

THE RURAL HITCH

A Quarterly Publication of the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association



WINTER AND HOLIDAY ARTICLES THROUGHOUT ISSUE

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From the Chief...

Jonathan M. Goldman, CPE



As we close out 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on the final quarter of the year and recognize the continued commitment, professionalism, and cooperation that define the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association (LRMFA).

The fourth quarter is traditionally one of our busiest and most challenging periods, and 2025 was no exception. From increased call volumes and seasonal hazards to ongoing training and administrative demands, our member departments once again demonstrated why mutual aid is not just a concept—but a daily operational reality in the Lakes Region.

This past quarter, LRMFA continued to focus on strengthening regional readiness through training and coordination. Our Training Division delivered and supported multiple programs aimed at both operational proficiency and leadership development. Participation across departments remained strong, reinforcing our shared commitment to interoperability and consistent standards. As we look ahead, member feedback will play a critical role in shaping future offerings to ensure training remains relevant, practical, and responsive to the needs of our agencies.

Operationally, mutual aid responses throughout the quarter highlighted the value of long-standing relationships and clear expectations. Whether responding to working fires, complex EMS incidents, or extended operations, departments worked seamlessly across jurisdictional lines. These responses are a testament to decades of cooperation and the professionalism of our firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers, and officers.

(Continued on page 4)

The Rural Hitch

Is Curated and Published Quarterly by

Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association

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Erin Hannafin, RH



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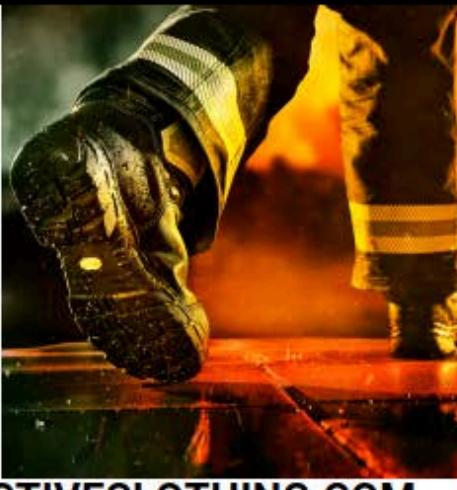
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(Continued from page 2)

The fourth quarter also included continued progress on organizational and governance matters. LRMFA remained engaged in policy review, infrastructure planning, and discussions surrounding technology and communications—areas that are increasingly critical to safe and effective operations. These efforts are often less visible than emergency responses but are essential to maintaining a resilient and legally sound organization that can support our members well into the future.

As we approach 2026, LRMFA will be marking its 75th anniversary—a significant milestone that speaks to the foresight of our founders and the dedication of generations of responders since 1951. That legacy carries responsibility. It requires us to honor the past while continuing to adapt, improve, and lead collaboratively.

I want to thank the chiefs, officers, line personnel, dispatchers, board members, and committee volunteers who give their time and expertise to make this organization work. Your dedication is what keeps LRMFA strong and relevant.

On behalf of the LRMFA leadership, thank you for another year of service, cooperation, and professionalism. I look forward to building on this momentum together in 2026. 



Jon Goldman, CPE
Chief Coordinator
Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association

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The Waterville Valley Department of Public Safety took delivery of their NEW Ambulance. This ambulance is a PL Custom, Type 1 Titan International MV607 Chassis purchased through Sugarloaf Ambulance and Rescue Vehicles. It closely resembles the 2015 ambulance that it is replacing.

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LRMFA Wins Awards



Last November 16-19, four members of the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid team proudly represented LRMFA at the Atlantic Chapter of APCO Conference in Mystic, Connecticut. Chief Jon Goldman (Atlantic Chapter Executive Council Representative), Deputy Chief Erin Hannafin (Atlantic Chapter Training Committee Chair), Lt. Matt LaDuke, and Dispatcher Josh Hanson (Chapter Webmaster).

The conference served as a powerful reminder of the importance of professional development in public safety communications. It provided valuable opportunities to connect with peers, grow as professionals, and refocus on the purpose that drives our work every day.

