

THE RURAL HITCH

A Quarterly Publication of the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association

**SERVING STRONG
THIS SPRING**

PROUDLY SERVING:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Alexandria | Hebron |
| Alton | Hill |
| Andover | Holderness |
| Ashland | Laconia |
| Barnstead | Meredith |
| Belmont | Moultonborough |
| Bridgewater | New Hampton |
| Bristol | Northfield |
| Campton | Plymouth |
| Center Harbor | Rumney |
| Danbury | Sanbornton |
| Dorchester | Sandwich |
| Ellsworth | Strafford |
| Franklin | Thornton |
| Gilford | Tilton |
| Gilmanton | Warren |
| Groton | Waterville Valley |
| | Wentworth |

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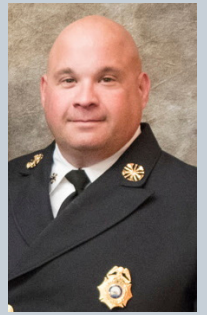
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From the Chief...


Jonathan M. Goldman, CPE



As we move into the first quarter of the year, I want to take a moment to recognize the continued dedication, professionalism, and resilience of our members and partners across the district and beyond. The start of a new year always brings both reflection and renewed focus, and I am proud of the work being done every day to strengthen our organization and the services we provide to our communities.

Over the past several months, we have continued to make meaningful progress while preparing for the move in late summer/early fall. From ongoing facility planning and equipment upgrades to strengthening regional partnerships, these efforts are all rooted in one goal: delivering the highest level of service to the public safety community, and the communities we serve.

This year will be a pivotal one for LRMFA as we move into a new building in collaboration with the NH Department of Safety. We are advancing projects that will have long-term impacts on system performance, capacity, and resilience in the new facility. At the same time, we remain committed to fiscal responsibility, operational excellence, and transparency in all that we do. These priorities guide every decision and investment we make.

I also want to acknowledge the importance of collaboration. Our success is built on strong relationships—with our member agencies, municipal partners, and public safety professionals throughout the state. Your input, engagement, and support are essential, and I encourage continued dialogue as we move forward together. 

Jonathan M. Goldman

Jon Goldman, CPE

Chief Coordinator

Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association

The Rural Hitch

Is Curated and Published Quarterly by:

Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association

Chief Coordinator

Jonathan M. Goldman, CPE

Deputy Chief Coordinator

Erin Hannafin, RPL

Editor

Nicholas Girard



I am honored to serve as the new editor of The Rural Hitch. My background is rooted in public safety and emergency communications. I earned my Associate's Degree in Fire Science from Lakes Region Community College, which provided a strong foundation and early appreciation for the work of first responders.

I currently serve as a Training Coordinator with New Hampshire 911, a role I have held since 2022. I have been with New Hampshire 911 since 2013. In this role, I work alongside the Training Department team to develop and deliver initial training for new telecommunicators, as well as manage certification and continuing education tracking. One of the most rewarding aspects of my work is watching new call takers grow from having no experience into confident professionals serving the public in critical moments.

I am also involved with the APCO Atlantic Training Committee, where I assist with training development and promotional efforts. Through APCO, I recently began the year long Registered Public Safety Leader program after being awarded a scholarship, an opportunity I am both grateful for and excited to pursue.

In addition, I serve as the Presentation Chair for the New Hampshire Dispatchers Association Annual Conference and Vendor Exposition, where I support presenters and assist with conference materials and promotion.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my husband and our three dogs. I am also active with the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, serving as Conductor for Milford VFW Auxiliary Post 4368 and as Assistant Webmaster at the state level, where I recently helped redesign the Auxiliary website.

As Editor, I look forward to highlighting the people and stories that make this organization strong while continuing the proud tradition of The Rural Hitch.



