

Ann Arbor Fire Department

Quarterly Newsletter

www.a2gov.org/fire

January - March 2008

Message from the Chief

The joint committee for a functional fire protection agreement has presented their findings to the City of Ypsilanti Fire Chief, John Ichesco and me. We met with representatives from both city teams to discuss the findings. I would like to congratulate the committee on completing what may seem on the surface to be a simple task, but in reality, was extremely difficult! I certainly appreciate everyone's efforts. The next step in this process will be to submit a draft of ideas to the city administrator for approval and then develop an official legal agreement.

By definition, functional consolidation shall result in having departments continue to exist and retain their autonomy. At the same time, each will become more effective in service delivery and more efficient in providing those community services, thus helping to control total cost to their respective tax-payers. It is my hope that there are other areas we can work together in the near future. Some examples of other areas would be: training, fire prevention, apparatus maintenance, hiring, promotional testing, etc. We believe there can be substantial savings if we work together to eliminate some redundancies and build cost efficiencies.

There are still many details to be addressed before it can become a legal agreement, specifically, the crews need to become familiar with the policies and procedures of both departments in order to conduct operations in a safe manner. This proposal represents the most common discipline between the two departments: fire operations, as agreed upon by the committee as the best starting point.

One other key component to the success of the functional consolidation concept is having a central dispatch. We've recently made tremendous progress in this area and I believe that in the near future, we'll see even more progress toward this goal. I would like to see a central dispatch with a dispatch authority that includes career opportunities for civilian employees who are committed to the delivery of public safety.

A new committee is being formed to research and develop a similar plan with Ann Arbor Township. We must develop either a functional agreement or establish an agreed upon mutual response for newly annexed properties from Ann Arbor Township. Many of these properties are not easily accessed, do not have available water mains in the area, and in some cases have sub-standard road conditions which cause additional access trouble. We must develop procedures that will be specific to the new properties for their safety and protection.



Rescue

On February 22, the Ann Arbor Fire Department responded to 1010 Catherine for a report of smoke in a four-story apartment building. Although the call originally was thought to be for a kitchen fire, it turned out to be something much larger.

After searching several apartments, Captain Stephen Kreger and firefighter William Gamble discovered fire in one of the apartments. Firefighter Gamble fought the fire, while Captain Kreger was able to locate and rescue a victim.

The department received many accolades for this rescue:

"Please convey a belated note of appreciation to the firefighters who saved the young woman in Friday's fire. I saw today in the paper that she is still in critical condition, but she undoubtedly would have died had they not discovered her through very careful firefighting. Thank you."

—Joan Lowenstein

"I have received many compliments regarding the efforts of the Firefighters who responded to the fire on Catherine. Some compliments have come from rare but important people and places. Obviously it makes me extremely proud when you are recognized for what you do as a matter of duty to this city. Some of the compliments came because the Firefighters on the scene reluctantly accepted the praise and were humble in their success. You should be proud and know that you have made your chief very proud. Thanks for all that you do."

— Fire Chief Samuel Hopkins



Autism awareness training

The training division is proud to announce that it is hosting it's first ever "Autism Awareness Training for First Responders" on various dates in April in conjunction with Autism Awareness Month. The prevalence of autism is growing at an alarming rate, and the likelihood of crews responding to a call involving someone with autism is quite high. Autism is a complex brain disorder that often inhibits a person's ability to communicate, respond to surroundings, and interact with others. It affects each individual differently. One of 94 boys are diagnosed with autism which is more prevalent in boys than girls. Overall, one of 150 kids has autism.

The key topics to be discussed are: What is autism, how to recognize autism, how to handle emergency situations, potential hurdles for firefighters, and community awareness. It is important for first responders to understand and be able to identify autism or its characteristics, not only to provide the best response to the patient, but also for their own protection.

A decision was made to host this training based on the fact that people with autism have more medical conditions than an otherwise healthy person, they are more likely to have accidents such as drowning, and the homes of someone with autism may pose potential risks to firefighters if they are unaware of those risks i.e., reinforced windows, etc. The training will be conducted by Training Chief Steve Lowe and Carrie Miller who works at the University of Michigan Autism and Communication Center.

Hot wheels

Hot Wheels® has chosen the Ann Arbor Fire Department as a themed vehicle for an upcoming Fire Rod (Hot Rod) line of vehicles. These cars will be in the style of hot rods, but will have the department's crest along with the AAFD lettering. This program is expected to launch in early 2009, and the cars will be available at local stores that sell the Hot Wheels® brand cars.



