

Ann Arbor Fire Department

Quarterly Newsletter

www.a2gov.org/fire

July - September 2008

Message from the Chief



You may have already heard about the new Fire Charter Committee. The committee has been formed to discuss issues that are important to firefighters, but often questioned by administrators outside of the department in regards to expectations and budget constraints. The committee wants to ensure that the citizens continue to receive a high quality of service. Members are as follows: Assistant Chief Ed Dziubinski, Assistant Chief Greg Hollingsworth, Battalion Chief Rob Vogel, Fire Inspector Al Perry, Driver/Operator Matt Hughes, Lieutenant Craig Ferris, finance liaison Stephanie Sharpe, Council members Leigh Greden and Margie Teal. I personally selected the fire department members based on a comfort level I have with these people, however, I hope that there are many volunteers, in the future, should they be needed. The city administrator and I will attend meetings as deemed necessary.

Attached, you'll find the team charter. Although I did not author this document, the words represent a commitment and a good starting point for the committee. There are many questions which the committee hopes to answer such as:

- What is the long-term plan for fire services?
- How does the purchase of expensive equipment fit into the plan and what funding sources are available?
- Can a regional fire services model be deployed?

Members of the department should feel free to contact committee members with ideas or suggestions and don't hesitate to contact me with any questions. Remember, this is not a part of negotiations and will not violate any contractual agreements. This is strictly a problem solving and planning team organized to allow for better service delivery for the community.

Fire Chief Sam Hopkins
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Open house

The department is hosting its annual Station 1 open house on Sunday, October 5 from 1 – 3 p.m. There will be some annual event favorites such as Cogs the Fire Safety Robot, Sergeant Smokey the 10-foot firefighter, special team demonstrations, face painting, and many other educational opportunities.

Although the open house at Station 1 will have the most activities of all the events, the sub-stations will also be hosting open houses. Citizens will have a chance to meet the firefighters in their neighborhoods and tour the stations that the firefighters live in during their 24-hour shifts. All of the substation open houses will be held from 6 – 8 p.m. on their respective days, see below:

- 10/6 - Station 3 at 2130 Jackson Ave.
- 10/7 – Station 4 at 2415 Huron Pkwy.
- 10/8 – Station 5 at 1946 Beal Ave.
- 10/9 – Station 6 at 1881 Briarwood Circle



Training updates

The training division recently held a toxic exposure training course to ensure that crews would recognize all hazards of smoke during a fire incident. Every year, hundreds of firefighters suffer heart attacks or some form of heart disease. Many of those heart attacks occur during, or within, one hour of a fire incident.

Overwhelming evidence indicates that hydrogen cyanide (HCN) is present in fire smoke more commonly and in greater quantities than previously believed due to modern materials such as: asphalt, cotton, foam, nylon, plastic, polymers, rubber, wool silk, which are common household items. HCN is 35 times more toxic than carbon monoxide (CO) and is also a by-product of smoke. HCN can also be odorless, as you must have a specific gene in order to smell it, and only 30 percent of the population has that gene. Scientific analysis of several fires over the last 20 years has shown higher levels of HCN in the victims' blood than CO. So what does this mean for the fire department?

The training division met with the medical control board to discuss the issue of HCN exposure and the risk to firefighters and what effects it may have on their hearts and possible long-term effects. The discussion revealed that local hospitals are not testing for HCN exposure or poisoning at this time. A meeting has been scheduled with the University of Michigan to share information about HCN exposure with the goal that there may be a study conducted to answer some of the unknown questions.

Personnel have been trained as to the risks and ways to avoid exposure through wearing Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) masks; and the incident commander is responsible for proper air management at fire scenes which includes constant air monitoring through the department's gas monitors. Two of the monitors also test for cyanide levels.

Firefighting on Waymarket

On September 2, 2008, the department responded to a structure fire at Briarcove Apartments on Waymarket which required more manpower than the department had for immediate availability. On an average day, there are 18 operations staff on duty. Each apparatus and respective crew members have specific assignments when arriving on a fire scene.

Rescue 1 was responsible for doing a primary search for occupants. The first arriving engine was assigned to be the first attack crew. They pulled the first supply hose and entered the apartment to find the origin of the fire. The second arriving engine supplies water from the hydrant to the first engine making the initial attack. One of the many responsibilities of Tower 1 is roof and window ventilation to prevent a flashover. Engine 4 arrived and pulled a third hose line to supply water and assisted with attack and overhaul.

Each time there are two people inside a burning structure, there needs to be another two on the outside with air packs and tools ready to go, as they are dedicated to rescuing the two people inside if needed. If a firefighter is in a MAYDAY situation, it takes approximately five to six firefighters to rescue them and enough personnel to continue attacking the fire. According to guidelines, after a firefighter has used two tanks of oxygen, they are required to rehabilitate, which means they have to be examined by Huron Valley Ambulance, for vitals and get oxygen, if necessary, as well as replenishing fluids.



During this particular fire, a mutual aid request resulted in the City of Ypsilanti sending one truck with four personnel and two trucks from Pittsfield Township with eight personnel. The department also issued a callback to other shifts within the department. A total of 35 Ann Arbor Fire department personnel were needed to work this fire in addition to firefighters from other local departments.

