

## STANDING FAST

THE GENE O'KANE DIVISION OF FDNY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Membership application is available on our website  
[www.okanefdnyretirees.com](http://www.okanefdnyretirees.com).

**WELCOME** to  
 "Standing Fast." The  
 official newsletter of the  
 Gene O'Kane Division of  
 FDNY Retired, the first  
 and oldest FDNY retirees  
 organization in the U.S.  
 We have been chartered  
 in the state of Florida  
 since 1979.  
 Postal Address: FDNY  
 Retired, 2053 Blue Beech  
 Ct., Trinity, FL 34655



## Who Are We?

We are an organization of retired New York City Firefighters living on the west coast of Florida in the areas of Pasco, Hernando, Citrus, Pinellas, Hillsborough counties.

Although now retired, we share the bond of having had the privilege of protecting lives and property of the residents of the City of New York as members of the greatest fire department in the world, the FDNY. As retirees of the FDNY, in 1978 we banded together to form the first chapter of the FDNY RETIRED, received a charter from the state of Florida and named our organization after our founder, Gene O'Kane. Thus we are "THE GENE O'KANE DIVISION OF FDNY RETIRED." Our division is the oldest of all the divisions of FDNY Retired, one of nine divisions located in Florida and one of twenty six divisions scattered across the United States. We are also a member of the the "URFA, the United Retired Firefighters Assn. We welcome all FDNY retirees, of all ranks, retired volunteer firefighters from all other municipalities and non-firefighters to join us in friendship and brotherhood as members of our proud organization.

*Membership and Meetings:* Membership in the Gene O'Kane Division of FDNY Retired is open to all FDNY retirees of all ranks, paid and volunteer firefighters from all cities across the U.S.A., also non-firefighters are accepted as "Associate Members." Applications for membership can be obtained by completing the application located on our website and mailing it in as directed. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month with the exception of June, July and August, at 7 p.m. at the America Legion "Paradise Post" located on Veterans Drive in New Port Richey, Fl 34654.

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, 2/17/2026. 7pm,  
 American Legion Paradise Post, New Port Richey, FL.



[okaneclubfdny@icloud.com](mailto:okaneclubfdny@icloud.com)

email us for more info.

## 2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD



**KEVIN DOHERTY, PRESIDENT**  
727-744-5748



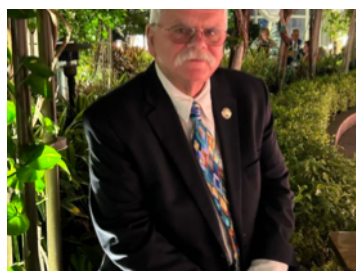
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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

Dear Members, Family and Friends,

Well, we certainly came through January with a wintery last blast...if you are like me, I can't wait to get our great Florida weather back. Let's hope that the ground hog doesn't see his shadow and we can head back to the beach!!!

Weather aside, January was pretty good to us. We had a nice showing of members come out to the first meeting of our new year. Lenny was back in the kitchen serving up his famous hot dogs and we had a few members bring along guests who are interested in joining us! That is awesome.

Here is a short update of upcoming happenings you should make note of:

**Day At The Races:** unfortunately, due to lack of participation this event has been cancelled. Let's see if we can bring it back next year.

**St. Patty's Day March Meeting:** Tuesday, 3/17/26. You won't want to miss this. Our regular monthly meeting gets a real boost when Chef Lenny brings out his Annual Corned Beef Sandwiches. It's also the last day to pay for the Annual Installation Dinner Dance, so bring your \$ if you plan to attend.

**Annual Installation Dinner Dance at Seven Springs Country Club:** Saturday, 3/28/26, 4pm. Tickets remain same as last year (\$45/person). Full details follow in this newsletter. You need to get your reservations and payments in by 3/17/26.

**Spring Picnic:** Saturday, 5/2/26. We're back at Fred Howard Park in Tarpon Springs. \$10.00 per person. See details and payment coupons in the Upcoming Events section of our website.

**Finally, a reminder — have you paid your 2026 membership dues?** You can pay at the February meeting on 2/17/26 mail it in (see instructions on the Booster and Membership section of the website).

