

**Onondaga County  
Department of Emergency Management**

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**



# COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

Over the past year our department has made significant accomplishments to improve the preparedness and response capabilities of our community. However, those accomplishments are overshadowed by the tragic events of April 14, 2024.

This past year is one that will never be forgotten in Onondaga County, as it brought the horrific reality faced by first responders to our front door: two law enforcement officers, Lieutenant Michael "Hootch" Hoosock of the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office and Officer Michael Jensen of the Syracuse Police Department were horrifically gunned down while protecting their community. This incident not only rattled the officers' families and friends, and the law enforcement community, it also rattled the broader public safety community.

Lt. Hoosock made significant contributions to all public safety disciplines throughout his career and his legacy will continue in the mentorship he provided to so many. Although working in law enforcement for only a short time, it has been well demonstrated that Officer Jensen's character had and will continue to make significant impacts on his department and the City of Syracuse. We are forever indebted to the sacrifice that they made.

The highlight of 2024 was the opening of our new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and training spaces. The new EOC has allowed us to expand capacity to include additional partner agencies and provide all agency representatives with a more effective working space to better coordinate a large response within Onondaga County. This new space has also enabled us to increase training and educational opportunities for our emergency management team and partner organizations. In just a portion of this year we were able to accommodate 2,100 participants in over 60 sessions. Many of these opportunities would not have been offered locally, without this new space.



# COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

Onondaga County has a long history of supporting our county-based fire departments with determining the origin and cause of fires. This year, our team was honored to be named the Alton L. Lewis Memorial Fire Investigation Team of the Year for NYS. This award exemplifies our team's commitment to the work they do and the services they provide to our county fire departments.

We look forward to continuously improving our capabilities and services provided to the community and partner agencies in 2025. The work we do would not be possible without the continued support of County Executive McMahon and the Onondaga County Legislature.



**DANIEL WEARS, MPA**



**Lieutenant Michael  
"Hootch" Hoosock**

*Onondaga County  
Sheriff's Office*



**Officer  
Michael Jensen**

*City of Syracuse  
Police Department*





# ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

*To partner with stakeholders to promote life safety and preservation of property through a progressive cycle of emergency and disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.*

## OUR MISSION

## ABOUT US

The Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management (OCDEM) leads Onondaga County and our partners in planning, preparedness, response, and recovery for daily emergencies, large-scale countywide events, multi-jurisdictional incidents, and major disasters. OCDEM is an important link in the coordination between emergency services and support, as well as the public and private stakeholders in order to collaborate with one another during preparedness for, response to, or recovery from major events and incidents.

The Department also has two bureaus within it: Fire and EMS. These bureaus are lead by the Director of Fire and Director of EMS, respectively.

*A comprehensive, well-coordinated emergency response and recovery system that has the local capacity to effectively manage emergency situations and disasters.*

## OUR VISION





# ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT CONT.

## DEPARTMENT HISTORY

In 2003, the County Legislature recognized the importance of emergency management by combining the Department of Emergency Management, the Fire Coordinator's Office, and the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Bureau under one Department. Local Law 6-2003 created a Department of Emergency Management incorporating a Fire Bureau and EMS Bureau.

2003

DEPARTMENT  
FOUNDED



## FIRE BUREAU

*Director: Gerald Payne*

The Fire Bureau provides coordination and assistance to local fire departments in Onondaga County by:

- Overseeing fire mutual aid in Onondaga County
- Coordinating fire service training with New York State Office of Fire Protection and Control (OFPC) and local fire departments
- Overseeing the County Fire Investigation Unit
- *Project Concern: A Juvenile Firesetters Program*
- Overseeing code enforcement of County owned and operated property
- Supporting several special response teams

## EMS BUREAU

*Director: Jeffrey VanBeveren*

To further the mission of the Department of Emergency Management, the EMS Bureau provides leadership, support, education, and coordination of pre-hospital emergency medical care within Onondaga County.

To achieve a collaborative and effective EMS system within Onondaga County, the EMS Division works closely with all EMS providers in Onondaga County by sharing information, maintaining a resource list for mutual aid purposes, supporting training programs, and working collaboratively with EMS agency directors and representatives from local and state public health departments.

# ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

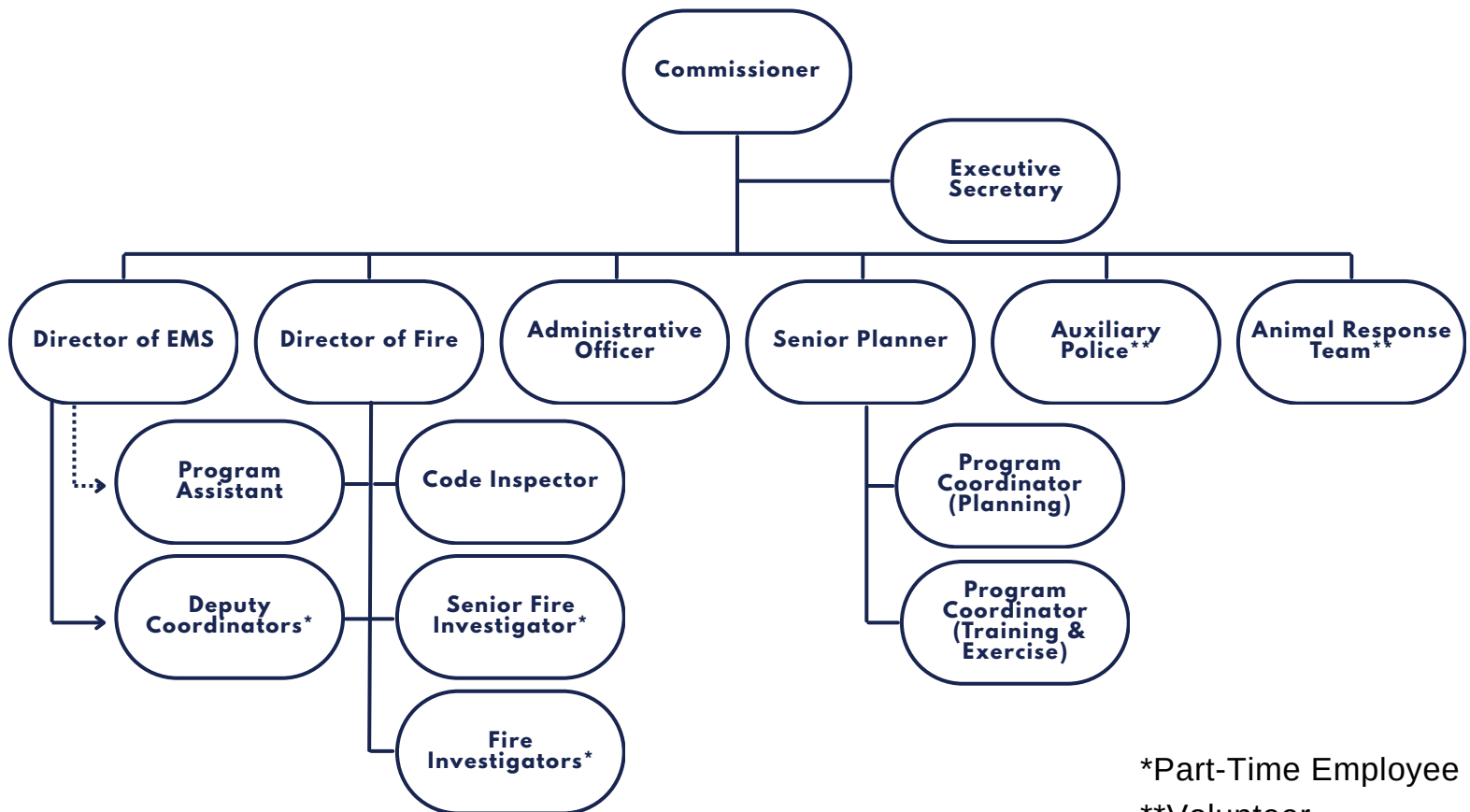
## STAFFING

The Department of Emergency Management is staffed by 11 full-time employees, 26 part-time employees, and a variety of volunteers.



