bid to undertake a Statewide Fire Service Strategic Plan. State funding totaling \$250,000 was appropriated for this effort.

With the partial closure of the Connecticut Fire Academy Bookstore in October of 2022 due to the unexpected passing of the supervisor, the position was refilled, and the store placed back into full operation. As a result, annual gross sales totaled \$292,860.57, an increase from the previous year's sales activity of \$199,144.90.

A total of 7,880 dormitory room nights were used by firefighters attending training at the Connecticut Fire Academy.

Training Unit (Connecticut Fire Academy)

The Training Unit, under the leadership of Director P.J. Norwood, delivers a wide range of training and education programs extending from the comprehensive 15-week resident Recruit Firefighter Training program to Fire Officer and technical specialty level courses, many with collegiate transfer credits. Courses are available for delivery throughout the state at local fire stations, Regional Fire Schools and at the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA) campus in Windsor Locks. Expanded use of the Acadis Learning Management System greatly enhanced and streamlined our ability to facilitate student registration and communications. A major reformatting of the annual training calendar reflected the transition to the digital age.

During FY24, the Training Unit delivered 346 training programs, accounting for reaching 5,770 students in 8,937 educational hours and a total of 199,139 student contact hours. In addition to training activities, the Unit continued administration of N-95 respirator fit testing services, supporting the COVID response by health care professionals. A total of 1,597 N-95 Respirator Fit Tests were administered at 36 separate locations statewide. In addition, a total of 290 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus respirator fit test were conducted at 19 separate locations.

The Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) continued to be offered to municipalities to assist in identifying future firefighters with the capability of career and lifelong success. This past year, 494 candidates registered, with 302 passing, 55 no shows after registration and 137 failed tests for an overall passing rate of 69%.

Recruit Firefighter Program graduated 116 recruits. The Fire Service (ITTFS) and Advanced Skills and Concepts (ASAC) programs were designed to provide high school students with an opportunity to learn more about the profession by attending a residential camp and performing training evolutions at the Connecticut Fire Academy. During the summer of 2023 and June 2024, we saw all programs at capacity, with 103 Cadets completing these programs.

Over the past year, the Connecticut Fire Academy has made considerable progress in several key areas, reflecting our commitment to excellence in training, safety, and operational efficiency. We placed a strong emphasis on instructor development by enhancing skills, safety practices, and instructional techniques, ensuring that our instructors are well-prepared to deliver high-quality training and adapt to evolving industry standards. In addition, we established and strengthened partnerships with the North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD) and the Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI), enabling us to incorporate innovative research and best practices into our training programs. Our training division also worked closely with the Connecticut Fire Prevention Council (CFPC) to develop high school pathway guidance, helping to create a clear educational pathway for young individuals interested in fire service careers.

Charter Oak State College continues to approve 22 CFA training programs for collegiate transfer credit, adding value to our students. Collaboration with the Military Department and Department of Public Health at the New England Disaster Training Center (Camp Hartell) located in Windsor Locks provides unique training opportunities for all emergency responders.

Certification Unit

The Certification Unit under the leadership of David Clark, assesses fire service personnel in areas ranging from basic firefighting skills to technical rescue specialties and from instructional methodology to executive officer leadership, curriculum development, public education, and fire prevention. This knowledge and skills evaluation of specific competencies legitimizes the pre-requisite training requirements and instruction associated with fire service-related training courses and education. The certification process is an independent third-party evaluation of requisite firefighter skills developed from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in support of the statewide fire service educational framework developed from the same standards. The certification process ensures emergency services personnel are better qualified to conduct

significant incidents while routinely operating in highly hazardous exposure areas when serving the citizens of Connecticut.

The Unit is accredited by two international entities: The National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (ProBoard) and The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC). Accreditation of the certification process validates the professionalism and commitment of full and part-time staff and provides portability to our customers as they pursue careers in the fire service. The Certification Division Director attended the annual Pro Board and IFSAC Conferences in FY 2024 and has been preparing for 5-year reaccreditation site visits scheduled by both accrediting organizations.

This fiscal year, the Certification Unit conducted 36 NFPA 1403 compliant Live Fire Training audits, 29 Vehicle Extrication Audits, 104 psychomotor examinations and 166 cognitive examinations, and 42 ADA compliant examinations, assessing 4094 candidates in FY 2024, resulting in 2923 Pro Board and IFSAC accredited certifications. The overall written examination success rate was 71.4 percent. In addition, the Unit developed and administered 12 promotional and 3 entry level examinations for municipalities. The Unit also administered 17 written examinations in cooperation with Bucks County Pennsylvania Community College Public Safety Training. Lastly, Reciprocity was granted to Connecticut Fire Service personnel certified by other accredited agencies for 75 levels of certification.