Stay safe and be well... hope to see you at our next meeting.

**KEVIN DOHERTY, President**

*All the best from your Board Members: Rich Miccio, Louis Kikis, Jim Savarese, Mike Doyle and your Board of Trustees: Jack D'Andrea, John Pasquale, John Murphy, and Steve McNally.*

*OKANE BOOSTERS: reminder...if your number is a 2 it's time to renew! Boosters run for 12 months. The number following your name indicates when your booster will expire.*

Thank you for your support. Anyone can be a booster. Family members, friends, etc.  
(Rev. 1/26)

Byrnes, Brian 1 Lt. Gene Sullivan, E39  
Byrnes, Brian 1 Firefighter James Byrnes 1824. Batt 21  
Byrnes, Brian 1 BC Carlo Andersen 456. Safety Batt  
Byrnes, Brian 1 Firefighter Marty Celic Murdered 7/2/77 13108. T.L.18  
Chichester, Dan10 Members of E275 1963-1987  
Chichester, Dan10 Members of L126 1963-1987  
Chichester, Dan10 Members of E234 1963-1987  
Dunscomb Jim11 Honoring all members of E82  
Dunscomb, Jim 1 Always in our hearts, E82  
D'Andrea, Jack10 Members of Ladder 126  
Incarnato, Charles10 Rockapulco - E268, L137 - Best on the Beach  
Incarnato, Charles10 On The Edge - E314 Members LOL  
Incarnato, Charles10 Never A Dull Moment E72, For Sure  
Incarnato, Charles10 Mid-town High Rise E8,L2, Batt8  
Incarnato, Charles10 The Bronx, must I say more? Great Memories  
Incarnato, Charles10 In memory of John Askin, E48, my friend and brother  
Kikis, Louis1 E22/ L13 "The Yorkville Nine"  
Kikis, Louis1 343 Never Forget  
Kikis, Victoria6 Honoring the memory or those who gave their all. 343 Never forget.  
Kikis, Victoria6 RIP Jeff Giordano - 9/11/01  
McCarren, Charles 1 BC Richard De Prima. Batt 49  
McCarren, Charles 1 Lt. James McCarren E48  
McCarren, Charles 1 Lt. Charles McCarren III FDNY Safety Command  
McCarren, Charles 1 Lt. Daniel McCarren E298  
McCarthy, William11 Members of L25, 9/11 Never Forget  
Martinsen, Ron1 Mem BC Tom Neary L134  
Martinsen, Ron1 Mem BC Chris Scalone E332  
Miccio, Rich6 Tom Gambino L163 - 9/11/01 - RIP  
Miccio, Rich6 L163/E325 - Woodside Warriors\*Nilsson Mike1 L 126  
Nilsson, Mike1 Remembering members of E303, L126  
Nilsson, Mike1 September 11, 2001. 343 - Never Forget  
Ragusso, Rob11 Honoring all members of E289  
Savarese Jim11 The Tin House Gang E-232/L176 BMA  
Savarese Jim11 Watkins St. E-231/L-120/44BN  
Savarese Jim11 Briggs Ave E79/L37/27BN  
Savarese Jim11 RIP Ron Quartuccio  
Tarantino Ron1 In Memory of Louis Tarantino

See next page for full instructions about sending in your Boosters....

**BY SENDING IN YOUR BOOSTER!  
YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT**

Becoming a Booster is simple. Just enter the name of your honoree and the message as you want it to appear. Each message is \$5.00 and runs for 1 year.

Example:

Your name and address

Your booster message:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Send your Booster. (\$5.00 per message) to:  
Mike Doyle, Financial Secretary  
5157 Silent Loop. Condo #314  
New Port Richey, FL 34652**

You may also find booster applications on our website:  
[www.okanefdnretirees.com](http://www.okanefdnretirees.com) or in our monthly newsletter

***OKANE BOOSTERS: reminder...if your number is a 12 it's  
time to renew! \*Indicates booster renewed.***

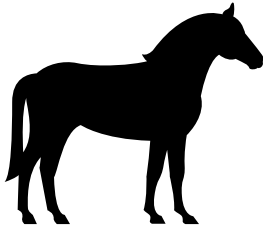
Boosters run for 12 months. The number following your name indicates when your Booster will expire. Thank you for your support. Anyone can be a booster. Family members, friends, etc. (Rev. 9/25)

**YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT**

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**BY SENDING IN YOUR BOOSTER!  
YOUR MESSAGE COULD BE HERE. SHOW YOUR SUPPORT**



**UPCOMING EVENTS**

.....  
• **WHOA.....**Sorry to announce that our  
• annual Day At The Races has been  
• cancelled for this year. We hope that we  
• can resume the fun in 2027.  
.....

**O'KANE FDNY RETIRED ANNUAL  
INSTALLATION DINNER DANCE:**

Mark your calendars for our Annual Installation Dinner Dance at beautiful Seven Springs Gold and Country Club. the fun starts with cash bar and seasonal snacks at 4pm, followed by a full dinner buffet and dessert. We are happy to announce that Cat Valentine will be entertaining us with her music and songs so bring your dancing shoes! Remember that friends and family are all welcome. Here are the details you need to know:



**Date:** Saturday, March 28, 2026

**Location:** Seven Springs Golf and Country Club  
3535 Trophy Blvd.  
Trinity, FL 34655

**Time:** 4pm Cocktail Hour/5pm Dinner Service

**Cost:** \$45.00 per person

**Payments and reservations need to be received by Tuesday, March 17, 2026.**

**Make checks payable to: O'Kane FDNY Retired**

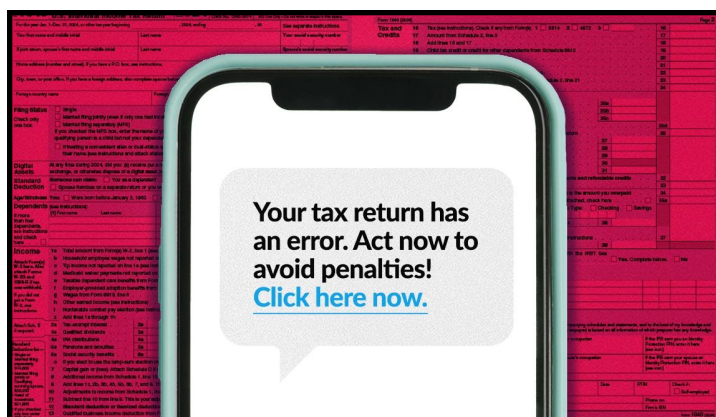
**Mail to: Louis Kikis, Event Chairperson**

**4973 W Breeze Cir**

**Palm Harbor, FL 34683**

## Tax Time Means Prime Season For Scammers

As the tax deadline approaches, scammers are eager to steal your money and personal information, whether posing as tax preparers or claiming to work for the IRS. In a March survey from LifeLock, 28 percent of participants said they'd been involved in a tax-related scam attempt at some point in their lives. Of those, 42 percent said the scams involved an IRS impersonator.



Have you gotten a text message that looks like this? **DON'T CLICK ON IT!** This is a scammer trying to get your information. **Know how scammers communicate.** Tax scammers often use urgency, fear, and enticements (big refunds) to manipulate victims. Here are some

samples that you might see:

