

# HOT CALLS



Jan - Feb 2026

Volume 13 Issue 1

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## UPCOMING DATES

- **Mar 3 OFPC Interior FF Ops- FFI - Steuben Training Center**
  - **Mar 3, HMFRO Annual Refresher Horseheads FD**
  - **Mar 17 St. Patrick's Day**
  - **Mar 23, HMFRO Annual Refresher Horseheads FD**
  - **3/23 NERIS - Steuben Training Center**
  - **April 5 Easter**
  - **April 6 Aerial Operator - Penn Yan FD**
  - **April 21 Decontamination - Dresden FD**
  - **May 21 Emergency Vehicle Ops - Yates County OES**
- \*Courses in Red Require Training Auth Letter**

## TRIVIA

Last Edition

Are most flammable gases lighter or heavier than air?

Answer: Heavier

This Edition

What is another term for "reverse lay"?



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.



## Strengthening Fire Training in Schuyler County

Maintaining operational readiness requires building more training capacity here at home. The EMO office recently met with the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) and is working to bring additional courses into Schuyler County. That information was shared with Fire Chiefs at the February Emergency Services Meeting, held later the same day.

One way to strengthen our position is by having local members serve as State Skills Instructors (SSI) or State Fire Instructors (SFI) with OFPC. These are part-time, paid positions. Having instructors in-county improves our ability to secure and host programs such as BEFO, IFO, and HMFRO locally.

Minimum qualifications for a State Skills Instructor include five years at the Firefighter 1 level, two years conducting routine company-level training, a current firefighter physical, and completion of Principles of Instruction (or equivalent). Principles of Instruction is recognized as the best practice for anyone conducting training within their fire department.

Members interested in applying should speak with their Fire Chief or contact the EMO office for additional information.

## Sound the Alarm Program

Schuyler County EMO is now in possession of fifteen (15) 10-year battery life smoke detectors for community residents, with the ability to get several more as needed, as well as bed shaker units for our hearing impaired residents. We will be working closely with the Red Cross to bring a Sound the Alarm Event to Schuyler County in the spring. The program consists of teaching how to properly install smoke detectors for needy families, and fire education.

# BANQUETS

## MECKLENBURG VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY HOLDS ANNUAL BANQUET

The Mecklenburg Volunteer Fire Company recently gathered for its Annual Banquet, an evening dedicated to recognizing the past year's service and setting the course for the year ahead.

Leadership for 2026 remains unchanged, providing the company with continuity and experience at the helm. Officers are as follows:

- Chief: Brian Gunning
- 1st Assistant Chief: Carl Taber
- 2nd Assistant Chief: Wayne Lauper
- 3rd Assistant Chief: Albert Foote

In 2025, the company responded to 170 calls for service, contributing a total of 1,450 manhours to the community.



The department averaged six firefighters per call, reflecting strong member participation and operational readiness throughout the year.

Recognition was given to Wayne Lauper, who was named Top Responder for 2025 with 116 calls answered. His commitment represents the level of dedication required to sustain a volunteer organization.

During the evening, Chief Gunning outlined priorities for the coming year, including continued work on the dry hydrant project and planned building updates to improve facilities and operational capability.

The event was catered by Falls Tavern, providing an excellent meal and an opportunity for members and their families to come together outside of emergency responses.

The banquet served as a reminder of the commitment shown by the membership and the continued support of the community they serve.

## BURDETT FIRE DEPARTMENT HOLDS ANNUAL BANQUET

The Burdett Fire Department recently held its Annual Banquet at the fire station, bringing members together to recognize service, install officers, and reflect on a productive year. A highlight of the evening was the recognition of Jason Kelly and Dale Walter, for their impressive 45 years of service, a milestone that reflects longterm commitment and leadership within the organization. (continued on next page)



## BANQUETS CONTINUED

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Officers for the coming year were formally installed by Car 3, Rick Churches, and Car 5, Matt Maloney. The 2026 leadership is as follows:  
Chief: Jason Kelly  
1st Assistant Chief: Allen Burke  
2nd Assistant Chief: Corey Glover  
3rd Assistant Chief: Chase Richtmyer  
Deputy Chiefs: Ryan Barr and Curt Connelly  
Lieutenants: Robin Lokken and Keith Caslin (absent)  
Rescue Captain: Elizabeth Richtmyer  
Over the past year, the department responded to 218 calls for service, demonstrating steady

operational demand and continued dedication from the membership. Elizabeth Richtmyer was recognized as the department's top responder for the year. The company also marked a significant operational upgrade with the placement into service of a new rescue pumper, strengthening response capabilities and enhancing service delivery to the community. The evening reflected both pride in the department's history and confidence in the leadership guiding it forward.