Nicholas Girard
Special Projects Coordinator
Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid

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75th Anniversary



The Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association (LRMFA) is proud to celebrate its 75th anniversary this year, marking three-quarters of a century of cooperation, coordination, and commitment to public safety across the Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

Established in 1951, the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association was formed by area fire departments with a shared mission: to promote cooperation among member agencies in the extinguishment of fires and the protection of life and property throughout the region. What began as a fire mutual aid agreement has grown into a vital regional organization supporting fire, EMS, and emergency communications and response services for member communities.

Over the past 75 years, LRMFA has evolved to meet the changing demands of emergency response. Today, the Association provides coordinated mutual aid, regional communications services, and leadership support that strengthens preparedness and response capabilities across 35 member communities within the Lakes Region. Through planning, large-scale incidents, natural and weather disasters, everyday emergencies, and special events, LRMFA has remained a cornerstone of regional collaboration.

“LRMFA exists because no single department or community can do this vital, lifesaving work alone,” said Chief Jon Goldman, the LRMFA Chief Coordinator. “For 75 years, our member agencies have come together to share resources, expertise, and responsibility to better serve the public. That spirit of cooperation remains just as critical today as it was in 1951.”

As a municipal corporation within the State of New Hampshire, LRMFA continues to focus on governance, accountability, and service to its member communities. The Association’s success is rooted in the dedication of generations of firefighters, EMTs, dispatchers, and municipal leaders who have supported its mission.

Throughout its 75th anniversary year, LRMFA will recognize its history, honor past and present members, and highlight the ongoing importance of regional mutual aid in protecting lives and property across the Lakes Region.

For more information about the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Association and its 75th anniversary, visit www.lrmfa.org or follow us on Facebook.

Welcome



A warm welcome to Tim Gatherum who joined the Tilton-Northfield Fire Department as a FF/AEMT! We're excited to have you on board as an FF/AEMT! Glad to have you with us!



22 Years with Plymouth Fire Department!

Congratulations to Captain Vachon on an incredible 22 years of dedicated service! Thank you for everything you've given over the years.

Happy Retirement Plymouth Police Chief Hutchins!

We would like to wish Plymouth Police Chief Alex Hutchins a happy Retirement. Chief Hutchins has always been a partner with LRMFA and has worked collaboratively to collocate radio equipment, allowing for both police and fire radio systems to be more efficient.



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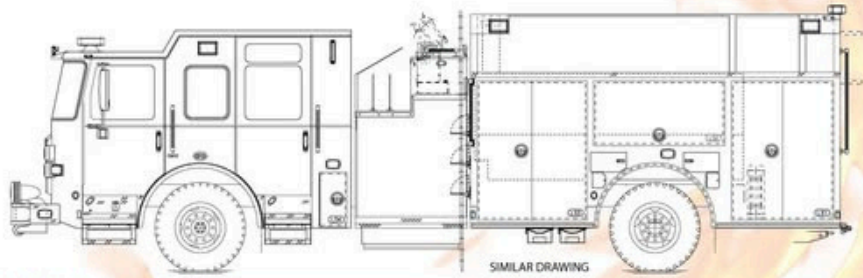


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The Meredith Fire Department, took delivery of their new Engine 3, which arrived in early January. This marks the department's first Pierce Mfg Enforcer chassis added to their fleet of Pierce apparatus and it will proudly serve out of the Meredith Center Fire Station. They have also contracted with Allegiance Fire & Rescue for an additional Pierce Enforcer Pumper to replace 14E1. This newly contracted Pierce Mfg Enforcer Pumper will closely mirror Engine 14E3, with some smart custom tweaks to perfectly serve Engine 1's unique needs.

Meredith Fire Department Takes Delivery of 14E3



NEW HAMPTON



In February, New Hampton received a new E-One engine with a Spartan cab. This will serve as 17E1. The engine has 1,000 gallons of water and a 1250 gpm pump. The engine also has an integrated 30-gallon foam tank. The engine features low hose bed access to preconnected lines and large diameter hose. A mobile repeater was also installed.

