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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Private Equity's Impact on Firefighting

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.

Representative Jennifer O'Mara

OPENING REMARKS
10:00 a.m. Rep. Jennifer O'Mara, D-Delaware

PANEL ONE
10:05 a.m. Ken Felker, Chief
Springfield Fire Company

Jim Capuzzi, President
Broomall Fire Company

Q & A with Legislators

PANEL TWO
10:35 a.m. Thomas O'Donnell, President
Pennsylvania Career Fire Chiefs Association

Kevin Ressler, Board Secretary
Pennsylvania Professional Fire Fighters Association

Q & A with Legislators

PANEL THREE
11:00 a.m. J.C. Tedorski, Deputy State Fire Commissioner
Office of the State Fire Commissioner

Q & A with Legislators

Broomall Fire Company

March 25, 2026

The Broomall Fire Company is a volunteer fire company that services Marple Township, Delaware County, PA. The company was founded in 1923 and currently serves 11 sq. miles and almost 25, 000 residents of Marple Township. We provide fire and recue services for Marple including I-476, the "Blue Route". BFC also provides and receives automatic and mutual aid from our neighboring fire companies. We average over 750 calls per year.

Our goal is to replace our major apparatus on a 20-year cycle. Our current fleet of major apparatus includes a 2012 Pierce Ladder, 2017 KME Heavy Rescue Truck, 2018 Seagrave Pumper, and a 2023 Seagrave Squad.

We ordered the Rescue in March, 2015 from Kovatch Mobile Equipment Corp. of Nesquehoning, PA. The truck was delivered in July 2016, just after the Rev Group acquired KME. The purchase price was $631,218 and although the original contract stipulated a 380-day delivery was acceptable due to changes we requested.

On September 29, 2017 we signed a contract with Seagrave Fire Apparatus, LLC of Clintonville, WI for a Marauder Pumper with a purchase price of $600,000 and a 380-day delivery. The truck was delivered in August, 2018 without any issues.

In 2020, due to significant mechanical issues with our aerial apparatus we were forced to seek a replacement. After looking at the cost and excessive build time to purchase a new truck, for the first time in modern history BFC purchased a 2012 Pierce Ladder truck the was previously owned by the Arlington, VA fire department for $612,000.

In February 2021, BFC signed a contract with Seagrave Fire Apparatus, LLC of Clintonville, WI for a Marauder Pumper with a purchase price of $729,962 and a 380-day delivery. This truck was comparable to our 2018 Seagrave Pumper, just 22% higher in cost. This price included a discount if BFC made a 50% pre-payment when the truck started production. After numerous inquiries and several missed commitments on June 23, 2022, some 3 months beyond the original delivery date, BFC received an invoice from Seagrave for $364,981 (50% of purchase price), that we promptly paid.

On January 3, 2023 Seagrave sent a Notice of Surcharge requiring BFC to pay an additional 15% of the original contracted price amounting to $109,494. Seagrave relied on the legal doctrine of Commercial Impracticability found in the Uniform Commercial Code. BFC strongly objected feeling the doctrine did not apply and Seagrave's actions were detrimental to the safety of our firefighters and community. Seagrave would not negotiate and presented us three options:

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Cancel our order, pay the surcharge, or "wait and see if prices come down". BFC evaluated all options including seeking quotes from other manufacturers and bringing suit against Seagrave.

We subsequently found that all manufacturers contacted projected pricing closer to or in excess of $1.0 million for a similar truck with a delivery timeframe of 3 to 4 years. Since we were replacing a truck that was originally built in the 1980's and was of questionable reliability and realizing that bringing legal action against Seagrave would delay the urgently needed truck, BFC was left with no choice than to pay the "surcharge".

The truck was finally delivered in August, 2023.

I firmly believe that the consolidation of fire apparatus companies has negatively affected the entire fire service with skyrocketing pricing and extremely long delivery dates.

James M. Capuzzi
President
Broomall Fire Company

Kevin's PPFFA Testimony – House Democratic Policy Committee

3/18/26

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee. My name is Kevin Ressler, and I have been a professional firefighter for over 25 years. I am currently serving as Recording Secretary for my union, the Pennsylvania Professional Fire Fighters Association. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the growing equipment crisis we have been experiencing with the fire service and the impact this has on the stability of emergency services in our communities.

This crisis is driven by emergency services departments being consolidated, and the private equity ownership of equipment manufacturers. This shift has created serious public safety concerns for professional and volunteer fire departments across the Commonwealth.