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## BEAVER DAMS FIRE DEPARTMENT HOLDS ANNUAL INSTALLATION BANQUET

The Beaver Dams Fire Department recently held its Annual Installation Banquet, recognizing the dedication of its membership and installing line officers for the coming year. The event highlighted both operational accomplishments and individual service milestones.

Line officers installed for the upcoming year are as follows:

- Chief: Corbin Smith
- 1st Assistant Chief: Tony Simpson
- 2nd Assistant Chief: Ross Hall
- 3rd Assistant Chief: John Rider, Jr.
- Captain: Vern McLean, Jr.
- 1st Lieutenant: Charlie Stoddard
- 2nd Lieutenant: David Swarhout



Over the past year, the department responded to 232 calls for service, averaging five firefighters per call. Members contributed a combined total of 6,005 manhours, reflecting the steady commitment required to maintain response readiness in a volunteer system.

Recognition was given to Charlie Stoddard as the department's Top Responder for the year. In addition, Joseph Giardina was acknowledged as the Top Trainer, demonstrating a strong commitment to maintaining and improving operational proficiency across the membership. A special moment during the evening was the recognition of Charlie Stoddard for 45 years of service, marking a significant milestone and underscoring decades of dedication to the department and the community it serves.

The banquet served as both a celebration of service and a reaffirmation of the department's continued commitment to operational excellence in the year ahead.

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## **ROUTE 14 CRASH IN MONTOUR**

In the last issue, we discussed the importance of appropriate helicopter utilization and how critical timing and coordination are when a patient's injuries exceed local capabilities. On January 17, that system was put to work - and it performed exactly as intended.

Montour Falls Fire Department was dispatched to a motor vehicle collision on State Route 14. Initial reports indicated a vehicle into a tree. Upon arrival, found the car had left the roadway and come to rest in the creek. Two patients were inside the vehicle.

The initial patient assessment was conducted by Centralus Ambulance. Based on mechanism of injury and patient presentation, the crew made the early determination that rapid transport to a higher level of care was required and requested two medical helicopters. Making that decision early is critical. It reduces delays and gives the system time to position resources before they are urgently needed.

Both patients required extrication from the vehicle. Watkins Glen Fire Department requested for mutual aid to assist with removal and stabilization. At the same time, a second EMS call for the Montour district was toned out and was covered by Centralus.

Odessa Fire Department was assigned to establish and manage the landing zone at the Carnival Grounds. The LZ was secured and coordinated without issue, allowing the aircraft to operate safely and efficiently. Erway Ambulance responded with the second transporting ambulance for the

MVC, ensuring patient transport from the was seamless.

Command structure remained clear throughout the incident. Montour established overall Incident Command, and Odessa handled Landing Zone Command. Roles were defined, communications were controlled, and agencies operated within the incident management system.

This incident serves as an example of coordinated operations across multiple agencies. Early air medical activation, disciplined command, and strong interagency cooperation resulted in two patients being delivered to definitive care as quickly as possible.

That is the system working the way it was designed to work.

## **OWEGO ST IN MONTOUR STRUCTURE FIRE**

At approximately 0600 hours on January 21, Montour Falls Fire Department was dispatched to a reported structure fire on Owego Street. Montour units arrived with smoke showing. A quick 360 conducted by 15-1 identified fire involvement in the crawl space beneath the structure. Based on conditions and the potential for extension, a second alarm was transmitted early to ensure adequate manpower and resources were in place. An initial handline was deployed, and crews made access to the floor space. The fire was located and determined to be confined to the crawl space area. Once confirmation was made that there was no extension into the walls or living areas, the incident was scaled back. Mutual aid companies from Watkins Glen Fire Department and Burdett Fire Department were downgraded. (Continued on next page)

Montour Structure Fire continued Overhaul operations were conducted to expose any hidden fire. During that process, heat tape was identified in the crawl space as a likely contributing factor.

Companies operated on scene for approximately one hour before returning to service. Early size-up, prompt second alarm activation, and coordinated interior operations kept the fire contained and limited damage to the structure.

