

THE RESPONDER

— Dedicated to Our Community, Our Profession and Each Other —

WINTER 2014



IN THIS EDITION

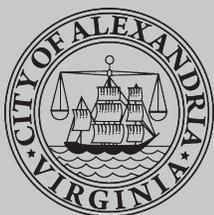
- Feature Story 1
- Community Engagement 2
- EMS News 3
- Training News 4
- Fire News 5
- Fire Prevention & Life Safety Tips .. 6
- Stats 7
- Administration & Logistics News .. 8

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This newsletter is written
and compiled by the
Alexandria Fire Department's
Community Services Unit



AFD Delivers Holiday Cheer

By Hilary Gates

In keeping with long-standing annual traditions, members of the Alexandria Fire Department, with help from the community, donated hundreds of toys and holiday help to local families in need. Heading two of those efforts were Captain Thurston McClain and Firefighter Michael Chandler, both of whom have been directing these campaigns for years.



AFD attends BPSPA Children's Christmas Celebration.

BFSPA Children's Christmas Celebration

Those who attended the Alexandria Children's Christmas Celebration this year at the Hilton Mark Center Hotel were treated to quite a show: a DJ, clowns, cheerleaders, games, and a visit from Santa. Sponsored by the Black Fire Service Professionals of Alexandria (BFSPA), this annual event focuses on making the kids feel extra special.

"We feed them, they get waited on by the Hilton staff, it's their day," said McClain, who was assisted by about 20 other firefighters playing Santa's helpers on the afternoon of Dec. 21.

McClain brought the kids and their families into the ballroom for a day of fun and gifts. He paid a small fee to the Hilton for the event, but said that the day is so full of giving that the BFSPA ends up with toys left over that are saved for the following year.

To the tune of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," Santa entered the room and the kids lined up by age groups to receive their toys.



Chip Myers and Cyndi Lake as Santa and Santa's helper.

Alexandria Firefighters Holiday Toy Drive

Apparently, "Santa" has never really said no to Chandler's requests for help.

"He is very generous with his time," said Chandler, who has been running the Alexandria Firefighters Children's Holiday Toy Drive since 1999. Santa has been played for years by Medic Chip Myers. Founded approximately twenty years ago by retired Captain Paul Scaffido, this toy drive has grown to be hugely successful. Because he receives so many donations, Chandler has been able to expand the list of recipients beyond the original sole recipient, INOVA Alexandria Hospital and its pediatric patients.

The drive begins just before Thanksgiving, when Chandler gathers donations to provide a full Thanksgiving meal to an entire family from the city's Battered Women's Shelter. Then, as the cash and toy donations continue to pour in during the next month, Chandler and other department volunteers eventually donate goods to city organizations,

Continued on Page 3

Continued on Page 2

Community Engagement

BFSPA Delivers Holiday Cheer

Continued from page 1

This year, McClain formed a new partnership with VeloCity, a bike shop on Mt. Vernon Ave. Employees of Velocity and the Bicycle Pro Shop, a longtime donor, refurbished dozens of bikes for the BFSPA to donate to the children.

Groups from a variety of city recreational centers attended this event including kids from the Lee Center, Charles Houston, Cora Kelly and even some from D.C. and from the Alexandria city shelters. McClain credits his long-time supporters for helping the BFSPA affect so many.

"We turn no one away," said McClain.

The effects of this event are everlasting. In over a decade of conducting this toy drive, McClain has stayed in touch with some of the attendees. He is touched by their gratitude and also personally understands their emotions.

"When I was a kid, I went to a holiday party and it has stayed with me," McClain said. "[The kids and their parents] see me and they never forget, even the ones who are grown. For them, it's a special deal."

Alexandria Fire Hosts Annual Open House

By Shawn Gore

In observance of Fire Prevention Week, the Alexandria Fire Department held its annual Open House event on Saturday, October 12. Visitors were able to get a first-hand look at how the Department operates. Attendees met city firefighters and paramedics while learning about fire safety and prevention. Employees at each of the nine stations got creative with demonstrations, performances, and tours that provided visitors with basic knowledge of the roles and requirements of firefighters and paramedics.

The open house event also included opportunities for children to spray a fire hose, tour apparatus, learn how to call 911, and more.



Firefighter Durant Cephers giving a fire hose lesson.



Firefighter Brad Strowman giving a truck tour to Alexandria Elementary School students.

National Fire Prevention Month

By Shawn Gore

In observance of 2013's fire safety campaign, city firefighters and paramedics discussed fire safety and prevention to 4th grade students in Alexandria Elementary schools' throughout the entire month of October.