In April, New Hampton received a new E-One mini pumper. This will serve as 17E3. The engine has 300 gallons of water and a 1250 gpm pump. The engine also has an integrated 20-gallon foam tank. The engine will serve as a rescue engine. In addition to a limited cache of structural equipment, including two SCBA's, it will hold the departments battery operated hydraulic cutters and spreaders, air bags, struts, swift water equipment, ice rescue gear, cribbing, and rope rescue equipment. The truck also has a 12-ton winch mounted on the front bumper. A mobile repeater was also installed. This engine was partially funded through the Granite State Clean Diesel Grant.



MAY 30TH



Firefighting with Limited Resources by Ret. Chief Ken Erickson

\$20

08:00-08:30 Check In / 08:30-12:00 Class



Register: www.eventleaf.com/e/2026Quarter2



Firefighting with limited resources; making tough decisions – this program is geared for all levels of officers, and future officers. The focus is about making good decisions based on your resources. Focusing on situational awareness, common errors, causes of injuries, realistic resources & needs, water supply, red flag warnings, and 15 critical concerns.





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- Two (2) 6" Intakes, One (1) Each Side
- One (1) 5" Front Intake – Right Side
- One (1) 2½" Gated Intake, Left Side
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- Kussmaul 20 Amp Super Auto-Eject 120V Shoreline Connection, Left Side of Cab
- Tecniq LED Warning Light Package
- Whelen 200W Siren and CPI 100W Speaker
- Two (2) FireTech HiViz 21" LED Scene Light Bars, One (1) Each Side
- Two (2) FireTech HiViz Guardian Elite GESM LED Scene Lights, Rear
- Two (2) Whelen 9S LED Scene Lights, One (1) Each Side of Cab
- One (1) FireTech HiViz 72" LED Brow Light
- One (1) 10' Attic Ladder, One (1) 14' Roof Ladder with Hooks, One (1) 24' 2-Section Ladder, and Two (2) 10' Lengths of 6" Hard Suction Hose
- 10'-2" Overall Height
- 33'-10" Overall Length
- 198" Wheelbase
- 144" Cab to Axle
- 21,500 FAWR
- 31,500 RAWR
- 53,000 GVWR



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!

First Call of 2026



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LRMFA DISPATCHER WINS CHILI COOKOFF

During their annual March Madness Chilli Cookoff, LRMFA was glad to be invited again to join in on the fun! In true fire service fashion, Dispatcher Adam Sattler brought his A-game, taking home the win for best chili. We appreciated the invitation and the opportunity to spend time with our partners next door, NOT on the phone. Hopefully we get invited back next year... we've got a title to defend!



LRMFA Training Division

The LRMFA Training Division is entering a new chapter with a new Chair, and we're pleased to introduce Deputy Chief Loutrel as the new Chair of the LRMFA Training Division. Bringing leadership experience and a strong commitment to professional development, Deputy Chief Loutrel will be helping guide the future of training across the Lakes Region.

As we continue to evolve our training programs, this is an ideal time to get involved. The Training Division plays a direct role in identifying needs, shaping course offerings, and ensuring we're delivering relevant, high-quality training to our member departments.

Interested in joining the Training Division?

Reach to Deputy Chief Loutrel
lloutrel@laconianh.gov

- One meeting per month
- Hybrid format (attend in person or online)
- Opportunity to directly influence regional training priorities