## WINTER CONDITIONS CHALLENGE CREWS AT 10TH STREET FIRE

Watkins Glen Fire Department was dispatched at 0430 hours on January 26 for a reported structure fire on 10th Street.

Car 19 arrived on scene within minutes and reported heavy smoke showing from the structure. At the same time, a significant winter storm moving through the area. Snowfall was steady, temperatures were hovering near zero, and road conditions were deteriorating rapidly slowing the response of second alarm companies.

An aggressive interior attack was initiated upon arrival of the first-due engine. Crews made entry and began fire suppression efforts despite rapidly worsening weather conditions. As fire conditions intensified and structural stability became a concern, command made the decision to transition to defensive operations.

Operating in zero-degree temperatures presents its own hazards. Hose lines freeze, equipment stiffens, visibility drops, and personnel fatigue sets in quickly. Snow accumulation and ice created additional footing hazards around the structure, further complicating operations.

Water supply and apparatus placement required careful coordination under winter conditions.

Mutual aid support was provided by the Montour Falls Fire Department, Burdett Fire Department, Dundee Fire Company, Himrod Fire Department, and Beaver Dams Fire Department. Hector Fire Department covered all the responding departments from the Watkins Glen station during the incident to maintain district protection.

Additional support agencies included Schuyler County Emergency Management, Fire Investigation Team, Watkins Glen Police Department, and the American Red Cross to assist displaced occupants.

Despite extreme weather and challenging fire conditions, crews operated cohesively and safely. The incident serves as a reminder that fireground strategy must remain fluid. Conditions dictate tactics, and in this case, defensive operations under severe winter weather were necessary to protect personnel while bringing the incident under control.



## CLOSE CALL FOR CEMS CREWS – CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE

What started as a routine day quickly turned into a serious incident for members of CEMS operating out of their quarters at the old PCC building.

CEMS ambulance crews were exposed to elevated levels of carbon monoxide inside the station. All members on duty registered significant CO levels and were transported for evaluation and treatment. They spent the majority of Saturday in the hospital receiving care and monitoring.

At the time of this writing, the suspected source of the carbon monoxide is believed to be a malfunctioning rooftop heating unit. Incidents like this are a reminder that CO is indiscriminate. It does not care whether you are in a private residence, a commercial building, or your own station. Without detection equipment, the outcome could have been very different.

The reason this situation was identified before it became catastrophic was simple—meters. The CO monitor carried on the EMS bags alerted crews to the presence of carbon monoxide. That early warning allowed personnel to recognize the hazard and seek care before the exposure became life-threatening.

The Odessa Fire Department carries a CO monitor on their EMS bags, and the meter is activated whenever crews enter a residence with reported illness or nonspecific symptoms. This practice has proven its value repeatedly. Carbon monoxide calls do not always present as “CO alarms sounding”. Many begin as headaches, nausea, dizziness, or flu-like symptoms.

Carbon monoxide monitoring on EMS equipment is also becoming standard under upcoming New York State Department of Health EMS equipment requirements. This incident reinforces why that requirement matters.

To maintain service coverage during the event, backup crews were called in, with Hector Fire Department covering calls until replacement staffing was in place. We spend a great deal of time talking about scene safety in other people’s homes and buildings. This incident is a reminder that our own quarters are no different. Detection equipment saves lives—sometimes they are our own. There will be more information on responding to carbon monoxide calls on the next two pages.

## ODESSA CHIMNEY FIRE

At 0130 hours on February 8, with temperatures sitting at 0 degrees, the Odessa Fire Department was dispatched to a reported chimney fire on County Route 14. The family had safely evacuated prior to fire department arrival. The first arriving officer completed a 360 size-up and identified smoke showing from the wall area where the stovepipe entered the chimney. Given the weather conditions, time of night, and the potential for extension, C-16 requested mutual aid from the Montour Falls Fire Department.

The structure was balloon-frame construction, increasing concern for vertical fire spread into concealed wall spaces and the attic. Crews made entry and quickly addressed the fire area. A water can was used for initial knockdown, followed by a 1½-inch handline to ensure full extinguishment and check for extension.

Fire was contained to the immediate area around the chimney connection with no significant extension found. Overhaul confirmed the attic space remained clear. Extreme cold once again added to the challenge. Frozen equipment and stiff hose made overhaul and pickup difficult, but companies operated efficiently and brought the incident under control.

After conditions were deemed safe and the structure was checked thoroughly, residents were allowed to return home.

