

# HOT CALLS



May - December 2025

Volume 12 Issue 3

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## UPCOMING DATES

- Jan 19 MLK County Offices Closed
- Feb 5 OFPC BEFO W. Elmira FD
- Feb 9 OFPC Battery Emergencies - Hector FD
- Feb 17 HM First Responder Ops Refresher - Brooktondale FD
- Feb 18 Fire Police - Enfield FD
- Feb 19 BEFO - Yates OES
- Mar 3 OFPC Interior FF Ops- FFI - Steuben Training Center
- April 5 Easter
- \*Requires Training Auth Letter

## TRIVIA

Last Edition

What type of cylinder has a red label on it?

Winners Ted Dudgeon, Jason Hudson

Answer: Flammable

This Edition

Are most flammable gases lighter or heavier than air?



This issue of the Schuyler County Emergency Management Newsletter is a special edition, designed to bridge the gap since our last publication and bring readers up to date on some of the notable emergency responses from May and June 2025. With regular editions resuming, we want to highlight the dedication and professionalism of our local first responders over the past few months.

As we return to our regular newsletter schedule, we remain committed to keeping the public informed about emergency activities and preparedness initiatives. The stories of our hot calls not only highlight the hard work of our first responders but also serve as a reminder of the importance of community safety awareness.

We thank our local emergency services teams for their continued dedication and encourage all residents to stay informed, prepared, and engaged with Schuyler County Emergency Management.

### LUCAS Device and AMBU Ventilation Training



Centralus Ambulance personnel demonstrate equipment

Odessa Fire Department personnel received a hands-on demonstration of the LUCAS mechanical CPR device and reviewed updates affecting the use of AMBU ventilation units. The training was conducted by Centralus Ambulance, providing members with valuable instruction on equipment operation and recent protocol changes to support effective patient care.



The mission of the Emergency Management Office is to oversee, assist, and coordinate the fire service, emergency medical service, hazardous material response, and 911 service throughout Schuyler County. Coordinate disaster preparedness activities and disaster response in Schuyler County, thus reducing the harmful effects that natural/manmade disasters have on citizens, businesses, and governments of Schuyler County.

## LARGE BRUSH FIRES CHALLENGE FIREFIGHTERS ACROSS SCHUYLER AND CHEMUNG COUNTIES

Over the past few months, Schuyler and Chemung County fire companies responded to multiple large brush and woods fires, requiring coordinated efforts across the region.

One significant fire occurred at Buck Mountain and King Road, caused by downed power lines that went undetected for some time. The fire quickly spread, prompting a large response from Beaver Dams, Montour Falls, Watkins Glen, Burdett, Schuyler EMO, New York State Forest Rangers, and numerous companies from Chemung County. Firefighters worked for several hours to contain the blaze. During this time, Odessa Fire Department stood by for absent companies and responded to two additional calls in Montour, as well as several brush fire calls in Van Etten.

On May 1, another large brush and woods fire occurred in the Millport District, again involving fire companies from both Chemung and Schuyler counties. Located on Jake Road off Burch Hill Road, command was set up on Jake Road. The use of several ATV units from both counties helped make firefighting efforts safer and more efficient. Many of the same companies that responded to the earlier fire assisted in containing this second incident.

These fires highlight the importance of inter-county coordination and the dedication of our firefighters, who work tirelessly to protect lives, property, and natural resources.



Firefighters at the scene of a brush fire. Photo R. Churches

## BURDETT STRUCTURE FIRE

On May 25, the Burdett Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire on Kellogg Road in the Town of Hector. Second-alarm units from Mecklenburg and Montour Falls were dispatched as part of the response. Upon arrival, Burdett firefighters found an active kitchen fire, which was quickly knocked down by the first-due engine. Crews conducted a thorough check of the upstairs area for fire extension, with none found. As a result, second-alarm units were released from the scene. Schuyler County Emergency Management, the Schuyler County Sheriff's Office, the Red Cross, the Code Enforcement Officer, and Fire Investigators also responded. NYSEG was requested to secure utilities and shut off power to the residence.