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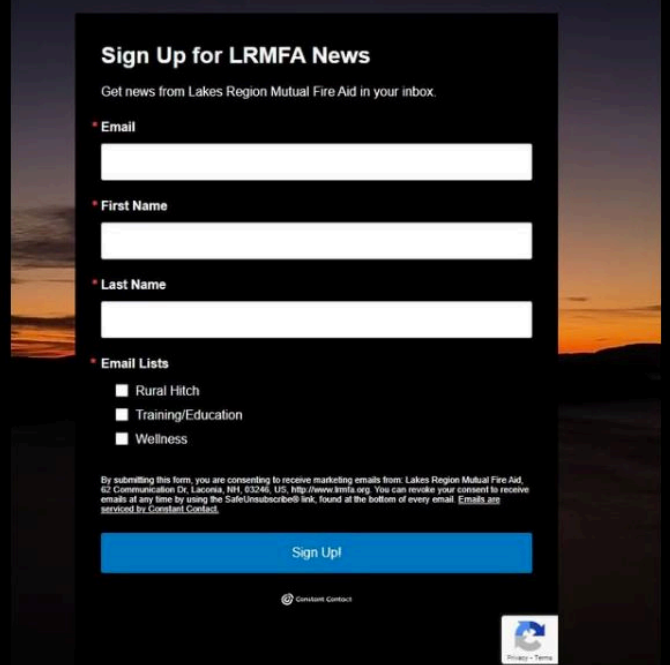
QUESTIONS: NICK MERCURI NMERCURI@CCSNH.EDU

SUBMIT YOUR CALL FOR PAPERS



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



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RETIREMENT

CONGRATULATIONS, DEBORAH BLACK!

Congratulations to Belmont Fire Chief Deborah Black on your well-deserved retirement after almost 28 years of service! Thank you for your dedication to our community's safety and your commitment to the townspeople of Belmont. Wishing you a retirement filled with fun, relaxation, and everything you enjoy!



PROMOTION

Congratulations, Chief Pickowicz!



DONALD PICKOWICZ

With over 17 years of dedicated service in the fire industry, including the past 2 years proudly serving the Town of Belmont, as the Assistant Fire Chief, Chief Pickowicz brings a commitment to the community and to the growth of the Belmont Fire department.



Celebrating 9 Years of Leadership!

On February 28, we marked Chief Jonathan Goldman's 9-year anniversary with LRMFA. For nearly a decade, Chief Goldman's leadership, steady direction, and forward-focused vision have strengthened our Communications Center and the 36 communities we serve. His commitment to operational excellence, technology advancement, and professional development continues to move this organization forward while honoring the strong foundation it was built on. Under his leadership, LRMFA has navigated growth, system enhancements, training expansion, and long-term planning — all while maintaining the high standard of service our members expect and deserve. Chief, thank you for nine years of dedication to this agency, this profession, and the people behind the headsets. We appreciate your leadership and your continued investment in the future of emergency communications.



Celebrating 3 Years of Dedication!

Please join us in congratulating Dispatcher Josh Hanson on his 3-year anniversary with LRMFA!

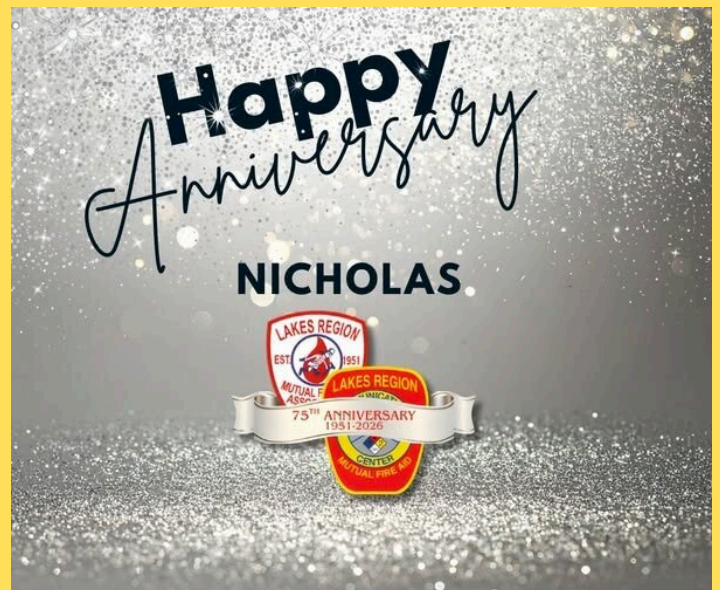
Josh continues to play a critical role on both our CAD Team and IT Team, helping ensure our systems remain reliable, efficient, and mission-ready. In emergency communications, technology isn't a luxury — it's infrastructure. Josh's steady work behind the scenes keeps our operations strong and our responders supported every single day.