The battalion chief keeps a watchful eye as to any warning signs that the buildings' structural integrity and/or the fire is worsening. If, at any time, there are suspicions of the fire turning defensive, the crews are ordered out of the building to fight it from the outside. Once the fire is out, crews perform salvage and overhaul. Overhaul checks for any extension of the fire that may be hidden in walls, attics, etc. Salvage occurs when there are personal articles that have not been damaged; the crews will cover up those items with tarp so that they are not damaged during the salvage process.



The fire department's involvement concludes after the fire is out, overhaul and salvage are complete, and the fire inspector has completed the investigation. The department calls the Red Cross if occupants need assistance with food, clothing,

and shelter, and the department also gives an "after a fire" packet to the occupant to help them find a company to assist with securing the scene.



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Role of a driver/operator

A driver/operator is assigned to a specific apparatus at the beginning of each shift, dependent on their certification levels. It is their responsibility upon beginning the shift to inspect the apparatus to ensure that the vehicle and its equipment are in proper working order; this includes proper pump and ladder operations.



DO Jim Adams assisting Lt. Ferris to change his airpack

When responding to an emergency, the driver/operator has many responsibilities. First and foremost they must transport the rest of the crew to the emergency scene. They verify the address and determine the quickest route. They communicate with the crew to ensure that everyone is ready to respond and properly restrained with safety belts. On the way to the scene, the company officer will tell the driver/operator any specific orders they need to follow upon arrival to the scene, depending on the nature of the emergency.

Upon arrival to an emergency, the driver/operator responds to any orders the company officer may give such as: retrieving equipment from the apparatus, deploying hose lines, setting up hydraulic rescue tools, raising ground and/or hydraulic ladders, or helping the firefighter carry EMS equipment. If responding to a structure fire, the driver/operator is needed to don personnel protective equipment; he/she will accompany the company officer and firefighter for fire suppression duties.

Specific duties assigned depend on the type of emergency as well as the type of apparatus. For example, the Rescue 1 driver/operator is responsible for the following: driving, operating the pump, deploying hose lines, setting up extrication equipment, stabilization vehicles before extrication can begin, and setting up lights for night operations. The Tower 1 driver/operator is responsible for driving, operating the pump, deploying hose lines, operating the tower platform, operating ventilation fans, and setting up lights for night operations.

Woman of distinction

Each year, the Girl Scouts of Huron Valley Council, honor women who exemplify the values of girl scouting in their professional lives and volunteer commitments. This year, the Girl Scouts honored the 2008 Women of Distinction at a luncheon on September 11 at the Marriott Eagle Crest resort in Ypsilanti, MI. To date, 56 women have received the award and Captain Gretchen Virlee was among the 2008 honorees.

The following are the standards necessary to receive the award:

- Must have a positive, active presence in the community that reaches beyond the scope of her professional position.
- Must exhibit, through her career or volunteerism, a philosophy that parallels the Girl Scout purpose of promoting leadership, responsibility and decision-making skills.

Captain Virlee's award included a letter of congratulations from President Bush. She also received a document from Governor Granholm which recognized her accomplishments as a leader as well as a golden clock engraved with her name. Congratulations, Captain Virlee.



Training Captain Gretchen Virlee



Fire hose testing

Hose testing has been completed by Fire Catt LLC, and crews can count on attack and supply hoses that are compliant with all current standards. Thank you to the chief, assistant chiefs, and the union for the initial business plan approval. Thank you to Field Operations Manager Karla Henderson for allowing the fire department to utilize the Wheeler Center for testing. A special thank you to Master Mechanic Mike Masten for coordinating it all and getting the hoses to the testing site. Finally, a big thanks goes to the crews for all the support during the testing process.

Statistics (January 1 – October 1, 2008)

Call Type	Rescue/ Medical	False Alarm	Hazardous Conditions	Fire	Other
Number of calls	2,857	572	257	210	603
% of call total	63%	13%	6%	5%	13%

Total Calls: 4,499

Who's who in the Ann Arbor Fire Department?

Driver/Operator Mark Luick began his career at the Ann Arbor Fire Department in 1995. Both his uncle and father were Ann Arbor firefighters. When Mark graduated from Chelsea High School, he volunteered at the Rockville, Maryland fire department as a student live-in for two years. He was also a member of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue in Montgomery, Maryland for three years.

Mark enjoys being a driver/operator for Rescue 1 because of the call volume and all the specialized equipment. In order to drive the apparatus, he has to know how to use and operate all of the equipment and their functions. Getting the crew to the scene quickly and safely is obviously very important, but being able to operate the equipment in different ways is also important. He also participates in the departments technical rescue team as well as the county team and the Ann Arbor Fire Departments Honor Guard.

Mark would like to see a heavy rescue added back to the fire department fleet instead of an engine, as well as additional staffing. He would also like the department to have jurisdiction over all of the area highways and have more of an opportunity to use all of the tools on Rescue 1. Someday, Mark would like to see a county or regional fire and rescue service with a centralized dispatch and command structure.

On a personal note, Mark enjoys woodworking, traveling, and helping his family on the farm. Mark and his wife, Cathy, have three dogs and a cat that live with them on a farm in Chelsea.