In the 2010s, the fire truck industry was diverse, competitive, and had a wide range of independent sellers. Back then, the cost of an average fire engine truck was about $300,000 - $400,000. Today, a fire engine costs over $1 million. Since the 2010s, private equity firms have "rolled up" fire truck manufacturers, to the point where just three companies control about 70-80% of the market. The mergers and acquisitions of fire equipment manufacturers have led to this consolidation of the market. This means reduced competition among the existing manufacturers and leads and higher prices and low inventory for fire stations in desperate need of upgraded equipment.

Delivery times for fire equipment, or apparatus as we also refer to them, have doubled or tripled in the past decade while manufacturers have adopted concerning practices like "floating" pricing. This is where manufacturers increase the final price of the truck after it goes into production. Some U.S. Senators have accused these private equity firms of creating backlogs that are intentional. The CEO of one firm claimed that the backlog provides his company a competitive advantage, citing a "rare level of demand certainty and production planning visibility."

The International Association of Fire Fighters, the IAFF, and members of the U.S. Senate have raised serious concerns about the impact of private equity and the consolidated market for fire apparatus. They have alleged that these companies are engaged in price-fixing, consolidation through mergers, and practices that have driven up costs while delaying critical equipment deliveries. Private equity owned manufacturers continue to fail to expand production capacity, and in some cases even reduce it, despite growing demand from fire stations nationwide. This prioritizes financial gains over the reliability and readiness that the public expects of us.

These are unacceptable practices, and are a direct obstacle to the urgent needs of the fire service for safe and reliable commitment.

The actions of apparatus manufacturers have real world consequences for Pennsylvanians and the firefighters that serve our communities. Our firefighters are forced to use aging and outdated trucks because their department simply cannot afford new trucks with the current state of the apparatus purchasing market.

As a fire truck's life is stretched, it will eventually fall out of compliance with the National Fire Protection Association standards. The trucks require more frequent repairs that take them out of service, and those repairs are getting exceedingly more expensive as time goes on. This all leads to less fire trucks in active fleets, slower response times to life and death emergencies, and degraded readiness of the fire stations.

The rising cost of apparatus is also directly compounding an already critical staffing crisis identified in the PPFFA's 2025 statewide staffing survey. That survey found that engines in Pennsylvania are staffed with an average of just 2.29 firefighters, and trucks with only 2.07 – far below the NFPA 1710 minimum of four. These numbers are not just theoretical. They represent the current, everyday reality of fire departments across the Commonwealth.

As municipalities face multi-million-dollar apparatus purchases, these escalating costs are increasingly crowding out necessary investments in personnel. Instead of adding firefighters to meet national safety standards, departments are forced to rely on overtime, delay hiring, or reduce staffing further to balance budgets. This creates a public safety risk: understaffed crews responding to emergencies with limited and aging equipment, stretching both personnel and resources beyond safe and sustainable limits.

The bottom line here is that the conditions and action of fire apparatus manufacturers, and their private equity overseers, directly increase the risks to firefighters and the communities we serve and protect.

Evidence continues to show that these challenges are not the result of market forces, but of systemic failures that demand oversight and immediate correction.

Firefighters cannot do our jobs without the timely delivery of safe, modern equipment at a price that taxpayers can afford and proper staffing levels in our fire departments.

Thank you for your time today and for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.

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Testimony for the House Democratic Policy Committee

March 31, 2026

Office of the State Fire Commissioner

John “J.C” Tedorski, Deputy Fire Commissioner

Good morning, Chairman Bizarro, Representative O'Mara, and members of the House Democratic Policy Committee, my name is J.C. Tedorski, the Deputy State Fire Commissioner in charge of our Harrisburg Offices. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding the impact of market consolidation on the current state of apparatus manufacturing and supply. Part of my role with the Office of the State Fire Commissioner is to oversee our Low Interest Loan program for fire departments, which, in many cases, use our loans to fund a portion of their apparatus purchases.

The Pennsylvania fire service is in a crisis. The cost of acquiring the apparatus – the engines, ladder trucks and rescue vehicles – that allow our firefighters to do their jobs is unsustainable. The years of consolidations by apparatus manufacturers and price hikes are making the purchase of new fire apparatus impossible for many departments and, for those who *can* afford new vehicles, the waitlist to receive them is routinely several years.

