

Fire Department

Philip E. Crombie, Jr.
Fire Chief

The Department responded to 693 incidents between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008. These included structure, vehicle, and outside fires (109), motor vehicle accidents with injuries or fluid spills (114), non motor vehicle rescue calls (9), non fire hazardous conditions (42), hazardous materials spills or leaks (46), carbon monoxide detector activations (33), open burning complaints (15), smoke or odor investigations (21), mutual aid responses (12), business and residential fire alarms (164), and public assistance calls (128).

Deputy Chief David Papp retired in March 2008 with 35 years of service. As a result of this retirement, several functions with the department were reorganized. Assistant Chief Richard Giansanti took over the personnel and human resource operations. Captain Chris Hack now heads Operations which includes our firefighting staff under the leadership of seven Lieutenants. Captain Brian Peck took on the additional responsibility for Safety. Captain Peck is also responsible for our radio communications and several key administrative functions.

Lieutenant John Hofmann was promoted to Captain and assigned as the Training Officer. Captain Hofmann is responsible for the delivery of our weekly training sessions. Two Firefighters were promoted to Lieutenant. Lieutenant Mike Giroux was assigned to Engine 3 at Station 3. Lieutenant Steve Toffolon was assigned to Squad 5 at Station 2 and is responsible for the Rescue Squad operations. Like all the department officers, Captain Hofmann, Lieutenant Giroux, and Lieutenant Toffolon were promoted after successfully completing both written and oral exams.

Construction on the department's new ladder truck proceeded this year. Delivery was expected in November 2007 but was delayed due to the sale and subsequent temporary bankruptcy of the manufacturer, American LaFrance. We received the new truck in August 2008. After several months of intensive training the new apparatus will be put into service.

Roger Hildebrand achieved 40 years of service in 2007. Roger was presented with both state and local proclamations at a reception in his honor. Roger currently manages our public information activities and is the department's photographer. During his years of service Roger has held the rank Firefighter and Lieutenant.



Congressman John Larson visited the department in March 2008 to announce passage of the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act. The bill exempts benefits to volunteer fire and medical responders from federal income tax. These benefits play a large role in the retention and recruitment of our volunteers. Congressman Larson chose South Windsor as the location for his announcement because the fire department and Town Council have advocated for this legislation since 1999. The Congressman presented the department with copies of the legislation and the pen used by President Bush to sign the bill.



The Fire/Ambulance facility replacement project continued to await approvals from State and Federal authorities. Several alternative designs using the existing site were proposed to these agencies. In May and June 2008 the Town Council worked to secure a new site given the difficulty in getting State and Federal approval to build on the existing site.

A new Command vehicle was placed in service. This four wheel drive Ford Expedition serves as the "mobile office" for the Incident Commander. The vehicle is equipped with state of the art radio

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and computer communications. The fire officer managing the incident can now communicate directly with a wide range of agencies that may be involved. Mobile computer connectivity allows immediate access to information on hazardous materials, building plans, weather, and other data that may be needed to make timely decisions to mitigate the emergency. A fire department officer is assigned as the Incident Commander and is available to respond 24 hours a day seven days a week.

The department completed an upgrade to our radio communications system. This upgrade improved coverage in several areas of town where signal strength was weak. It also improved our communications capabilities with other town emergency services and with surrounding towns. With funding support from the Town Council we were able to complete a three year portable radio improvement project in a single year. All firefighters operating inside buildings are now equipped with portable radios for emergency communications. In the event of a structural collapse or other emergency firefighters can now communicate individually with the Incident Commander.

A new recruitment program was unveiled in May 2008. It is expected that this will be an annual event. Thirteen of our fellow townspeople made the decision to become members of the fire department this past year. This is up from six the previous year in part due to this focused recruiting effort.

2008 marks the 70th anniversary of the formation of the South Windsor Volunteer Fire Department. Since 1938 a group of dedicated citizens has been providing fire and rescue services to the Town. The fire department is currently staffed by more than 100 residents who volunteer their time, energy, and enthusiasm to help their fellow citizens. These individuals contributed over 24,000 hours of time to the community. We encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about volunteering, either as a firefighter or in an administrative, support, or fire prevention education capacity, to join us at Fire Headquarters any Tuesday evening.

