



Firefighters Employment, Standards, and Training Council Meeting  
January 6, 2026  
Orlando, Florida

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>REPRESENTING</b>	<b>TERM ENDING</b>
Byron Bennett North Bay Fire Control Dist.	State Fire Marshal	June 30, 2026 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Thomas DiBernardo Florida Department of Health	Bureau of EMS	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Darrel Donatto Town of Palm Beach	Florida League of Cities	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Shawn Hanson Greater Naples Fire Rescue	Florida Fire Marshals Association	Oct. 31, 2026 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Dara Hennessey City of Cocoa Fire Rescue	State Fire Marshal	June 30, 2026 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Jeremy Joseph Florida Forest Service	Florida Forest Service/DOA	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Patrick Kennedy West Palm Beach County F/R	Florida Association of Counties	June 30, 2026 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Jim Millican Lealman Fire District	Florida Association Sp. Districts	Oct. 31, 2026 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Terry Parris Panama City Beach	State Fire Marshal	Jan. 1, 2027 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Kevin Reed Hillsborough C.C	State Fire Marshal	Oct. 31, 2026 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)

**ABSENT:**

Carlos Aviles St. Augustine Fire	FL Fire Chiefs' Association	June 30, 2026 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Brad Bischoff Bradenton Fire Department	FL Professional FF Assoc.	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Aaron Colburn Reedy Creek Emergency Svs.	FL Professional FF Assoc.	Jan. 31, 2027 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)
Dr. David Lee Sylvester Comprehensive	State Fire Marshal	June 30, 2026 (2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Michael Woodward City of Oviedo Fire Dept.	FL Fire Chiefs' Association	June 30, 2026 (1 <sup>st</sup> term)

The Firefighters Employment, Standards and Training Council meeting was called to order.

**On a motion duly made**, the minutes from the Firefighters Employment, Standards and Training Council held on October 28, 2025, were approved.

**Motion carried.**

**REPORT FROM DIVISION:** *given by JoAnne Rice, Director*

- **Legislative**
  - Legislative meetings are ongoing. SFM has had a lot of input from the Florida Fire Chief's and FFMIA so we can identify any issues as we move forward.
- **Budget**
  - Pushing for \$5million budget request for post traumatic stress for First Responders (tracking of suicide/mental health/best practices/research)
  - Requested two new positions within the Division to grow the Domestic Security section. John Kohnke will be retiring in June. His position will be posted within the next few weeks.
  - Working on filling the Bureau Chief position for the Bureau of Fire Prevention. Five candidates have been selected, and interviews will take place in the next couple of weeks. Former Bureau Chief Bruce Gillingham is now the Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Fire Standards & Training/Florida State Fire College.
- **Changes**
  - NERIS
  - FireTRAQ- working through the new system. Once functioning fully, it will be an enormous help in data/recruitment/retention/tracking/reports/etc.
- **Rule Development** – Working on – moving forward
  - Live Fire
  - 69A-66
  - 69A-62
- **Fire Service Day at the Capitol and Gala - February 17-18**
- **Fire Service Awards – March 2**
- **“Ring of the Bell” – March 3**

**REPORT FROM THE BUREAU:** *given by Bruce Gillingham, Bureau Chief*

- **Stats**
  - Employed Firefighters - **43,536**
  - Certified Firefighters - **49,024**
  - Firefighter certifications issued last year - **3,065**
  - Firefighter certifications that expired (2025) – **1,208**

- Volunteer certifications are down, currently - **3, 227**
- The Bureau issued in total, **10, 589** last year, outside of Firefighter I and II
- Out of State/DOD
  - Currently 28 approved and will test in January and February
  - 97 pending application/fingerprints
  - 206 pending verification of training
  - Last year, certified 94 Out of State/DOD
  - Currently 29 are employed (as of Dec. 1)
- **Safety Grants**
  - Contracts issued, 58
  - Total amount awarded \$986,574.32
- **FY25-26 Florida Volunteer Firefighter Assistance Grant**
  - Awarded \$2,983,562.63. This includes the 1,000,000 recurring funds and the 2,000,000 for fiscally constraint areas
  - 51 recipients
- **“Grow As You Go” (On-line volunteer program)**
  - FY25-26 – 36 enrolled to dated
  - FY24-25 – 100 enrolled
  - 35 have completed the program
- **Campus Activity**
  - Volunteer Week – March 13-15, 2026
  - NFA Florida Weekend at NFA – April 25-26, 2026
  - Instructor Conference – May 6-7, 2026
  - Lithium-Ion – September 2026 dates to be determined
  - Marion County Fire Rescue Station 1 – construction underway
- **Campus Updates**
  - Roof replacement
    - Finalizing submissions/permits/approvals
  - Auditorium
    - CD’s have been submitted for review
    - No exceptions have been received
    - CPPI is preparing GMP
  - Cafeteria
    - CD’s have been submitted for review
    - No exceptions have been received
    - CPPI is preparing GMP
  - Courtyard
    - Field survey completed
    - Survey map drawing in progress
    - Schematic design in progress
- **ProBoard/IFSAC Certification and Reaccreditations**
  - Working on Life Safety Educator
  - Working on Fire Inspector for IFSAC
  - August 2026 -site visit by IFSAC
- **FireTRAQ**
  - Lots going on!
  - Several “hot fixes” were done
  - Issues with Pearson Vue as they rolled out new software at the same time we did. 90% of issues have been corrected.
  - We are very busy! Over 3,000 applications currently in the” que”
  - Updates coming by the end of January

- Supplemental Comp fixes
- Notifications and Announcements
- Working through additional data migration from FCDICE
- Single Course Exemption entry updates
- Updating Certs
- Cancelling applications, etc.
- Reports – 90% should be available by the end of February
- Roster uploads for Training Centers

**Director JoAnne Rice**, the Florida State Fire College has two new trucks.

- Ladder Truck
- Tanker/Pumper

**Chairman Darrel Donatto** suggested that the CFO's website data needs updating referencing volunteer firefighters.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **Council Member, Kevin Reed**

Training Directors are concerned that there are not enough State Evaluators. The Training Directors Association will write a letter to the CFO advocating more evaluators. He urged the Council to do the same.

Discussion was held on State employee recruitment, retention, salary, and compression issues.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Division of State Fire Marshal – Publishing of Investigative Summary Findings

Discussion was held on the Division publishing investigations on their website

- SFM Legal – has issue with publishing investigative reports in their entirety, would like to see a “Lessons Learned”. They also wanted a cool down period before release. They requested the Division come up with a procedure.

Further discussion was held. Chief Gillingham will gather additional information.

### **AUDIENCE:**

#### **Council Member, Tom DiBernardo**

The Department of Health has contracted with the University of South Florida to participate with the Workforce.

Tom DiBernardo introduced Dr. Bruce Moeller from the University of South Florida.

Workforce Study: EMS/Florida's increasing population and elderly population. Study is modeling effect through 2050 and impacts on Fire & EMS agencies.

When study completed, the report will be published and shared widely.

**NEXT MEETING: TBD**

**ADJOURN.**

*Audio file available upon request*