



CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

Education Committee
242 Spring Hill Road
Storrs, Connecticut 06268

*Burrville Regional Fire School
Eastern Connecticut Fire School
Fairfield Regional Fire School*

*Hartford County Regional Fire School
Middlesex County Fire School
New Haven Regional Fire Academy*

*Wolcott State Regional Fire School
Valley Fire Chiefs' Regional Fire School
Stamford Regional Fire School*

State of Connecticut
Joint Committee on Appropriations
February 23, 2011

Dear Senator Harp and Representative Walker; Co-Chairs, and other committee members,

The Education Committee of the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association is comprised of twenty three members of the Connecticut Fire Service. These fire service educators are committed to promoting excellence in the ranks of the Connecticut fire service through training. We promote training through the nine regional fire schools and the Connecticut Fire Academy. We also promote the standardization and centralization of fire fighter and fire officer certification training and testing.

Our committee members have a collective history of service to the citizens of the state of Connecticut of several hundreds of years. These committee members represent both volunteer and career fire departments in every county of the state. We share a common vision to promote the fire service agencies in our state to be the best in the country. That vision provides for the greatest degree of safety for the citizenry of the state of Connecticut and the greatest degree of safety for all of Connecticut's thirty thousand firefighters.

We draw your attention to the network of regional fire schools as is a model of regionalization. This effort dates back over a half a century and provides for training opportunities for over three hundred fire departments through just nine regional fire schools. For more than a decade our committee has been working closely with members of the General Assembly to promote a capital project, outlined by a facility study that was funded by legislative action in the 2001 legislative session. We have also actively promoted the realistic funding for regional fire school operations.

The nature of the organization that provides fire service training could probably be debated. No one can debate that every community in the state of Connecticut deserves to have a competent fire department in order to provide these most necessary public safety functions. The regionalization of this effort provides cost saving while assuring quality control, standardization, and oversight in a manner that remains accountable to fire service organizations within each region of the state.

As the members of the Education Committee have attempted to compile realistic and responsible budgets for our operations, the Executive branch of the state government has continued to work deliberatively in order to reduce those budgets to a point where the directors of these schools are unable to meet their financial obligations. There is no discretionary funding remaining in these budgets. They represent the costs of facility operations and fixed costs such as utilities, insurance and instructor payroll. Many of the items that should be contained within our budgets in order to place us in compliance with regulations of the State of Connecticut, such as personal protective equipment for our instructors as required by regulations of the Connecticut Department of Labor, are instead purchased by our instructors at their cost. Many tools and work equipment are also purchased by our dedicated fire service instructors. Our directors should not be forced to violate regulations of state agencies in order for our schools to continue to have sufficient funds to operate.

The first fire department in Connecticut was organized in 1803. Today there are nearly 30,000 firefighters belonging to over 300 fire departments in this state. Over 70% of these firefighters are volunteer service providers. These firefighters provide a significant savings to Connecticut taxpayers over the cost to replace them with career firefighters. Those savings are estimated at over 100 million dollars annually. These firefighters are committed to the people of this state. All of these firefighter, career and volunteer, need access to quality training facilities. Their safety and the safety of all of Connecticut's residents depend on properly training these firefighters. The Connecticut Department of Labor (O.S.H.A.) mandates that this training be delivered.

These firefighters ask for so little in order to provide this vast array of emergency response services. They do, however, require and deserve the support of the state of Connecticut to provide adequate funding for training facilities. Current funding levels are totally at odds with the "long term plan" embraced by this committee. The construction of regional fire schools with bond funding is totally inconsistent with the stated goals of reducing the operational funding budgets of these same facilities.

During the period from 2004 through 2006 funding levels to operate the state's regional fire schools was increased significantly after nearly ten years of stagnation and neglect. Since 2006 those funding levels have been attacked in order to help solve the current budget crisis. This savings of a few thousands of dollars threatens to add as much as a hundred million dollars to the cost to taxpayers in order to continue to ensure the availability of these essential emergency services. As communities lose the advantage of a properly trained volunteer force there will be little choice but to turn to career firefighter positions. This approach promises to result in another huge financial burden on all taxpayers in Connecticut.

The following note is contained in the state budget document under the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control budget. "Rollout FY2009 Rescissions FY 2009-2010 -85,965 FY 2010-2011 -85,965
Continuation of reductions to the following accounts: Firefighter Training 1, Payments to Volunteer Fire Companies and Fire Training Schools in Willimantic, Torrington, New Haven, Derby, Wolcott, Fairfield, Hartford, Middletown and Stamford These directives would seem to indicate that the state is planning to declare a moratorium on fires and related emergencies. No one in the fire service has noted the resulting reduction in calls for service. If you evaluate the calls for service across this state, they increase every year. How can any reasonable person expect to provide for an increase in the demands for service while engaged in a plan that calls for a continuation of reductions to their training accounts This directive is unrealistic and irresponsible.