Photos from Burdett structure fire. Photo R. Churches

# BANQUETS AND CHIEFS REPORTS

## ODESSA ANNUAL BANQUET

### 2025 Chief's Report



Line Officers are installed by new Mayor of Odessa

Chief Adam Mahnke, 1st Asst. Steve Siptrott, 2nd Asst. Mike Croft, 3rd Asst. Kyle Bailey, Capt. Jeremy Hoffman, Lt. Rich Brown, Dep. Chief JJ Jelliff, Dep. Chief Mike Tomassi, and Dep. Chief Rick Churches were not present  
Fire Police Capt. Ted Dudgeon.

#### Call Volume Summary:

- Structure Fires: 4
- Vehicle Fires: 0
- Brush Fires: 2
- EMS Calls: 220
- Motor Vehicle Accidents: 25
- Hazardous Conditions: 66
- Service Calls: 30
- Good Intent Calls: 7
- False Alarms: 19
- Dispatched & Canceled En Route: 46
- Other Calls: 17
- Mutual Aid Given: 25
- Mutual Aid Received: 19

Total Calls for Service: 437

- Fire-related calls: 217
- EMS calls: 220

#### Personnel Hours

- Incident Responses: 4,114 hours
- Non-Incident Activities: 2,065 hours
- Total Department Hours: 6,179 hours

#### Incidents by Municipality:

- Village of Odessa: 89
- Village of Montour Falls: 8
- Village of Watkins Glen: 2
- Town of Catharine: 157
- Town of Cayuta: 72
- Town of Dix: 1
- Town of Hector: 11
- Village of Millport: 3
- Town of Montour: 51
- Town of Van Etten: 10
- Town of Veteran: 27

#### Mutual Aid Given

- Beaver Dams: 1
- Mecklenburg: 1
- Millport: 2
- Montour Falls: 13
- Van Etten: 6
- Watkins Glen: 2



Department Officers 2025 - 26

Chief: Jason Hudson

1st Asst: Charlie Scaptura

2nd Asst: Aaron Emery

Deputy Chief: Anthony Nieves

Deputy Chief: Rob DeDominick

Deputy Chief: Nick Dalrymple

Captain: John Horrocks

Lieutenant: Brent Hulslander

Safety Officer: Brian Hudson

#### 2025 BANQUET AWARDS:

##### TOP RESPONDER

DANIEL NAVARRO – 264 CALLS

##### TOP TRAINERS

BILL BEARDSLEY – 21 TRAININGS

##### 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

MIKE DeNARDO, STEVE ELY, ALAN GREGORY, TIM HUDSON, MARK SPECCHIO



#### 2024 Incident Report Summary

Fire Incidents: 26

EMS Incidents: 329

Hazardous Condition Incidents: 66

Service Call Incidents: 156

Good Intent Incidents: 115

False Alarm Incidents: 76

Severe Weather Incidents: 10

Landing Zone Incidents: 4

Total Incidents for 2024: 782

Total Man Hours: 21,242.36

#### 2024 Incidents by District

Village of Watkins Glen: 513

Town of Reading: 157

Town of Dix: 70

Montour Falls: 24

Beaver Dams: 4

Monterey: 1

Odessa: 2

Tyrone: 1

Dundee: 6

Millport: 2

Tompkins Corners: 1

Greenwood Lake: 1

#### 2024 Training Activity

52 In-House Training Sessions

6,526.42 Total Training Man Hours

# ODESSA STRUCTURE FIRE

On April 26, a fire substantially damaged a 60-foot single-wide trailer located on County Road 10, outside the Village of Odessa. The structure was positioned within a pavilion adjacent to a garage.

The pavilion featured truss construction, raising concerns for potential roof collapse. Firefighters faced heavy wind conditions and found the fire running through the attic space of both the pavilion and the trailer. This allowed the fire to spread into the ceiling space of the trailer.

Despite challenging conditions, crews were able to protect and save the nearby garage, preventing further damage.

Fire units responding to the incident included Odessa, Montour Falls, Watkins Glen, Mecklenburg, Town and Country, Van Etten, and Millport fire departments.