Statistics (January 1 – March 26, 2008)

Call Type	Rescue/ Medical	False Alarm	Hazardous Conditions	Fire	Other
Number of calls	885	161	58	40	176
% of call total	67%	12.5%	4.5%	3%	13%

Total Calls: 1320



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Hurst test

Today's vehicles are constructed quite differently than they have been in the past. Cars and trucks are built with heavily reinforced high strength steels that can quickly become the enemy during vehicle extrication. Hydraulic rescue tool manufacturers, like Hurst, have been unable to gain access to vehicle parts of the future, which would allow them to design tools that can cut through the new "steel." On Feb. 18, all of that changed when a testing session occurred at Station 5.

Engineers from Ford Motor Company and Hurst Jaws of Life, met to experiment with different cutting tools and automobile parts of future Ford vehicles. Several lessons were learned from this meeting including: steel tends to fracture rather than shear; and the hydraulic pressure in the Hurst system fluctuates rapidly when the steel is being cut. The majority of the successful cuts made by available tools, happened with the Hurst MOC 2 cutter, which is the same model of cutter carried on Rescue 1 and Engine 6 of the Ann Arbor Fire Department.

Battalion Chief Kevin Cook commented that it was particularly impressive that these two companies came together to work with firefighters towards a common goal of rescuing victims in a timely manner. Based on the results of the test, Hurst engineers are working on a revised blade and tool design. Hopefully a prototype of the tool can be tested later this year, as the Ford engineers indicated. To help stay on the cutting edge of these types of efforts, the department is going to continue to bid to be the host for future tests.

HURST Cutter



An exercise in efficiency

Station 5 recently participated in an "Energy Conservation & Outreach" study conducted by the University of Michigan. Firefighter Ernie Close was the fire department liaison for the project. He worked with the plant operations division at the university to improve the overall energy efficiency of the building.

The following areas were studied: Lighting energy conservation, HVAC load reductions, HVAC distribution improvements, HVAC plant improvements, and the building tune-up to optimize existing equipment. The program is an extension of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Energy Star" program, designed to encourage energy efficient buildings and operational upgrades. Firefighter Close received a certificate of completion for his efforts, indicating that the upgrades are saving energy, preventing pollution and lowering operating costs.

Firefighter Close is also working with the U of M building services group to accomplish many other upgrades to the building. These include refinishing the tile floor, putting up new ceiling tiles, painting the ceiling grid, obtaining carpet runners, and many other improvements as well. A



A new sign has also been placed in front of the station, marking the address and identifying the building as the "University Fire Station." Lieutenant Ellen Taylor and Battalion Chief Kevin Cook have also joined the efforts to help improve Station 5. Everyone at Station 5 appreciates all of their efforts and looks forward to enjoying their improved surroundings once all the updates are completed.



Positive Feedback

- Paul Schreiber, the mayor of Ypsilanti, said he really appreciated the assistance and excellent job the fire department provided to Ypsilanti during the American Legion fire.



Ann Arbor Tower One and Ypsilanti Tower One are seen here using master streams at the American Legion fire in the City of Ypsilanti. Multiple units from the City and Township of Ypsilanti as well as Ann Arbor worked at the fire for several hours.

Highlights

Members of Ann Arbor Firefighters Local 693, along with the assistance of the Ann Arbor Visitors and Convention Bureau, have begun a campaign to host the 2010 Michigan Professional Firefighters Union (MPFFU) State Convention. This is a great opportunity to bring revenue into the local economy and show firefighters from all over Michigan and the nation what Ann Arbor has to offer! If chosen, the Four Points by Sheraton has been secured as the host hotel. The City of Detroit Fire Department is another possible contender to host the convention. It has been over 30 years since this convention has been held in Ann Arbor.

Thank you to all who are involved in this endeavor, including: Jim Adams, Mark Edman (committee chair), Craig Ferris, Steve Lowe, Jimmy Hodges, Mike Reddmann, Matt Schroeder, and Craig Sidelinger.

Who's who in the Ann Arbor Fire Department?

Brent Kostanko was hired into the Ann Arbor Fire Department 10 years ago. He became interested in the fire service due to the training he received as part of the Navy. Brent obtained his bachelor's degree in public safety from Siena Heights University in addition to an associate's degree in fire science.

Brent believes in the basics of firefighting and likes to lead by example. He really enjoys working with the probationary firefighters and helping to show them the ropes. He also agrees with the concept of functionalizing fire service to provide better, more efficient service to all communities as long as it does not affect personnel negatively. As with most members of the department, the biggest change he's seen since his start 10 years ago is the reduction of personnel.

Brent has a wonderful outlook on life. He's appreciative of every day, he adores his family and friends, and he loves his job. He has gone through two kidney transplants and battled cancer. As a matter of fact, this month marks his five-year cancer-free milestone.

Brent has been married for 12 years to his beautiful wife Carrie who currently is attending nursing school. They have four children ages 4 – 12: Olivia, Isabella, Thomas, and Madison. The Kostanko family resides in the Irish Hills area.