In addition to our staff, OCDEM annually hosts anywhere from 2-5 interns from local area colleges and universities with interest in emergency management and/or preparedness.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



\*Part-Time Employee

\*\*Volunteer



# WE'VE MOVED!

## New Facility

After several years of operating out of the sub-basement of the John H. Mulroy Civic Center, the department obtained and renovated a state-of-the-art emergency management complex.

On January 26, 2024, moving day commenced to a fully renovated, centrally located former Army Reserve Center in Liverpool, NY.

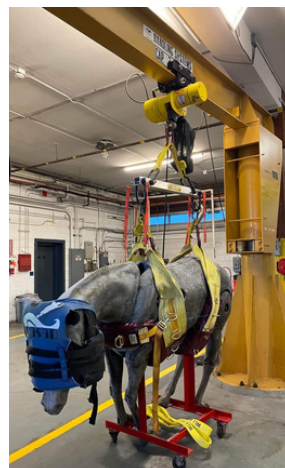
With a dedicated office wing, conference areas, training rooms, media briefing room, detached garage, gated trailer lot, and brand-new Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the facility is nearly all-encompassing of the department's primary resources and deployable assets, complete with room to learn and grow.



Gated trailer lot

Primary facility

Detached garage





# EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

## Grand Opening

On April 2, 2024, County Executive McMahon and Commissioner Wears announced the official opening of the brand-new, state-of-the-art EOC. Equipped with the latest communication systems, high-tech audiovisual systems, and real-time data analysis tools, the EOC provides the county with additional capabilities and space to bring in additional organizations into our emergency preparedness and response efforts. The new EOC is centrally located within Onondaga County with easy on/off access to major highways. With the detached garage and gated trailer lot on site, all of the departments most deployable assets are able to be safely stored in the same accessible location, allowing for shorter deployment timeframes to incidents.



*Liverpool EOC Grand Opening*



*Liverpool EOC (New)*



*Downtown EOC (Former/Back-Up)*





# EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER CONT.



## Solar Eclipse EOC Activation

On April 8, 2024, the department activated the EOC from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM to support the 2024 Total Solar Eclipse. The event was closely monitored with representation from local and state partners, as well as non-government organizations.

In 2023, the department coordinated a 2024 Solar Eclipse Planning Committee (2024 SEPC) that met regularly leading up to the event. This allowed for us to unify and prepare for potential implications identified in AAR/IPs from the 2017 Total Solar Eclipse. This committee successfully led to the development of a 2024 Solar Eclipse Coordination Plan and smooth EOC activation.

The opportunity to activate the new EOC with a pre-planned event was a unique experience that allowed for the department to exercise new capabilities, as well as identify any areas in need of improvement to remedy for future activations.



## Training Room Usage

Following the opening of the new EOC, the Department of Emergency Management was subsequently able to offer training room reservations to other County departments, as well as to our partner organizations, at no expense.

In 2024, the training rooms accommodated **65 events**, hosting over **2,100 individuals!**



# PLANNING

## Planning Overview

In early 2024, the department onboarded a new Senior Planner, right alongside our huge transition into our new primary facility and EOC.

Through the year, significant emphasis was placed on integrating the new EOC and enhancing emergency preparedness and response capabilities through comprehensive plan review, revision, and development. These efforts aligned with Federal and State guidelines, ensuring the County's readiness to address a wide range of potential hazards.

The planning activities conducted during 2024 demonstrate a commitment to proactive emergency management. These efforts have strengthened the County's preparedness posture and will contribute to more effective responses to future emergencies.

## Key Planning Activities

### Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) Enhancement:

- Initiated a comprehensive review and revision of the Onondaga County CEMP, adhering to FEMA's Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101 (CPG 101) and incorporating FEMA Community Lifelines framework. This ongoing project aims to modernize the plan and ensure its effectiveness in addressing contemporary threats.

### Infrastructure and Hazard-Specific Planning:

- Performed thorough reviews and implemented revisions to dam emergency action plans to mitigate potential flood risks.
- Developed and reviewed the emergency plan for the Solar Eclipse event in April 2024, to support public safety during the event.