# WHAT'S NEW

## NEW RESCUE ENGINE IN BEAVER DAMS

The truck has a 5 firefighter cab and carries 1200 gallons of water along with a variety of rescue equipment. This compliments two other engines, one pumper tanker and a rescue engine. They carry 5200 gallons of water on the 1st alarm response. The company has one of the largest apparatus bays in the county. The three engines were parked inside and they still had room to hold their annual banquet with room left over.



## COUNTY RESOURCE TRAILER

The Emergency Management Office continues to move forward with refurbishing the response trailer to expand on-scene capabilities countywide. Funding for this project was generated through the sale of a previously assigned EMO vehicle, allowing us to reinvest those resources directly into operational readiness. The trailer is equipped with scene lighting, tools, and a cascade system, providing support at extended or complex incidents. Recently, EMO staff and the County Fire Investigators completed placement of the equipment onto the vehicle, ensuring it is available for deployment if needed.

We are still planning to permanently mount the generator to the trailer to enhance efficiency and streamline operations on arrival. While the primary intent is to support fire investigations and emergency operations, the trailer is an asset and may be utilized by any fire department or our law enforcement partners when operational needs dictate.



## BURDETT NEW RESCUE / PUMPER HAS BEEN PLACED INSERVICE

The new truck replaces a modular rescue that carried personnel and a variety of equipment. The new Squad 3 is multi-use for both rescue and serves as an engine with 1000 gal of water and 1500 gpm. It also can carry a crew of 6.



## TYRONE UTILITY TRUCKS

The Tyrone Fire Department has placed two new utility trucks in service, replacing a former rescue that was sold, with equipment strategically reassigned to the smaller units. Each truck features dual slide compartments — the upper dedicated to firefighting and brush operations, and the lower configured for EMS equipment. Both units are five-person cabs, providing operational flexibility while making driver training more manageable.

The department maintains an impressive lineup of turnout gear - most of it assigned - along with two dry suits ready for water or ice incidents. It's a practical, well-thought-out setup that reflects smart use of space and resources. They have coffee on Tuesday mornings - stop by and see the operation firsthand.





## RESPONDING TO CARBON MONOXIDE CALLS

When the temperatures drop, heating systems go into full operation. Furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, and supplemental heaters run longer and harder. That seasonal shift increases the likelihood of carbon monoxide (CO) incidents—for the occupants inside the structure and for the responders walking through the door. Carbon monoxide is not something you can see, smell, or taste. It is a byproduct of incomplete combustion, and it is one of the most common and dangerous atmospheric hazards we encounter in residential and occupational settings. Each year, tens of thousands of people nationwide require medical treatment due to CO exposure. For fire departments and EMS providers, that means every CO activation or “odor of gas” call must be approached methodically and with discipline.

### **Where Carbon Monoxide Comes From**

Any fuel-burning appliance has the potential to generate dangerous levels of CO, particularly if it is malfunctioning, poorly maintained, or improperly vented.

### **Common sources include:**

- Gas or oil furnaces and boilers
- Gas stoves and ovens
- Gas water heaters and dryers
- Fireplaces and wood stoves
- Portable generators
- Vehicles operating in attached garages

Occupational exposures are also a

concern. Operators of forklifts, trucks, and other fuel-powered equipment are at elevated risk, especially in enclosed or poorly ventilated environments such as garages, tunnels, loading docks, warehouses, maintenance shops, and confined spaces.

### **Why CO Is So Dangerous**

Carbon monoxide is an insidious hazard. It provides no sensory warning and requires monitoring equipment for detection. Clinically, its symptoms frequently mimic influenza—headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, and fatigue. During peak flu season, that overlap can delay recognition and intervention.

If carbon monoxide is identified at unsafe levels, evacuation and ventilation are immediate priorities. Early recognition and decisive action save lives.

### **Conducting a Systematic Carbon Monoxide Investigation**

A thorough CO investigation should follow a consistent, step-by-step approach:

#### 1. Interview the Occupants

Assess for symptoms consistent with CO exposure.

Determine the timeline of symptoms.

Identify possible combustion sources and recent appliance use.

Ask about recent maintenance, renovations, or changes to heating systems.

#### 2. Monitor for Carbon Monoxide

Do not enter a suspected environment without a properly functioning, calibrated gas monitor and appropriate PPE.

Zero the monitor in fresh air prior to use.

Use a calibrated CO detector to assess interior levels.

