

Joe Pilat serves as a Firefighter First Class (Technician) with the Annapolis Fire Department and is assigned to the department's Special Operations - Marine unit. A 20-year veteran of the fire service, he serves as an operator aboard Fireboat 36 and is involved in the department's maritime emergency response, training, and preparedness efforts throughout the Chesapeake Bay region.

Mr. Pilat's professional training includes the Port of Virginia's Robert E. Rumens Shipboard Firefighting School, Shipboard Firefighting Command School, Marine Firefighting Command School, and the Steven Todd Dooley Search and Rescue Forum. He holds certifications including Firefighter I and II, Fire Officer, Instructor, Rescue Technician, Hazardous Materials Operations, Cardiac Rescue Technician, Mate I and II, and Motor Vessel Operator.

Pilat serves as an instructor with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Shipboard Firefighting Program and is currently contributing to the development of the IAFF's 40-hour Shipboard Firefighting program. Locally, he developed a Shipboard Firefighting Awareness program for the Annapolis Fire Department that was delivered to all department personnel in July 2026. The program provides firefighters with an understanding of commercial vessel construction, shipboard fire behavior, vessel systems, operational hazards, and the unique challenges associated with responding to emergencies aboard commercial vessels.

Mr. Pilat is actively involved in the development of the Port of Baltimore Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT) and is also a member of the Port of Virginia Maritime Incident Response Team. His maritime work has provided opportunities to train and operate alongside the U.S. Coast Guard, port authorities, state agencies, regional fire departments, and private-sector maritime partners. He has participated in maritime training, exercises, and large-scale events focused on strengthening interoperability and the ability of land-based fire departments and maritime partners to operate together during complex vessel emergencies.

In addition to his operational responsibilities, Mr. Pilat serves as President of the Annapolis Professional Firefighters, IAFF Local 1926, a position he has held for five years following six years of service on the

union’s Executive Board. His leadership has included advocating for staffing, training, equipment, firefighter safety, and enhanced regional emergency response capabilities.

Mr. Pilat brings to the National Port Partners Emergency Response Summit a perspective shaped by both front-line maritime operations and more than a decade of IAFF labor leadership. As a union president and firefighter, he has experience advocating directly with local, state, and federal elected officials and policymakers for investments in public safety, specialized maritime training, and emergency response capabilities. He believes strengthening maritime preparedness requires not only well-trained responders and strong partnerships among fire departments, the Coast Guard, port authorities, government agencies, and private industry, but also effective advocacy to ensure decision-makers understand the unique risks facing our ports and waterways. His experience bridging the operational, labor, and policy arenas provides a perspective on how the fire service can build the relationships and support necessary to sustain maritime response capabilities before the next major incident occurs.