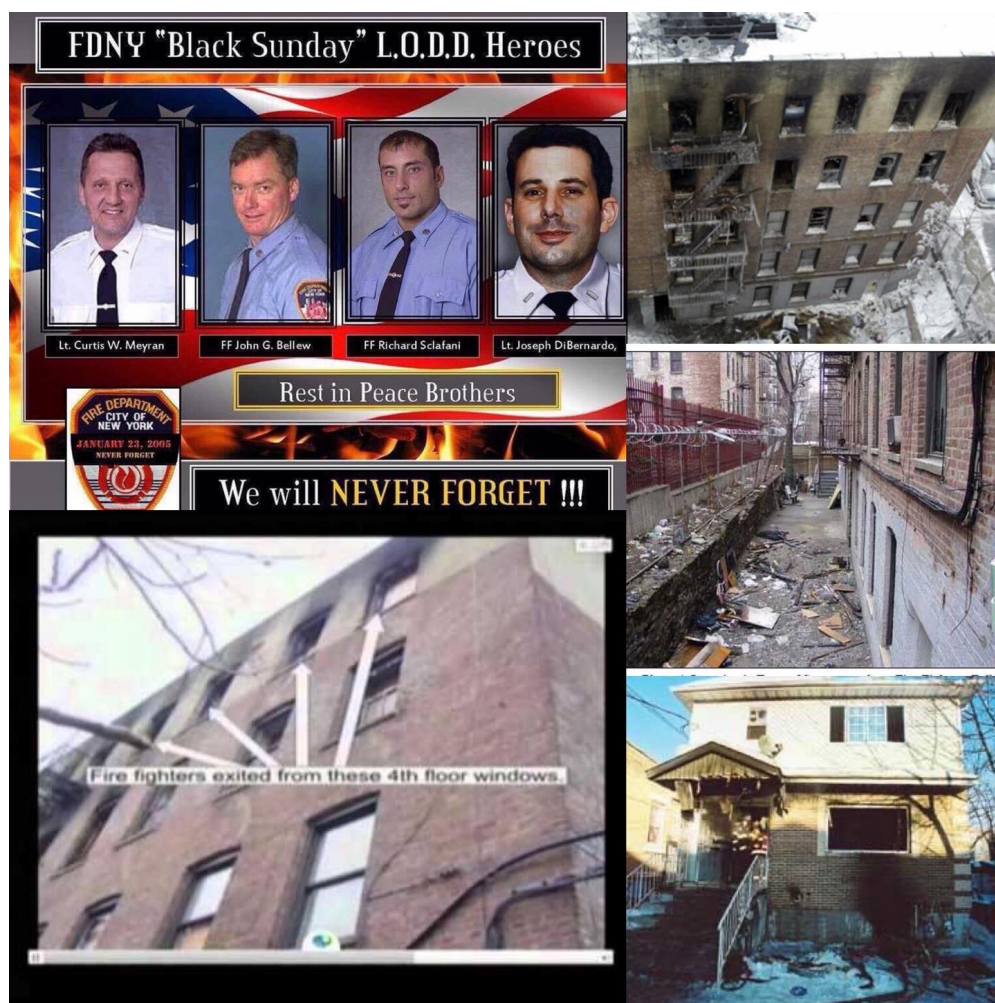
- "Your tax return has an error. Act now to avoid penalties!"
- "You're eligible for a \$5,000 tax refund. Click here to claim it."
- "The IRS has flagged your account. Verify your information immediately to avoid legal action."

**Know how the IRS communicates.** Unless you have been in contact with the IRA about back taxes, **the IRS will never call, or text, or email you to ask for personal information or requests payments.** If you receive a call like this, **HANG UP**, and don't click on links in emails or texts. The links could load ransomware or malware onto your computer or device.

**REMEMBER...IF YOU GET AN UNEXPECTED TEXT ABOUT AN IRS PAYMENT, IT'S A SCAM!**

## REMEMBERING THE "BLACK SUNDAY" FIRES, TWENTY ONE YEARS LATER

Thursday, January 23, 2026 marks 21 years since the tragic fires in the Bronx and in Brooklyn that came to be known as "Black Sunday." The two fires claimed the lives of four FDNY firefighters and left three others seriously injured.



It all started at 7:59am when a box alarm in the Bronx was called. It was a typically bitter cold and windy January morning, with a blizzard the day before blanketing the city. The fire started on the 3rd floor, with the cause undetermined but thought to be possibly an extension cord or space heater setting fire to a mattress. 3 alarms were eventually called: Engine Company 42, Ladder Company 33, , Ladder Company 27, and Rescue Company 3 were the first to be directly involved in fighting the fire.