The curtailment of funding for existing regional training facilities will result in a duplication of efforts by individual fire departments as they attempt to find alternate training sources in order to remain in compliance with State of Connecticut Regulatory Mandates for training within their own shrinking budgets. The curtailment of funding for regional fire schools has necessitated the sharp increase in course fees charged to students. As a result there has been a sharp increase in for profit training companies. These companies are offering competitive training classes across the state. Since these private companies have no facilities and limited equipment, they are able to undercut the fees of the regional fire schools. They are also not subject to oversight and audit like the regional fire schools. This places additional stress on the system of regional fire schools to attempt to compete on a very unequal footing. Statewide, this is exactly what has been happening over the past few years. These efforts negate the savings afforded by a carefully coordinated regional approach to training. Cost savings, quality control, and standardization of training will all be compromised by this continued initiative to underfund fire service training accounts.

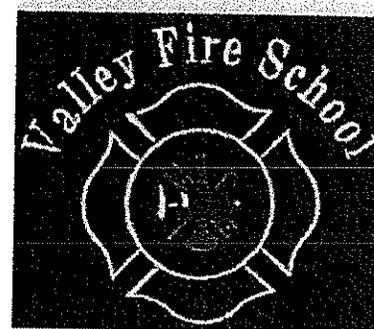
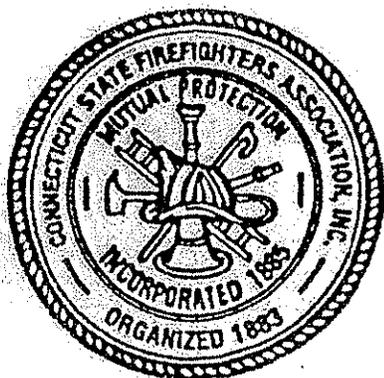
Please reinstate realistic regional fire school budgets that allow for the continuation of operation of these essential facilities. Preserve the fire service in Connecticut. Your constituents rely on these essential services. At risk are the very lives of those constituents you represent.

Sincerely,

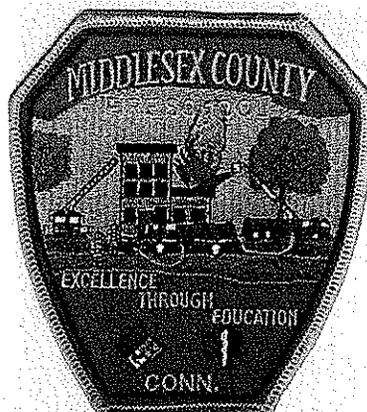
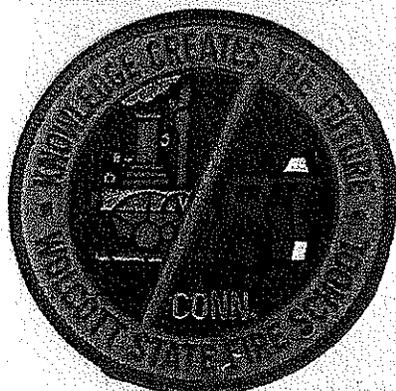
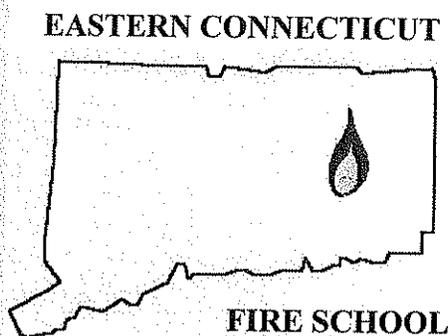


Alan R. Hawkins, chairman

CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION EDUCATION COMMITTEE



Joint Committee on Appropriations
January 23, 2011



**Connecticut State Firefighters Association
Education Committee
Regional Fire Schools
Operations Budgets**

School	Budget request	Actual after	Budget request	Actual	Budget request	DERT Proposed	Budget request	DERT Proposed
	2009/10	2009/10	2010/11	2010/11	2011/12	2011/12	2012/13	2012/13
Fire Training School Torrington	94,215	77,299	97,985	81,367	101,904	61,025	105,981	40,683
Valley Fire Chiefs Reg. Fire Sch., Derby	40,658	35,282	42,284	37,139	43,976	27,764	45,735	18,569
Eastern Ct. Fire School, Willimantic	177,126	160,869	184,211	161,798	191,580	121,349	199,243	80,899
Fairfield Regional Fire School	77,064	66,875	80,147	70,395	83,352	52,796	86,687	35,197
Hartford County Reg. Fire Sch.	187,160	160,869	196,518	169,336	204,379	127,002	212,554	84,668
Middlesex Fire School, Middletown	86,778	56,100	86,778	59,053	90,249	44,290	93,859	29,527
New Haven Regional Fire Academy	52,946	45,946	55,064	48,364	57,267	36,273	59,557	24,184
Wolcott State Fire School	133,434	95,162	138,771	100,162	144,322	75,122	150,095	50,081
Stamford Regional Fire School	60,683	52,660	63,111	55,432	65,635	41,574	68,261	27,716
Totals	910,065	751,062	944,869	783,046	982,664	587,195	1,021,971	391,524
Shortfall		159,003		161,823		395,469		630,447



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242 Spring Hill Road
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2011

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Connecticut State Firefighters Association Education Committee