The week began with a keynote address by Amanda “AK” Dozanti, whose message resonated deeply with attendees. She encouraged participants to pause and recognize what is going right, rather than allowing challenges to define the narrative. Dozanti emphasized the importance of extending the same compassion to ourselves that we readily offer to the callers who depend on us. She reminded attendees that burnout does not always announce itself loudly—sometimes it whispers. Yet, every time a dispatcher answers the phone, they have the potential to change a life. That impact is meaningful, powerful, and worth protecting. Her message was clear: celebrate the wins, big or small, and remember that you matter to the people you serve.

The week concluded with moments of recognition that filled LRMFA with pride. During Tuesday evening’s Annual Awards Banquet, Lt. Matt LaDuke and Dispatcher Josh Hanson were honored with the 2025 Atlantic Chapter of APCO Team of the Year Award. Their exceptional coordination during a water rescue in Laconia earned them this prestigious honor. In April, a cold and exhausted man was drifting down the Winnipesaukee River toward the dam, facing imminent danger. At the time, Laconia Deputy Fire Chief Jay Ellingson praised LRMFA’s role in the incident, noting that “the real-time information provided by LRMFA while simultaneously relaying it to the companies in the field was critical ... and contributed to the successful outcome of the incident.”

The accolades continued, where Atlantic Chapter President Anne Camaro presented the President’s Award to Deputy Chief Erin Hannafin. This award, given at the sole discretion of the Chapter President, recognizes an individual who made exceptional contributions throughout the year. President Camaro commended Deputy Chief Hannafin for her “unwavering commitment and selfless acts of service to the Atlantic Chapter of APCO and this year’s Conference Committee.”

Reflecting on the week, Chief Jon Goldman shared, “We have an amazing team of talented professionals at LRMFA, and when empowered to always do the right thing, they do. It is remarkable to watch each of them grow in their own ways and be recognized for such.”



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#2 Discharge, Left Side 2.5"
#3 Discharge, Right Side 2.5"
#4 Discharge, Right Side 3"
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SCBA Tubes, (7)
Whelen LED Light Package
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Each year on Social Media, LRMFA brings some fun to our channels. We invite Social media followers to guess which agency or town will have the first call of the year. Congratulations to Thornton, who rang in the new year by taking the very first dispatch of 2026 – sent out at 00:01:31 by Lt. LaDuke.

Congratulations to Jack Olmstead who guessed Thornton correctly – while many guessed “Campton-Thornton Fire Rescue,” Jack was the only one who identified the town specifically, which was the requirement. He’ll be receiving an LRMFA swag bag!

Thank you to everyone who participated – we kicked off 2026 with a little fun, a little competition, and a lot of community spirit.

Here's to a safe and steady year ahead!

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NH Emergency Dispatchers Association Awards Nominations are open!



CALLING ALL NOMINATIONS!

Do you know an outstanding emergency dispatcher/telecommunicator, team, supervisor, trainer, or IT/Radio Technology professional who goes above and beyond every day? It's time to recognize their exceptional contributions!

The 2026 NHEDA Awards nomination period is OPEN!

We're looking for nominees who demonstrate professionalism, leadership, innovation, and commitment in public safety communications across New Hampshire.

Award Categories Include:

- Telecommunicator of the Year
 - Team of the Year
 - Supervisor of the Year
 - Trainer of the Year
- Information Technologies / Radio Frequency Technologies

NHEDA

Deadline: January 31, 2026
<https://www.nheda.org/awards>

Let's celebrate the people and teams who make emergency communications stronger every day.
Nominate someone amazing today!

We Want to Hear from You!

The LRMFA Training Division is committed to continually strengthening and improving the training opportunities we provide to our member departments—and your feedback is essential to that process.

We invite you to take a few minutes to share your thoughts on our current training programs. Let us know what's working well, what could be improved, and what types of training you'd like to see offered in the future. Your input plays a direct role in shaping upcoming courses and ensuring we are meeting the evolving needs of the Lakes Region public safety community.

Please scan the QR code or click the link below to complete the survey:

<https://form.jotform.com/252936074757165>

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective and for helping us make LRMFA training stronger, more relevant, and more effective for everyone we serve.