6 FDNY Bronx firefighters were the first to enter the fire building (a 4-story structure built in the 1920's). Initial reports said occupants were believed trapped on the 4th floor, the floor above the fire. (The structure had been illegally subdivided using drywall partitions - a condition unknown to the firefighters at the time). Heat intensified, flashing through the door of the apartments, leaving the firefighters unable to find their way to the fire escape. They were forced to make the decision to jump from the 4th floor window to the ally below. All 6 jumped and sustained critical life-threatening injuries. FDNY Lieutenant Curtis Meyran of Battalion 26



and Lieutenant John Bellew of Ladder 27 died instantly. The other 4, Brendan Cawley, Jeff Cool, Joe DiBernardo, and Gene Stolowski, were severely injured with life altering injuries. Jeff Cool and Joe DiBernardo were permanently disabled and forced to retire. Joe Bernardino was later promoted to Lieutenant but, sadly passed away with line of duty injuries from the fire.

Later that same day in Brooklyn, at 1:37pm there was a fire in the basement of a 2-family home. People were attending a birthday party and reported smelling smoke. Firefighters from Ladder Company 103 responded and were investigating the source of the smoke but needed to withdraw when the heat from the source became too intense. All got out except for Firefighter Richard T. Sclafani. He was soon found unconscious on the stairs, and sadly pronounced dead bringing the total number of firefighter deaths to 3, the highest number in one day since the attacks of September 11th 2001.

We honor the memory of Lt. Meyran, Lt. Bellew, Lt. Di Bernadto, and FF Sclafani. We will never forget the supreme sacrifice of our members 21 years ago.

Following the tragic "Black Sunday" fires, the FDNY reviewed the events of the day and implemented many procedural changes including the return of personal safety bailout ropes for all personnel. Here is a summary of lessons learned and changes implemented.

### **Key Lessons Learned and Changes:**

- **Mandatory Bailout Gear & Training:** Reintroduction of personal safety escape ropes (NFPA 1983 compliant) for every firefighter, along with rigorous, repetitive training on emergency window exits.
- **Mayday Procedures:** Enhanced focus on immediate Mayday transmission, ensuring firefighters know how and when to call for help, and that it is prioritized.
- **Operational Discipline & Safety:**
  - **Team Integrity:** Strict requirements to maintain team continuity during interior operations.
  - **Situational Awareness:** Improved, consistent use of Thermal Imaging Cameras (TICs) to identify hazards.
  - **Communication:** Mandatory, regular progress reports from interior crews to the Incident Commander (IC).
- **Command Accountability:**
  - **RIT Deployment:** Rapid Intervention Teams (RIT) must be in place and ready before interior operations begin.
  - **Strict Command Functions:** Enhanced, thorough size-up by the initial IC to assess risks, such as building layout and fire conditions.
- **High-Rise/Wind Conditions:** Specific SOPs developed for fire fighting in high-wind conditions to prevent fire spread.

Black Sunday resulted in the first time since 1918 that the FDNY lost members at two separate, fatal incidents on the same day, prompting a major, lasting overhaul of safety protocols and equipment.



Rear view of Bronx apartment building and alley where firefighters were forced to jump to.



Illegal partitions in 4th floor Bronx apartment blocked fire escapes on January 23, 2005

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF LT. DIBERNARDO , his family created the **Lt. Joseph P. DiBernardo Foundation**, whose mission is to provide fire departments in need with safety training and personal life safety systems. For more information go to: [joeydfoundation.org](http://joeydfoundation.org).

## The Big Apple Is in a Deep Freeze...What Does That Mean For Firefighters?

As of late January 2026, New York City is experiencing an, "unprecedented" and prolonged "deep freeze," with temperatures remaining below freezing for 12 consecutive days, marking the longest cold snap since 2003. This extreme weather has severely impacted Fire Department of New York (FDNY) operations, forcing crews to battle blaze-related hazards in temperatures as low as 9 degrees, resulting in frozen equipment and increased fire risks.

### Key Challenges for Firefighters



- **Frozen Hydrants:** Extreme cold has caused water in fire hydrants to freeze, hindering fire suppression efforts.
- **Thawing Apparatus Deployment:** The FDNY is deploying specialized "thawing apparatus" trucks to melt ice inside hydrants and ensure water flow across all five boroughs.
- **Frozen Equipment:** Freezing temperatures are causing significant challenges, including ice accumulation on gear and equipment.
- **Increased Fire Risks:** The intense cold has led to multiple fires, including a 3-alarm fire in Staten Island and a major blaze in the Bronx that spread to adjacent apartments.
- **Demanding Conditions:** Firefighters are braving sub-zero wind chills to combat these incidents, often dealing with 11+ inches of snow from a preceding, record-breaking January 2026 blizzard.