His technical expertise, commitment to improvement, and willingness to step up wherever needed make a measurable impact across the organization.

Thank you, Josh, for three years of dedication to LRMFA. We appreciate the work you do — and we're glad you're on this team. Here's to continued success ahead!

Celebrating 3 Years of Dedication!

Special Projects Coordinator Nicholas Bridle is recognized, on the completion of seven years of service. SPC Bridle serves as the Rural Hitch Editor and continues to support the agency through a variety of special projects as needed. His institutional knowledge and behind-the-scenes work contribute directly to operational continuity and long-term success.





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HAPPY BIRTHDAY 9-1-1

President Lyndon B. Johnson's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice recommended that a single number for reporting emergencies should be established nationwide. The FCC (Federal Communications Commission) met with AT&T (the American Telephone and Telegraph Company) to find a quick way to establish a universal emergency number. This implementation of a single, universal number for all types of emergencies ultimately leads to a more accurate and efficient response to emergencies across the nation. On February 16, 1968 the first ever 911 call was made in Haleyville, AL.



Senator Rankin Fite places the first ever 9-1-1 call from the Mayor's office in Haleyville Alabama. Image courtesy of the Daily Northwest Alabamian, February 16, 1968.



Representative Tom Bevill answers Senator Fite's first 9-1-1 call. Image courtesy of the Daily Northwest Alabamian, February 16, 1968.



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LAKEPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

November 8, 1958

Mr. Robert Callahan
Keene Fire Station
Keene, New Hampshire

Dear Mr. Callahan:

The fire Departments in the Lakes
Region Mutual Fire Aid Association are as follows:

- Alton- Chief Weston Aldin
- Ashland- Chief Homer Young
- Belmont- Chief Howard Reed
- Center Harbor- Chief S. R. Rand
- Franklin- Chief Leland Wescott
- Gilford- Chief Harold Wilkenson
- Gilmanon(Peaked Hill) Chief Albert Clark
- Gilmanon Iron Works(Gilmanon Hills) Chief Richard Price
- Hill- Chief Dana Charles
- Laconia- Chief Merle Sargent
- Meredith- Chief Roy Prescott
- Moultonboro- Chief Ralph Dale
- New Hampton- Chief Harold Chase
- Sanbornton- Chief George Currier
- Tilton- Chief Roy Jordan
- Winnisquam- Chief A. J. Simmons

Sincerely,
Austin C. Barlow

Austin C. Barlow
Secretary

*Received
Nov 10, 58*

LAKES REGION MUTUAL FIRE AID ASSOCIATION
LACONIA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Lakeport, N.H.
Jan. 24, 1962.

Robert Callahan, Secretary
Keene, New Hampshire

Bob:

Our membership has grown to eighteen towns this year.

The member towns now are

- Alton, Ashland, Belmont, Center Harbor, Franklin,
- Gilford, Gilmanon Corner, Gilmanon Iron Works,
- Hill, Holderness, Laconia, Meredith, Moultonboro,
- New Hampton, Sanbornton, Sandwich, Tilton-Northfield,
- and Winnisquam.

Respectfully

Austin C. Barlow
Austin C. Barlow, Secretary

The "Independent Homeowners Hardware Store" located in Lakeport at 769 Union Avenue with a telephone number of 170. We know this because in 1958 he also wrote another letter to Captain Callahan in Keene NH updating him with the LRMFAA member towns for that year on his company letterhead.

The Federation of Fire Mutual aid still exists today, and is all of the Mutual Aid districts in NH that come together to unite NH's strong mutual aid system.

These annual updates were so that each districts dues and delegates could be tabulated. Due were \$1-\$2 per community.