Compare readings to established exposure benchmarks:

(Continued on next page)

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Responding to Carbon Monoxide Calls  
continued from previous page:

50 ppm – OSHA Permissible Exposure  
Limit (8-hour time-weighted average)

200 ppm – Mild headache possible after 2–  
3 hours

400 ppm – Short-term exposure limit (15  
minutes, ACGIH)

800 ppm – Headache, dizziness, nausea  
within 45 minutes; potential collapse  
within 2 hours

1,500 ppm – Immediately Dangerous to  
Life or Health (IDLH); life-threatening  
within minutes

Any elevated reading warrants controlled  
ventilation and further investigation of the  
source.

### 3. Inspect Venting Systems

Examine chimneys, flue pipes, and  
appliance vent connectors for:

Corrosion

Cracks or disconnected joints

Blockages (including nests or debris)

Improper pitch or backdrafting

Compromised venting is a common  
contributor to CO accumulation.

### 4. Simulate Worst-Case Operating Conditions

If needed and safe to do so, operate all  
fuel-burning appliances simultaneously  
while assessing building pressure  
dynamics.

Close exterior doors and windows.

Activate exhaust systems (bathroom fans,  
kitchen hoods, attic fans).

Evaluate for negative pressure conditions.

Use smoke or other appropriate methods  
to check for backdrafting at fireplaces,  
water heaters, and furnaces.

Backflow under negative pressure is a  
frequent cause of intermittent CO alarms.

### 5. Evaluate Carbon Monoxide Alarm Placement and Function

Confirm alarms are operational and within  
service life.

Ensure proper placement per  
manufacturer recommendations.

Avoid installations in excessively humid or  
hot areas.

Maintain appropriate distance—generally  
at least 15 feet—from fuel-burning  
appliances.

Equipment Discipline and Personal Safety  
False alarms happen. We've all responded  
to calls that turned out to be low batteries  
or malfunctioning detectors. That  
familiarity can breed complacency. Don't  
let it.

Maintain strict discipline with your  
monitoring equipment:

Perform a bump test prior to each shift or  
use.

Calibrate per manufacturer and  
departmental policy.

Zero the monitor only in confirmed fresh  
air.

Allow sufficient time for readings to  
stabilize.

Understand alarm set points and  
response actions.

Never disregard a monitor alarm.

Every carbon monoxide call deserves a  
professional, measured response.

**Approach each one as if your life - and  
the lives of the occupants - depend on  
your decisions.**

**Because they do!**

## CYANIDE POISONING ANTIDOTE AVAILABLE

Cyanokit® (hydroxocobalamin) is an FDA-approved antidote used for the treatment of known or suspected cyanide poisoning. In our environment, the most common exposure risk is smoke inhalation from enclosed structure fires, particularly in modern, synthetic fuel loads. Cyanide is produced during combustion of plastics, foams, and other nitrogen-containing materials. It impairs cellular respiration by preventing the body from utilizing oxygen at the mitochondrial level. The patient may have adequate oxygen delivery, but at the cellular level they are unable to use it — resulting in rapid hypoxia, severe metabolic acidosis, altered mental status, cardiovascular instability, and potentially cardiac arrest.

Early recognition is critical. High suspicion should be maintained in fire victims with altered level of consciousness, hypotension, cardiac arrest, severe lactic acidosis, soot in the airway, or exposure in a confined space. Treatment with hydroxocobalamin works by binding to cyanide ions to form cyanocobalamin (vitamin B12), which is then excreted in the urine. When administered promptly, it can significantly improve outcomes in critically ill patients.

Regionally, Bangs Ambulance in Tompkins County maintains a Cyanokit and will respond with it upon request. Mercy Flight Central also carries a kit onboard their helicopters, providing access during aeromedical transports when indicated. It is important to note that the medication must be administered by the agency to which the kit belongs. The owning agency's credentialed provider is responsible for preparation and administration in accordance with their medical control policies.

Given the time-sensitive nature of cyanide toxicity, early communication through dispatch and direct coordination with responding ALS resources is essential. If cyanide poisoning is suspected, request the resource early. Proactive recognition and decisive action can make the difference in survivability on these high-risk incidents.



**Ray Emery - Odessa - January 6, 2026**

**Lucy Allen - Beaver Dams - February 13, 2026**



**Lt. Brian Hatt Raywick** 51 KY

MVC with fire apparatus. Truck rolled over.

**Capt. Michael Brooke** 57 North Hampton Pa.

Heart attack after Ice rescue training

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