### Compliance and Operational Improvements:

- Conducted a comprehensive review of New York State Emergency Management Accreditation standards to ensure ongoing compliance in emergency planning.
- Updated and revised the EOC Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) and Job Aids, enhancing operational efficiency and clarity during emergency activations.





# TRAINING & EXERCISE

## Staff Training

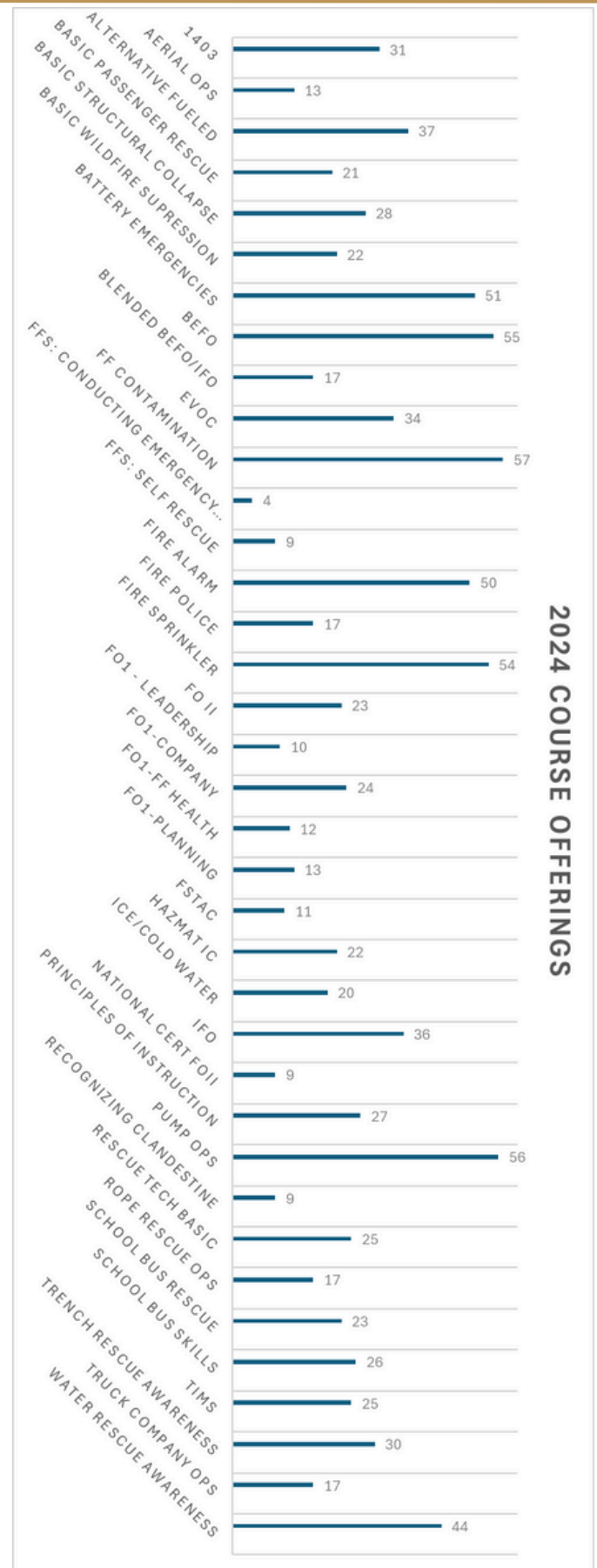
In 2024, **8 full-time staff** members completed approximately **808 hours of training** and professional development.

The trainings covered a wide array of Emergency Management disciplines including, but not limited to: Code Enforcement, Community Lifelines, Continuity of Operations (COOP), Damage Assessments, Emergency Operations Center Roles & Functions, Fire/Arson Investigations, Hazardous Materials, Incident Command System (ICS)/National Incident Management System (NIMS), Mass Casualty Incidents, Risk Assessments, Severe Weather, and WebEOC.