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EMS PEARL:



HOB (HEAD OF BED) FOR STROKE PATIENTS



April 7, 2026

Rob Rix, MD – CH EMS Medical Director

Concord Hospital EMS Pearl: HOB for Stroke Patients

For a long time now there was the belief that patients with any type of large stroke needed to have their head of bed (HOB) elevated to 15-30 degrees. This belief was two-fold: 1) A patient with a large stroke can have their swallowing mechanism effected and this can lead to increased aspiration and subsequent aspiration pneumonia and 2) HOB elevation leads to a decrease in intracranial pressure (ICP) (about 5.6mmg mercury) which could be important for large strokes where increases in ICP may worsen outcomes. Recall that increasing the pressure around the brain is very bad as there is no good place for that swelling to go. This is certainly the case for hemorrhagic or bleeding strokes where HOB at 30 degrees is a very standard part of care for these patients and helps to decrease ICP. However unlike in hemorrhagic strokes, in ischemic strokes pressure increases from brain edema are usually not seen until around day 2 once all the inflammation from the dying brain tissue sets in, so should we really be keeping the HOB up for all stroke patients across the board?

Enter the ZODIAC trial in JAMA Neurology 2025! This simple study randomized patients who had a large vessel occlusion (LVO) stroke (essentially a big ischemic stroke) to either HOB at 0 degrees (flat) or HOB at the traditional 30 degrees and looked at neurological deterioration while awaiting treatment for the LVO/blockage. Recall treatment for an LVO stroke is when a neuro-interventionalist/endovascular stroke specialist at a comprehensive stroke center goes into the blood vessel with small catheter inserted peripherally like a cardiac cath and removes the clot.

The results were striking. Neurological deterioration occurred 34.4x faster in the HOB at 30 degrees vs the HOB at 0 degrees!! And there were no aspiration events in the 0 degree group. This is an NNT (number needed to treat) of 2.5 for preventing severe neurological deterioration, meaning that you only need to put HOB at 0 degrees for 2.5 of your patients to make a significant difference in neurologic deterioration. For comparison, the NNT for non-invasive ventilation for respiratory failure to reduce mortality is 16! In fact, the study was stopped early because there was such a dramatic positive effect of keeping the HOB at 0 in this patient population. This is both good and bad. Good because you don't want to harm any more LVO patients by keeping the HOB at 30 degrees, but bad because trials that are stopped early tend to over-estimate effect size, meaning the true benefit isn't quite as significant as an NNT of 2.5 and a hazard ratio of 34.4, but we'll almost certainly never know the TRUE effect size because no one is going to repeat such a positive study when the intervention was as simple as adjusting the HOB (and no big pharma involvement...). BUT, I think it's safe to say HOB flat for confirmed LVO patients is a really important intervention. In fact, the ZODIAC trial actually led to a change in the 2026 AHA/ASC guidelines which suggest "temporary use of 0 degree head positioning" in patients with certain types of ischemic (non-hemorrhagic!) strokes.

Why would something so simple as HOB cause such a dramatic change in neurologic deterioration? Let's break it down: In an LVO stroke, a large blood vessel is blocked by a clot and the brain tissue relying on that vessel is dying from the drop in blood flow. The body responds to this by trying to increase blood flow to the dying brain tissue by way of "collateral" blood circulation. Collateral blood flow occurs from smaller blood vessels that travel around the larger blocked vessel to get to the dying neurons. Think about it like the small tributaries that go around the blockage in a dammed-up stream. Now, when the HOB is elevated, the heart must pump blood against gravity to get up to the brain and feed those small collaterals. When HOB is flat, gravity is eliminated and blood flows easier to the collaterals so that ischemic brain tissue may be able to hang on a little bit longer while we rush to try and get the patient in front of a neuro-interventionalist (in NH that's only going to be at DHMC, Portsmouth, or Boston). This is a similar reason why we tolerate higher blood pressures in ischemic strokes, because we want a higher perfusion pressure to those collateral vessels trying to get blood flow around the blocked artery.