Mission Statement

The Education Committee of the Connecticut State Firefighter's Association is made up of representatives from the Regional Fire Schools, The Connecticut State Firefighters Association, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Connecticut Fire Academy and is organized in a collaborative effort to support the firefighters in the State of Connecticut by:

- **Promoting the regional fire schools as a means of providing fire fighter and fire officer training at the local level;**
- **Supporting the efforts of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to provide quality training through the Connecticut Fire Academy;**
- **Developing and promoting short and long range plans for capitol improvements to the State's regional fire schools;**
- **Developing recommendations for standardizing the delivery of fire fighter and fire officer certification training at the state's regional fire schools;**
- **Coordinating training initiatives between the regional fire schools and the Connecticut Fire Academy;**
- **Providing a forum for the exchange of ideas relating to fire fighter training in the State.**

Connecticut State Firefighters Association

Education Committee

Overview of Operational Budget requests from the Regional Fire Schools

In order to sustain operations with losses in state funding levels regional fire schools have increasingly shifted expenses toward tuition costs back to end user groups.

For an example, tuition costs for the Eastern Connecticut Fire School in Willimantic have escalated as indicated on the below table.

Year	Course offering	Per student tuition
1990	Firefighter I	\$50
1991	Firefighter I	\$85
1996	Firefighter I	\$165
2002	Firefighter I	\$260
2006 spring	Firefighter I	\$375
2006 fall	Firefighter I	\$400
2008 fall	Firefighter I	\$500
2009 fall	Firefighter I	\$550
2011 spring	Firefighter I	\$600

These fees place a terrible burden on the training budgets of local fire departments.

In many cases these fees are paid by the individual firefighter.



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January 23, 2011

The current operating status of the nine regional fire schools is as follows:

- Valley Fire Chiefs Regional Fire School, Derby – This facility has been shut down since 2000. Training is currently being conducted in various fire stations. Live fire training is being conducted at the Fairfield Regional Fire School, about twenty miles away.
- Middlesex Fire School – The longevity of the current school remains in question. The department of transportation is continuing planning for highway improvements that include the demolition of the existing school. There is currently no facility for live fire training at this location.
- New Haven Fire Academy – This project has advanced through the construction process. The project is nearly complete. This progress is great but this one school falls far short of meeting the needs of Connecticut's firefighters.
- Hartford County Regional Fire School - This facility continues to provide training opportunities to the region. The existing burn building does not provide opportunity for class "A" burns. This structure is a propane gas-fired building that limits the realism of the fire attack evolutions. The design for this project is complete. With favorable action by the State Bond Commission tomorrow a construction contract should now be awarded.
- Fairfield Regional Fire Academy - This facility continues to provide training opportunities to the region. The burn building, recently shut down for repairs, is now back in operation but is badly deteriorated from years of use.
- Fire Training School of Torrington – This facility continues to provide training opportunities to the region. The burn building has continued in operation but is badly deteriorated from years of use. An engineering evaluation of this facility has recently recommended that training fires cease.
- Wolcott State Fire School - This facility continues to provide training opportunities to the region. The burn building continues in operation but is badly deteriorated from years of use.
- Eastern Connecticut Fire School, Willimantic – The burn building at this facility has been closed since September 2005 due to structural deterioration. The property that this school has operated on since 1955 has now been purchased and is currently owned by the Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. The design and construction for this school needs to be advanced. This regional fire school has a fifty-five year history of service to Tolland, Windham and New London counties. Live fire training is currently being conducted at the Stamford Regional Fire School, a distance of slightly more than one hundred miles.
- Stamford Regional Fire School - This facility provides training opportunities to the region. The burn building is relatively new. All of the existing infrastructure at this facility has been funded by the City of Stamford.

National standards and OSHA regulations mandate that initial live fire training, and annual refresher training including attack of interior live fires, be provided for structural firefighters. There are now four burn buildings within the regional fire school system in varying states of repair. The declining number of available burn facilities is causing a severe over-utilization of the remaining burn buildings, accelerating their rate of deterioration. Please note that there are more than three hundred fire departments in Connecticut. Most rely upon these regional fire schools for their basic fire suppression training. Hands-on training is essential.

Regional fire schools are the only cost-effective means that local fire departments have to access the specialized training facilities necessary to meet their training needs. Classes currently offered through these regional school venues include a full spectrum of course deliveries on traditional fire service functions and associated administration. Additionally, they are offering classes to prepare firefighters for responses to incidents involving weapons of mass destruction, chemical and bio-chemical agents and other homeland defense initiatives. The lack of appropriate

attention to this project has continued to have a devastating impact upon attempts by fire service leadership to train their members and to adequately protect Connecticut's citizens.

When we first came to you a decade ago we were attempting to develop a progressive plan to respond to the requirements for training of Connecticut's firefighters that was appropriate to deliver quality programs at affordable costs. Now, a decade later we have realized very little progress toward our objective and instead are fighting for our survival. A lack of appropriate attention to this relatively small funding need will likely result in a complete collapse of the existing system of regional schools that has successfully served Connecticut for over a half a century.

If we intend to abandon this plan we will need to develop an alternative plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan R. Hawkins". The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Alan R. Hawkins, chairman