Our office reviews, on average, seven loan applications per month for projects including both new and used apparatus purchases. Because most fire apparatus is built to a specification to fit the needs of the fire department purchasing the apparatus, a comparison of projects is not as straightforward as comparing prices to commercially available passenger vehicles. A review of average project costs by type of apparatus does, however, illustrate an alarming trend.

Our loan program tracks apparatus purchases by major category of vehicle. Aerials have some type of large ladder or tower attached to them, engines carry hose, water, and a pump, and tankers are primarily tasked with hauling water to scenes where no hydrants or other water source is available. Rescues carry specialized equipment for extricating entrapped individuals, from automobiles, collapses, or other circumstances.

Over the past three years, we have seen the average cost of a new aerial increase from $1.1 million to $1.5 million dollars, or a 36% increase. The cost of a new engine has risen from $680,405 to $845,452, which is a 24% increase. The average cost of a tanker truck went from $431,508 to $580,701, which is a 35% increase. The increase in the average cost of rescue trucks in our loan program was the most dramatic, rising over the last three years from $762,519 to $1,165,681. That's a 53% increase.

It should be noted that our low interest loan program does not provide a loan for the full cost of these projects. For new apparatus, our program only lends up to $494,942 or 50% of the project cost, whichever is less, for an aerial, $353,547 or 50% of the project cost, whichever, is less for an engine, tanker, or rescue. The fire department must find a way to fund the balance of the project total.

Many factors may be influencing the increase in costs in the apparatus industry. Increases in costs of raw materials like metal, increased sophistication of apparatus, and the economic forces of a reduction in the number of independent manufacturers in the industry, which creates less competition, all factor into the increase.

Historically, the fire apparatus industry in the United States was highly fragmented. As recently as the mid-2010s, there were roughly two dozen independent manufacturers competing in the market, many of them family-owned businesses with deep ties to the fire service.

Today, that landscape has changed dramatically.

Over the past 15 years, private equity firms have increasingly pursued a strategy known as a "roll-up," in which they acquire multiple competitors in a fragmented industry and consolidate them under a single corporate structure. While this strategy can improve efficiency in some sectors, its application in essential service markets—such as fire apparatus manufacturing—raises serious concerns about competition, cost, and public safety.

It is important to understand that just three companies REV Group, Oshkosh, and Rosenbauer now control roughly two-thirds to as much as 80 percent of the U.S. fire apparatus market, according to testimony provided to the United State Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs by Edward Kelly, General President of the International Association of Firefighters.[1] To illustrate the impact of consolidation on the fire apparatus industry, American Industrial Partners acquired and consolidated multiple manufacturers into what is now REV Group. These types of consolidations reduced the number of manufacturers supplying the fire community. However, the recent market changes go beyond large-scale consolidation. Some of the independent manufacturers have seen investment by private equity groups. For example, FWD Seagrave is currently a portfolio company of ELB Capital Management, LLC. Corporate ownership severed the close ties that many of the family-owned apparatus manufacturers felt with the fire service. This shift to more corporate-focused organizational structure has, in my opinion, made profit a larger component in the business relationship.

While we don't have any hard data specific to Pennsylvania to share with you regarding apparatus order wait times, I can say that anecdotally we are seeing longer delivery times on apparatus. It is not unusual for a loan application to be delayed because the manufacturer cannot provide a title for a vehicle or manufacturers performance certification letter that is required to execute the loan. The manufacturer often provides these documents closer to the delivery date of the apparatus. The International Association of Firefighters has estimated apparatus lead times have increased from one year to 4.5 years.

The cost increases for new fire apparatus have also had a secondary effect of increasing pricing in the used fire apparatus market. When you compare total project costs funded in part by our loan program for used apparatus, it shows an increase in prices. The average cost of used rescue

[1] Sounding the Alarm: America's Fire Apparatus Crisis - Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

trucks in our program increased from $248,333 three years ago, to $509,500, a 105% increase. The average cost of used engines went from $205,200 to $333,571 from 2024 to 2025, which is a 63% increase in just one year.

The increased costs of both new and used apparatus are definitely impacting fire departments in the Commonwealth. In both career and volunteer departments, the costs have caused many departments to become even more reliant on grant funding to purchase new apparatus. In the volunteer fire service, traditional fundraising methods: raffles, chicken dinners, and community events no longer raise enough money to make the payment on apparatus. These increased costs are causing more and more volunteer hours to be diverted to fundraising events, which takes away from hours available for training and response.

Thank you for allowing me to share what we are seeing related to the cost of fire apparatus and the impacts on the fire service in the Commonwealth. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.