Now the question remains, should all patients with a FAST-ED score of ≥ 4 be laid flat? As is described in protocol 2.24, a FAST-ED score of ≥ 4 predicts higher likelihood of LVO (i.e., a big stroke that might be a candidate for neuro-intervention). It's a great question and one we recently discussed at the Northern New England Stroke Collaborative meeting. Unfortunately for EMS, until we start getting portable CT scanners in rigs (Google "mobile stroke unit" and you'll see plenty out there!), I think we're stuck keeping HOB just slightly elevated as unfortunately a large hemorrhagic/bleeding stroke can also present with a high FAST-ED score and look clinically similar to an ischemic stroke. In the hemorrhagic stroke population we definitely do not want to lay them flat as this can increase ICP leading to a potentially larger bleed and brain injury.

For now, the ZODIAC trial mostly impacts the IFT services out there as if you're called to transport an LVO patient to an endovascular stroke center please make sure that the HOB is FLAT throughout transport. And if you roll into an ED to pick up an LVO patient and the HOB is up, unless there is active vomiting or airway compromise that the ED doc is planning on fixing real soon, in the nicest way possible please suggest that the ED staff drop the HOB to flat and explain why. It's fun to say "because of the ZODIAC trial" so I would encourage you to just say that and know that the simple act of dropping the head may truly impact your LVO patient's outcome.

Thanks for reading!

Robby

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BELMONT FIRE DEPARTMENT IS HIRING!!!

FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTER / AEMT

POSITION OVERVIEW:

The Town of Belmont Fire Department is seeking three (3) qualified candidates to fill immediate openings. The individuals will perform responsible firefighting operations, emergency medical care, and other related duties.

SALARY RANGE: \$26.83 — \$38.19 (per hour)

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- ◆ High school diploma or GED (Associate's Degree Preferred)
- ◆ Certification as a Firefighter II and Nationally Registered AEMT
- ◆ Possession of, or ability to obtain, valid NH CDL-B driver's license with tank endorsement within the 1st year of employment.
- ◆ Eligible under State of NH Administration rules, 701.01, 701.02, 702.01, 702.2, or a lateral transfer that meets rule 703.01
- ◆ Valid Driver's License and successful criminal and driving background check
- ◆ Ability to pass an NFPA 1582 pre-employment physical

WORK SCHEDULE:

- ◆ Based on a rotating 42-Hour work week
- ◆ Rotation: 1-2-1-4 Rotation

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

Address to: Firefighter/ALS Provider Hiring Process

Attn: Chief Donald Pickowicz

PO Box 837, Belmont, NH 03220



This is a Union position.

The Town of Belmont is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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Earlier, in January, the LRMFA Training Division hosted “Cost of Code 3” training, bringing together responders from across the region for an important and thought-provoking discussion on response styles and decision-making. This course generated meaningful conversation, challenged long-standing habits, and reinforced why and how we respond matters just as much as how fast we respond. The engagement in the room spoke for itself.


Thank you to our instructors for delivering a high-impact program and to everyone who attended and contributed to the discussion. Training like this strengthens our collective approach and ultimately makes our communities safer. We look forward to continuing the conversation and hope to see you all at next quarter’s training.



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LAKES REGION MUTUAL FIRE AID BY THE NUMBERS

	Month	Admin	Emergency	Incidents
2026 First Quarter	January	1263	2693	2171
	February	995	2271	1828
	March	1256	2436	2037
	Total for Quarter	3514	7400	6036
	Avg/Day	39	82	67
2026 First Quarter	April			
	May			
	June			
	Total for Quarter			
	Avg/Day			
2026 First Quarter	July			
	August			
	September			
	Total for Quarter			
	Avg/Day			
2026 First Quarter	October			
	November			
	December			
	Total for Quarter			
	Avg/Day			
2026	Month	Admin	Emergency	Incidents
	Total for 2026			
	Avg/Day			

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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.

Send your Department News to:
ruralhitch@lrmfa.org

*Extra!
Extra!*