## Coordinated Trainings

OCDEM was able to coordinate **37** Office of Fire and Prevention Control **course offerings** in 2024, hosted by **24 agencies** and accounting for **979 firefighters trained**.

Trainings covered a variety of topics, with highest enrollment (*over 50 individuals*) in Firefighter Contamination Reduction & Cancer Screening, Pump Operations, Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations (BEFO), Fire Sprinklers, Battery Emergencies, and Fire Alarms.



# TRAINING & EXERCISE CONT.

## Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan

The plan aims to enhance the preparedness and response capabilities of emergency responders and organizations by providing comprehensive and repetitive training and exercising opportunities. The training and exercises will cover various scenarios, from natural disasters to man-made incidents, and will involve various response partners from the public and private sectors.

For all exercises conducted, AAR/IP will be completed following the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP) best practices. The AAR/IP process allows for us to identify gaps, strengths, and weaknesses in capabilities, and provide a structure for improving those capabilities. The MYTEP also aligns with planning priorities, allowing for us to update plans, policies, and/or procedures, and then test, train, and exercise them prior to an emergency or disaster, leading to a more efficient and effective response.

The 2023 - 2025 Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan (MYTEP) focuses on 4 key priorities:

1

EOC Operations

2

MCI Management

3

MFI Response

4

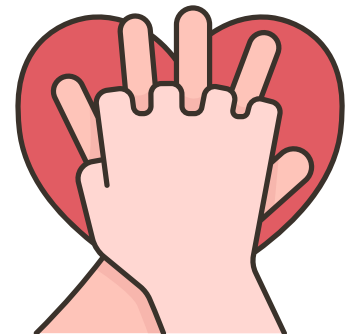
Active Shooter Response & Management

## Exercise Overview

In 2024, the department coordinated and/or participated in **10 exercises** including workshops, tabletop, functional, and full-scale exercises. These exercises covered a variety of topics including: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE), Cybersecurity, Dam Failure, EOC Operations, Hazardous Materials, Human Needs, Mass Casualty Incidents, Public Health, Reception Center Activation, and Severe Weather.

## CPR Training

The Department of Emergency Management is an American Heart Association training center. In 2024, instructors taught over **463 CPR classes reaching over 3,790 people.**



# TRAINING & EXERCISE CONT.

## Integrated Emergency Management Course

In 2024, we had the privilege and honor to both host and attend FEMA's Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC). The IEMC is a nearly 40-year-old program delivered through a **4-day, exercise-based training activity** for EOC personnel and community partners involved with incident response and recovery, to practice simulated but realistic emergency situations within a structured learning environment. This is a **highly competitive, application-based program** requiring approval from both the State and FEMA Region, selecting only 12 communities for delivery each year.

Throughout the week, we were able to build the interdependent awareness, leadership, and communication skills needed to develop, refine, and implement policies, plans, procedures, and mutual aid agreements in a "whole community" EOC environment. We are grateful to have been selected for a 2024 delivery and want to thank not only FEMA for the delivery but also extend our gratitude to the Onondaga County departments and public and private sector partners that took time out of their busy schedules to attend this invaluable experience with us and ultimately create a more resilient community.





# TRAINING & EXERCISE CONT.

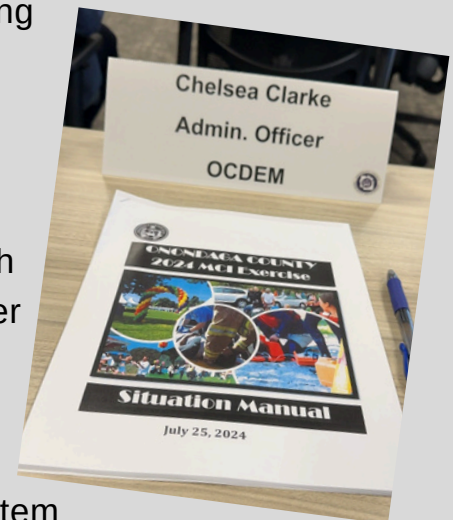
## Mass Casualty Incident Tabletop

On Thursday, July 25, 2024 the Department of Emergency Management hosted a MCI Tabletop (TTX) facilitated by Contingency Management Consulting Group, **aligning with the priorities identified in the MYTEP**. Exercise play consisted of representation from Command Post, EOC, EMS, Hospital, and Field personnel. The objectives for this TTX focused on the MCI management plan, collaboration with County disciplines, and demonstration of mass casualty capabilities.