### Operational Context

- **Long-Term Cold:** The deep freeze is expected to last until at least early February 2026, driven by a "Greenland Block" that is forcing Arctic air into the region.

- **Life-Safety Hazards:** The dangerous cold has contributed to at least 14 deaths in the city, with hypothermia suspected in many cases.
- **Emergency Response:** The FDNY continues to operate under high-stress conditions, with officials emphasizing the danger of the weather, which has also impacted neighboring Westchester County, where crews battled a blaze in Nodine Hills.

In summary, the 2026 deep freeze has forced the FDNY to utilize specialized, rapid-response thawing techniques to maintain fire suppression capabilities, as they tackle a high volume of dangerous fires in, "12 days of icy hell".

## **ICE..ICE..ICE BABY...Scenes From Around The City.....**





**SUPER SNACK...PIZZA ANYONE?**

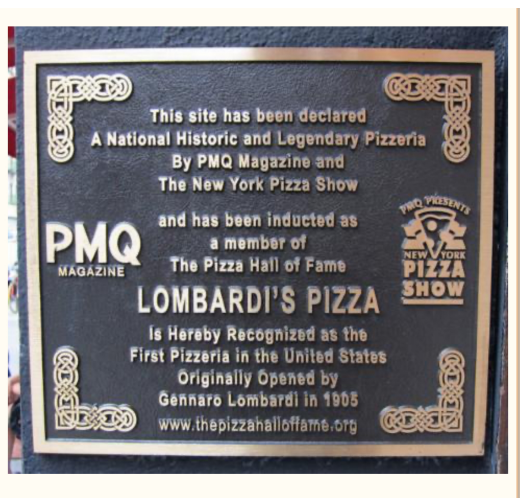
Almost everywhere we go all across the globe you'll find some version of this yummy Italian treat. Way back, centuries ago in Naples, Italy, the very first pie was born. The Pizza Margherita, whose red, white and green ingredients represent the colors of the Italian flag, was made in 1889 honoring Queen Margherita and the popularity of this modest slice has continued to grow and evolve.

Here in Florida, transplanted New Yorkers are always on the look out for the classic New York slice. Some agree that there is no comparison to the many versions of pizza we know today.

You can thank Italian immigrant, Gennaro Lombardi, for introducing this "tomato pie" to New York City back in 1905. Lombardi arrived in the United States from Naples. He began selling these pies to local factory workers from his grocery store in Little Italy. His pizza became so popular that he turned the shop into Lombardi's Pizza, which went on to become America's first officially licensed pizzeria. Still going strong, Lombardi's restaurant on Spring Street is one of the first stops for New York City visitors.

Here in Florida we have many styles of pizza which have dedicated followers as they stem from the many areas we have moved from. There is New England Style, Chicago and even Detroit, each with its own distinctive flavors and features. Whatever your fancy is, is there anyone out there who can resist a good slice?

With Super Bowl coming up, it should be on top of your list for football fun.! Mangia!





## DID YOU KNOW THIS?

STARTING IN 2025, MEDICARE SET A LIMIT OF \$2,000 ON HOW MUCH PEOPLE PAY OUT OF POCKET FOR COVERED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS EACH YEAR. THIS LIMIT APPLIES TO ANY MEDICARE DRUG PLAN YOU HAVE, WHETHER IT'S STAND-ALONE OR PART OF A MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLAN.

The \$2,000 cap includes everything you pay for covered medications - such as your yearly deductible (if your plan has one) and any copayments or coinsurance you pay when you pick up your prescriptions at the pharmacy or by mail.

Your drug plan will keep track of what has been paid by you and it will report on your progress toward the cap in your explanation of benefits.

QUESTIONS? Call the Medicare Hotline: 1-800-Medicare (800-633-4227)

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Hang in there folks....and keep your fingers crossed that that pesky ground hog does not see his shadow!

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