Above Water Supply from OFD Station, Far Left Trailer inside the pavilion Fire started in alley between buildings. Bottom Right: Watkins Glen interior team takes a rehab break. Photos R. Churches and Odessa File

# FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION AND HANDS-ON TRAINING HIGHLIGHT LEARN NOT TO BURN PROGRAM

Schuyler County Emergency Management, in partnership with local fire departments and emergency services, continues to promote fire safety education through the Learn Not to Burn® program. This nationally recognized initiative teaches children essential fire and life safety skills while also offering real-world insight into how firefighters protect the community. As part of the program, students from B.C. Cate School recently participated in a hands-on learning experience focused on brush fire suppression techniques. With guidance from Odessa Fire Department, Montour Falls Fire Department, and Centralus Ambulance, students learned how firefighters construct and use a fire line to control and stop the spread of wildland fires. Additional support was provided by the Mecklenburg and Burdett Fire Departments, assisting operations in Montour Falls alongside Montour E-17 and Centralus Ambulance. The training emphasized teamwork, situational awareness, and safety while giving students an up-close look at emergency response operations. The Learn Not to Burn® program helps reduce fire-related injuries by empowering young people with knowledge they can apply at home and share with their families. These interactions also help strengthen connections between first responders and the communities they serve.

Schools and community organizations interested in fire safety education or hands-on demonstrations are encouraged to contact Schuyler County Emergency Management or their local fire department for more information.



Photos submitted by Rick Churches

## SAFETY CORNER



### WORKING SAFELY AROUND DOWNED POWER LINES

Downed power lines are extremely dangerous and should always be treated as energized, even if they are not sparking or smoking. Utility companies and emergency management agencies across the country stress that assuming a line is “dead” can have fatal consequences.

When a live power line touches the ground, electricity can spread outward through the surrounding area—a phenomenon often compared to ripples in water when a pebble is dropped. Anyone entering this energized zone can be seriously injured or killed. Safety experts recommend staying at least 35 feet away from any downed power line, roughly the length of a school bus. Family members, bystanders, and pets should also be kept well clear of the area.

Never attempt to move or test a downed line with objects such as sticks, poles, brooms, or tools. Rubber gloves or rubber-soled shoes do not provide protection from electrocution. Even nearby puddles or wet ground may be energized and pose a serious hazard.

Motorists who encounter a downed power line on their vehicle should remain inside the vehicle if there is no fire. The ground around the vehicle may be energized, and stepping out could result in electrocution. Drivers should sound the horn, call 911, and warn others to stay away until emergency personnel determine it is safe to exit.

If the vehicle catches fire or begins to smoke, occupants should jump clear of the vehicle—without touching the car and the ground at the same time—and then shuffle away with feet together, never lifting their feet off the ground.

For first responders, these incidents serve as a critical reminder. Firefighters and rescue personnel can become complacent around downed trees and wires, especially when lines appear inactive. Not smoking does not mean not energized. While it may not be possible to guard every downed line, clearly marking the area with caution tape and keeping people away can help prevent tragedy. The danger is real. Fire Chief Gary Moore of Whitewater, Missouri, was checking widespread storm damage when he was found deceased near downed power lines—a sobering reminder that no one is exempt from the risks associated with electrical hazards.

Awareness, distance, and caution save lives. When it comes to downed power lines, stay back, keep others away, and wait for utility and emergency professionals to declare the area safe.

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**STAYING SAFE**  
**When Power Lines Come Down**

Stay at least **35 feet** from downed lines. Don't touch anything they might be touching. Live power lines can energize the ground around them.

If you're too close, **"shuffle" away** to safety — take tiny steps with both feet on the ground and touching each other. This can prevent a dangerous situation known as "step potential."

Keep children and pets **away**.

**Never drive over** a downed line.

Assume any downed line is live and dangerous. Report it to your utility, or call 911 if there's an immediate danger.

## HELICOPTER RESPONSE: A VITAL LINK IN SCHUYLER COUNTY TRAUMA CARE

Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) are a critical component of trauma care in Schuyler County, especially given the county's rural geography and distance from regional trauma centers. When seconds matter, air medical transport provides rapid access to advanced medical care that may not be available locally.