Specifically, this exercise focused on **six (6) primary objectives**:

1. Reviewing criteria to activate the Command Post, determine staffing levels, and discuss activation of the MCI plan and its response level(s).
2. Reviewing resource requirements for an evolving situation & identifying how additional resources would be obtained.
3. Identifying how news statements are developed & coordinated with appropriate agencies and approved for dissemination by the proper authorities.
4. Discussing communication/coordination with hospitals to adjust workflows to accommodate the rapid influx of patients.
5. Identifying potential vulnerabilities in the emergency response system and defining corrective actions to address these weaknesses.
6. Demonstrating the process of planning for and addressing the longer-term needs of incident response and recovery.



# TRAINING & EXERCISE CONT.

## Human Services Winter Snowstorm Tabletop

In 2023, it was a high priority for the Department to exercise the County's capabilities to respond to a severe snowstorm incident, particularly following the devastation of the Buffalo Blizzard of 2022. The Department invested time in reviewing AAR/IPs and the County's Winter Storms Annex. In utilizing a similar scenario to the Buffalo storms, a lake-effect snowstorm TTX was conducted in December 2023, testing the **target capabilities** of Planning, Public Information & Warning, Operational Coordination, Mass Care Services, and Mass Search & Rescue.

Following the success of the 2023 TTX, the TTX was modified for delivery on December 3, 2024 to evaluate Onondaga County's capabilities and response to a simulated snowstorm incident including the **integration of Human Service Agencies**.



*In true Onondaga County fashion, we welcomed our guests with a snowstorm!*

Specifically, this exercise focused on **four (4) primary objectives**:

1. Assessing the effectiveness of the County's emergency response plans and capabilities to respond to a severe weather event.
2. Testing communication protocols and information-sharing mechanisms.
3. Identifying areas for improvement in coordination, communication, and resource allocation, and developing strategies to enhance future emergency responses.
4. Informing revisions to the current Winter Storms Annex to the CEMP.





## Fire Investigation Unit

The Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) operates within the Department of Emergency Management, under the oversight of the Director of Fire. The FIU is a team of highly-trained individuals who play a crucial role in determining the circumstances that led to a fire. This information is primarily utilized in supporting arson investigations and help prevent future fires.

Through NYS General Municipal Law Chapter 24, Article 10, Section 204-D, it is the responsibility of the Fire Chief of any department to determine the cause of a fire or explosion that their department responds to. The FIU serves as a resource to support county Fire Chief's and local law enforcement outside of the City of Syracuse. Fire Investigators use a combination of scientific and investigative techniques to determine the origin and cause of a fire, including examination of burn patterns and examination of the physical evidence at the fire scene. In 2024, the FIU conducted over **430 hours of investigations, investigating over 140 incidents.**

## Fire Investigation Team of the Year

On Tuesday, November 19, 2024, the FIU received the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. (IAAI) **Alton L. Lewis Memorial Fire Investigation Team of the Year Award** for an incident that happened in North Syracuse on November 22, 2022. Although the incident resulted in a double fatality, the FIU was able to bring the case to a successful conclusion.



During the painstaking removal of debris and reconstruction of the fire scene, investigators were successful in finding the “needle in a hay stack” to pinpoint the origin and cause of the fire and utilized data available and collected during the documentation of the incident and arranged it into a logical and rational format arranged in chronological order while comparing the hard data to physical fire modeling (a well-accepted and recognized method utilized in analyzing fire events).



# FIRE & EMS

## Fire Investigation Team of the Year (continued..)

The Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management's FIU team approach demonstrates the ethical dedication, professionalism and respect that the team has to successfully complete a challenging investigation.

In addition to the FIUs award, Senior Fire Investigator Ron Ryan was awarded the **Jack Meehan Memorial Photography Award**.