LRMFA Training Division



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David Gooze
FF/EMT
Franklin Fire
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Nicole Bascom
Public Safety Officer
Waterville Valley
New Hire



The LRMFA Dispatchers were honored to once again sponsor a tree at Rotary Park in Laconia this holiday season, as part of the Celebrate Laconia initiative. Thank you to Celebrate Laconia for coordinating this community initiative. We also extend appreciation to Celebrate Laconia for assembling an exceptional lineup of events during Celebrate Laconia on November 29th, including a parade and a range of family-friendly activities. This holiday season was a reminder that the heart of public safety is people. Our dispatchers exemplify that daily, and we remain proud and humbled by their generosity and community spirit.

Do you want to sign up to receive the LRMFA Rural Hitch, or bi-weekly training bulleting from the Training Division?

Go to www.lrmfa.org and scroll to the bottom of the page.

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Sign Up!

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MAX THE ELF RETURNS

Thanks to a very special (and highly classified) seasonal agreement between the United States and the North Pole, LRMFA once again welcomed back our “temporary holiday help.” Z. Max—better known as Max—returned this year to lend a hand to our outreach team and continue his ongoing education in all things LRMFA and public safety communications.

During his month-long stay, Max wasted no time getting into his usual mischief. This year, he even joined forces with Dash, the temporary holiday employee visiting NH 9-1-1, proving that two elves are definitely more trouble than one.

While Max’s productivity may be questionable, his ability to bring laughter, smiles, and holiday cheer to a busy workplace is unmatched. We truly enjoy his annual visit—but much like hosting energetic grandkids, we’re equally happy to pack him up and send him back to the North Pole when the season ends... at least until next year.



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO CHIEF SITAR

"I would like to send a special thank you to Chief Sitar. Chief has moved on from TNFD after leading the department for more than a decade. During his time here Chief Sitar always put his staff first. His attention to firefighter safety, crew size, proper equipment, and cancer awareness was second to none.

Chief Sitar has left TNFD in a better place than he found it, which I believe is the goal of every fire chief.

Chief, thank you for your support over the years. I hope to see you out on the golf course soon!" – TNFD Fire Chief Sean Valovanie



TILTON-NORTHFIELD
FIRE DISTRICT

LRMFA CELEBRATES 75 YEARS



In 2026, Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid will be celebrating 75 years. Next year, more stories will appear in every issue of the Rural Hitch, but for now, as a preview, here are our graphics recognizing this milestone.

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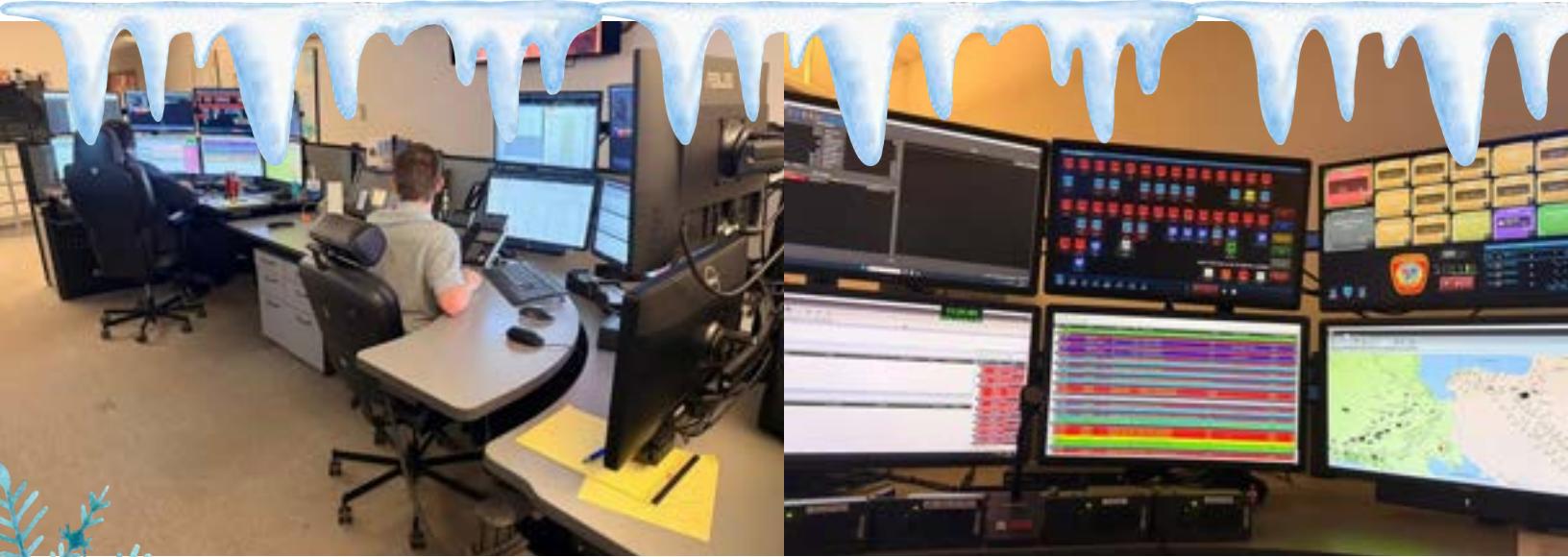
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Capital Area Mutual Aid to Upgrade Primary Radio System in 2026



Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact officials have announced a planned upgrade to their primary radio communications system, scheduled for spring 2026. The transition will move the region from a simplex simulcast system to a repeated simulcast system, a change designed to improve coverage and reliability for fire and EMS communications across participating communities.

Although a firm cutover date has not yet been established, Capital Area Mutual Aid is providing early notice to partner agencies so radio programming changes can be planned and completed in advance. Agencies that operate with Capital Area Mutual Aid will need to update their radios to maintain uninterrupted dispatch communications once the new system goes live.

The upgrade affects Capital Area's primary Compact Fire & EMS dispatch channel. While the receive frequency and tone will remain unchanged, the transmit frequency will shift as part of the move to a repeated simulcast configuration.

Primary Dispatch Channel – Programming Reference								
System	Channel	Usage	Transmit Frequency	TX Tone	Receive Frequency	RX Tone	Mode	Notes
Current	1 (CAPITL1)	Compact Fire & EMS	154.3550 MHz	136.5	154.3550 MHz	136.5	Analog	Primary Dispatch – Simplex
New	1	Compact Fire & EMS	151.1825 MHz	136.5	154.3550 MHz	136.5	Analog	Primary Dispatch – Repeated

Capital Area Mutual Aid officials stress that early coordination is critical to maintaining seamless communications during multi-agency incidents, large-scale emergencies, and routine mutual aid responses. Additional information, including a confirmed implementation date, will be distributed as the project timeline is finalized.

Agencies with questions regarding radio programming or system compatibility are encouraged to contact Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact directly as preparations continue for the spring 2026 transition.

LAKES REGION MUTUAL FIRE AID BY THE NUMBERS

	Month	Admin	Emergency	Incidents
2025 First Quarter	January	1261	2484	2018
	February	1213	2517	1961
	March	1381	2469	1966
	Total For Quarter	3855	7470	5945
	Avg/Day	42.83	83.00	66.06
2025 Second Quarter	April	1279	2327	1774
	May	1256	2405	1812
	June	1561	2823	2103
	Total For Quarter	4096	7555	5689
	Avg/Day	45.01	83.02	62.52
2025 Third Quarter	July	1594	2968	2526
	August	1655	3146	2282
	September	1460	4968	2297
	Total For Quarter	4709	11082	7105
	Avg/Day	51	120	77
2025 Fourth Quarter	October	1235	4513	2184
	November	1159	4545	1874
	December	1409	3209	2259
	Total For Quarter	3803	12267	6317
	Avg/Day	41.00	133.00	69.00
2025	Month	Admin	Emergency	Incidents
	Total for 2025	16463	38374	25056
	Avg/Day	45.10	105.13	68.65

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We want to help your agency shine.

- Do you have a New Hire or Promotion? Let us know!
- How about a retirement? Let us thank them for their service to your community.
- Did you get a new piece of Apparatus? Send us a Picture or two, we love new trucks!
- Hosting a Training? Let us help you fill seats.

Extra!
Extra!

Send your Department News to:
ruralhitch@lrmfa.org