Schuyler County regularly utilizes several air medical resources, including [LifeNet 7-12](#), [LifeNet 7-7](#), [Guthrie Air](#), and [Mercy Flight Central](#). These aircraft allow patients with severe trauma or life-threatening medical emergencies to be transported quickly to specialty care facilities, often significantly reducing transport times and improving patient outcomes.

A key part of successful helicopter operations is the establishment of a safe and effective landing zone (LZ). Local fire and EMS personnel are typically responsible for selecting and securing an LZ. Ideally, the area should be 100 feet by 100 feet, flat, firm, and free of debris, with no overhead hazards such as wires, trees, or poles. All loose items should be secured, and vehicles or apparatus used to mark the LZ should have emergency lights on but headlights and spotlights turned off to avoid blinding the flight crew.

The LZ should be secured from bystanders, with one designated point of contact to communicate with the flight crew. Responders should approach the aircraft only when directed by the crew and always from the front or side, never from the rear where the tail rotor is located.

Effective coordination between local responders and air medical crews ensures helicopter operations are conducted safely and efficiently. These partnerships remain a vital part of Schuyler County's overall trauma system, helping deliver timely, lifesaving care to those who need it most.

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# FIREFIGHTERS SPREAD HOLIDAY CHEER WITH SENECA SANTA GIFTS

On Christmas Eve, Schuyler County firefighters delivered gift bags to 92 families across the county, helping children aged 2 to 12 enjoy a brighter holiday season. The bags, packed with toys, games, stuffed animals, and more, were picked up at the First Presbyterian Church in Watkins Glen, where gifts are gathered and prepared each year.

Schuyler County Emergency Services Director Kirk Smith, who has been part of the delivery day for more than 40 years, said the effort

combines gifts purchased by Seneca Santa with community donations. "Our volunteers take great pride and pleasure in delivering these presents and bringing joy to so many children," he said. The program, which started in the 1940s, is run by a volunteer corps led by Peggy Scott of Burdett. Nine fire departments across the county volunteered to deliver gifts to families in their assigned districts. Chief Brian Gunning of the Mecklenburg Fire Department has participated for 20 years and now brings his family along to help. "It's nice to see the smiles on the faces and do something that's not a disaster situation," he said. "It's a way to give back and spread holiday cheer."



Emergency Services Director Kirk Smith on the phone in the First Presbyterian Church, surrounded by Christmas gift bags prepared by volunteers for delivery to more than 200 children aged 2-12. Photo Odessa File

His son, Gabe, added, "I think it's pretty cool to share the Christmas cheer and help those who are less fortunate."

This year, Seneca Santa is assisting 204 children from 92 families. Gifts are tailored to each child's age and include toys, books, food, and a special pre-wrapped present from the program.

Lieutenant Brent Hulslander of the Watkins Glen Fire Department said deliveries this year were larger than in recent years. "The last couple of years it was kind of slim—we maybe filled two trucks. This year, it's three, four, maybe five trucks, which is awesome," he said.

Thank you [WENY](#) and the [Odessa File](#) for the media coverage.





**Dwight Westlake - Odessa - April 14, 2025**

**Rich Rexford - Tyrone - June 11, 2025**

There isn't yet an official, final national tally published by organizations like the NFPA or USAFA for 2025 as of early 2026, but available tracking from fire service sources indicates that for the calendar year 2025 there have been about 76 firefighters in the United States who died in the line of duty. These figures include deaths due to occupational cancer, medical and cardiac events, vehicle crashes, traumatic incidents, and violence, reflecting how varied and serious the risks can be for firefighters. This number is provisional and may change as more reporting and investigations are completed. Fire service advocates also emphasize that many deaths—especially occupational cancer deaths—are not always captured in traditional LODD counts unless the connection to firefighting is formally recognized.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT HONORS ITS FALLEN OFFICERS IN WATKINS GLEN



Picture from the memorial of fallen officers in May.  
R. Churches

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