## Annual Henry 'Hank' Boynton Award

On October 10th, 2024, the 29th Annual Henry 'Hank' Boynton Award was presented to Lt. Michael Greveling Jr. of **Fayetteville Fire & EMS**.



Chief Henry "Hank" Boynton was a firefighter with the Syracuse Fire Department from 1964 until his death in 1994. Chief Boynton was dedicated to making our community a safer place through fire prevention education for youth.

The Boynton Award is presented annually by the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management Fire Bureau and the Project Concern Committee during Fire Prevention Week to an individual and/or organization that exemplify the Chief's commitment, leadership, initiative and dedication to reducing the incidence of juvenile fire setting through fire prevention education for youth.

Boynton Award honorees have advanced fire safety awareness, particularly among young children. Their efforts have improved the lives of many families and contributed to the reduction of juvenile fire setting in our community.



# FIRE & EMS CONT.

## Code Enforcement

The code enforcement team continued to play an integral role in ensuring the safety and stability of our community through its rigorous inspections and permitting process for county-owned and operated property. Throughout 2024, the team conducted **724** inspections and issued **228** permits for a total approved permit construction value of **\$33,178,428.00**. These efforts not only helped to ensure that all new construction and renovation projects met local and state regulations, but also promotes public safety.



Codes Category	Permits Issued	Inspections Conducted
Annual Building Inspections	N/A	320
ASM Events	75	59
Construction Alteration	16	103
Demolition	2	42
Events & Tents, County Parks	29	37
Mobile Food Trucks	92	154
New Construction	1	3
Pyrotechnics	3	3
Welding & Hot Work	10	3



## Fire Training Trailer

In 2023, the department acquired a fire training trailer (FTT) which allows for fire departments to conduct training in their areas of expertise, and in some cases, practice skills they would not have otherwise had the opportunity to exercise, including: forcible entry, vertical ventilation, horizontal ventilation, and emergency bailout procedures.

The FTT is loaned out for a minimum of two (2) weeks at a time, and up to a maximum of two (2) months at a time, if there are no other requests.

In 2024, the FTT was loaned out to **12 fire departments** throughout the County, reaching a **total of 33 fire departments** through mutual aid.





# SPECIAL RESPONSE EQUIPMENT & TEAMS

## Introducing... The SHERP

The SHERP is now one of the County's most valuable deployable assets. This vehicle was specifically **engineered to navigate the most difficult environmental conditions**. It is not only capable of ground transportation, but also floating in bodies of water and navigating through deep snow or marshes.

Following the devastation of the 2022 Buffalo Blizzard, the Department reviewed AAR/IPs and conducted TTX exercises to test the County's capabilities and ultimately **strengthen preparedness measures to respond to severe weather events**. It was determined that the SHERP would be an efficient way to help fill a huge capability gap. Onondaga County is currently the only entity in Central New York with possession of a SHERP.

The SHERP holds up to 6 passengers, in addition to the driver and officer. Its capabilities are truly endless, but it will be deployed for the **primary purpose of supporting local agencies with rescues in difficult terrains**. It is also easily deployable for swamps and hard-to-reach frozen areas in need.





# SPECIAL RESPONSE EQUIPMENT & TEAMS

## The Onondaga County Animal Response Team

On August 20, 2024, the Onondaga County Animal Response Team (OnCART) participated in an exercise to practice handling horses in emergency situations. This was a great training opportunity in collaboration with the fire departments.

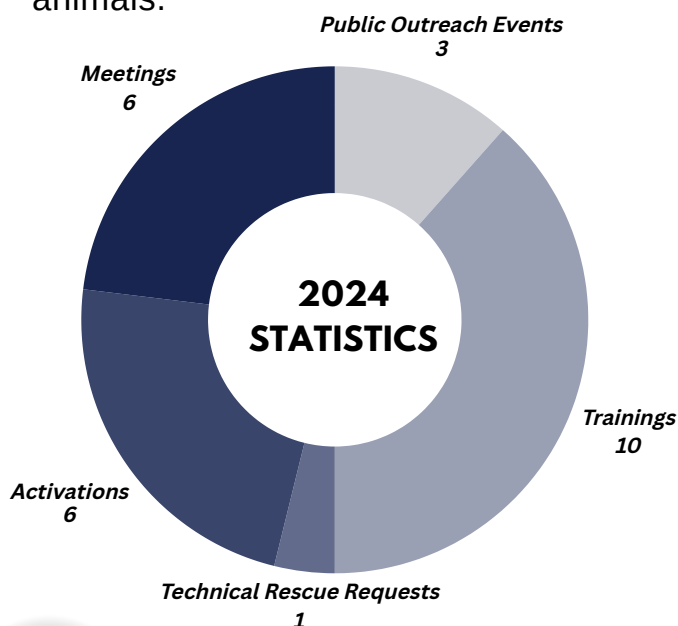


### OnCART is dedicated to...

- Provide training to facilitate safe rescue practices for responders and animals.
- Provide sheltering and rescue of companion animals and livestock in disaster situations.
- Facilitate the coordination of agencies and resources to manage an emergency involving animals.

OnCART is always looking for volunteers, and training is **FREE!**

Interested in joining? Contact us at [onondagacart@gmail.com](mailto:onondagacart@gmail.com)



The team includes collaboration amongst multiple agencies and private sector organizations, as well as the New York Department of Agriculture and Markets. We welcome volunteers from EMS, fire service, police, veterinary professionals, and the public! The team is **all volunteer**, supported by the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management.

In 2024, OnCART **completed a total of 4,466 volunteer hours.**



# SPECIAL RESPONSE EQUIPMENT & TEAMS

## Mobile Incident Command Vehicle Enhancements

Each year, members of the House of Representatives are allowed to submit a limited number of discretionary program requests to the House Appropriations Committee for projects in need of federal funding. On March 19, 2024, Congressman Brandon Williams visited the Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management to announce that under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, House Appropriations approved his office's Community Project Funding request for a replacement of the departments Mobile Incident Command vehicle, in the amount of \$423,000.00.

As noted in Congressman William's project description: "The costs of repairs are increasing and technology on the vehicle has been updated multiple times over the past 18-20 years. The vehicle is used to support local public safety agencies throughout the county in response to large-scale emergency incidents and pre-planned special events. The vehicle has also, and will continue to be available to support neighboring jurisdictions. The vehicle has been a critical asset to the County during responses to hazardous materials incidents, law enforcement responses, assisted living center evacuation, the COVID-19 pandemic and other events. The vehicle provides a centralized location to coordinate all public safety disciplines and supporting, non-governmental agencies involved in the response."

It is of vital importance for the department to replace this essential vehicle before it can no longer support incidents throughout Onondaga County.

The department is immensely appreciative of Congressman Williams' support.



# DEPARTMENTAL GRANT SUPPORT

## Grant Funding

In 2024, the department was **awarded \$1,109,196.00 in grant funding** through both competitive and non-competitive State and Federal grant programs.

Grant	Granting Agency	Amount Granted	Funding Allocation(s)
<b>Critical Infrastructure Grant Program</b>	New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services	\$50,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Physical security enhancements/target hardening measures to primary EOC</li></ul>
<b>Emergency Management Performance Grant</b>		\$172,748.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Supports staff salaries, eligible interoperable communications equipment, and service fees for operational support</li></ul>
<b>Hazardous Materials Grant Program</b>		\$209,600.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provides financial support to the CNY Regional HazMat Team</li><li>Supports OT/backfill &amp; consultant costs for trainings, eligible equipment &amp; supplies, software, maintenance, and calibration</li></ul>
<b>State Homeland Security Program</b>		\$253,848.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Supports staff salaries, eligible interoperable communications equipment, incident response equipment, physical security equipment, EOC equipment, logistics-related equipment, camera trailer upgrades, supplies for citizen preparedness, and operational software &amp; subscriptions</li></ul>
<b>Technology &amp; Equipment Program</b>	United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing	\$423,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Replacement of Mobile Incident Command Vehicle (EM-50)</li></ul>





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