The Alexandria Fire Department and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) want to remind local residents to "Prevent Kitchen Fires." According to the NFPA, kitchen fires are the leading cause of home fires and have been selected as the focal point of this year's campaign. Fire Prevention Month reminds us of all the serious fire hazards present in our communities, homes and workplace and how to prevent them from starting.

The curriculum focused on the job duties of firefighters, smoke alarms, home escape planning, 911 calls, and the common types of fires and how to prevent them from happening.

Five Fire Safety Quick Tips

- Always stay in the kitchen when you are frying, broiling or grilling food.
- Keep a pan lid or a cookie sheet nearby whenever cooking. Cover a burning pan with either of these in the event of a fire.
- Never pick up and move a burning pan from the top of the stove.
- Install a fire extinguisher near the exit door from your kitchen. If a stove top fire is small enough, use the fire extinguisher to put out the fire.
- Keep the cords to all electrical appliances wrapped so they do not hang over the counter, tempting a child to pull on them.

Alexandria Firefighters Holiday Toy Drive

Continued from page 1

ALIVE! and The Campagna Center, in addition to visiting the hospital.

More than anything, walking through the hospital with Santa is an experience Chandler cherishes.

"When Santa walks in and hands the kids a toy, the looks on their faces is something you'll never forget," he said. "We go through the emergency room with our toy bag, too. The staff likes it as much as the kids do. They're always glad to see Santa."

After the pediatric unit at Alexandria Hospital closed years ago, the toy drive moved its philanthropic efforts to the hospital's NICU, where every patient, and sometimes patients' family members, receives a new blanket.

Chandler insists that he not be given credit for doing all the work, as it takes numerous people to reach as many as 150 beneficiaries, as it did this year.

"We have a lot of generous people in this city," he said.

EMS NEWS

Medics Set to Graduate From 28th EMS Recruit School

By Hilary Gates

The 28th EMS Recruit School is on track to graduate 14 medics from training on February 13 at 7:00 p.m. at the Masonic Temple.

The recruit class began on November 11, 2013, and has thus far completed extensive training ranging from advanced life support courses to operations of emergency vehicles to Department history. Most recently, the 14 recruits completed their community service project, in which they chose to adopt and support a local family in need of help during the holidays.

EMS lead instructor David Fox focuses on teaching recruits the city's EMS system and procedures, such as responding to calls, city streets, landmarks, and procedures for hospital call-ins and transfers of care. To this end, recruits are tasked with passing a daily written quiz and must maintain an 80% average on all testing, in addition to successfully performing drills and practice calls.

To ensure the recruits get adequate exposure to the intricate workings of the fire department, Fox and co-instructors Tracy Eichelberger and Amy Stephens make training as comprehensive as possible. For example, by riding on fire apparatus, recruits learn not only about station life, but also gain insight into the integral role firefighters play in EMS calls, as well as on non-EMS calls.

While in school, recruits are also required to maintain a high level of fitness. For the past three years, CrossFit has been the standard for AFD's recruit schools. Firefighter Sean Europe heads this effort, with strength and conditioning workouts supplemented by yoga and running sessions. This combination effectively makes recruits very sore, while

improving their overall level of fitness.

Fox said that he hopes that existing department members will assist the new medics as they work to become valued and productive members of the organization.

"The recruits are working hard to become an asset to our ranks," he said.

Upon graduation, recruits are assigned to Field Training Officers on the four EMS shifts throughout the city, beginning their internships to become Advanced Life Support providers for the City of Alexandria.



EMS Recruit School medics delivering Christmas gifts.

New Medic Units Now in Operation

By Hilary Gates

Thanks to four new medic units, the City of Alexandria is better prepared to respond to the needs of its citizens and visitors. In addition to replacing aging apparatus, the units make it possible to maintain three rotational or reserve units at all times, improving the department's responsiveness to large-scale incidents and ability to conduct routine vehicle maintenance on the units.

At a cost of about \$220,000, each new unit mirrors the black-and-red paint scheme and equipment layout of the existing Horton-designed medic units that were deployed in 2010. The first of the three new units was placed in service on December 17 at station 207 with stations 206 and 202 receiving units shortly after. The remaining unit is designated for station 210 upon its opening scheduled for later this year. Some fire stations needed their exhaust venting systems redesigned, which slightly delayed the units' deployment.

In addition to state-of-the-art equipment, the new units feature a siren called the "Howler." Essentially a siren that people can feel, the Howler produces a low-frequency tone capable of vibrating vehicles and alerting drivers to the approach of the emergency vehicle. This siren is used in conjunction with the existing audible sirens.

All fire department members received training on the layout and operation of the new units to assure familiarity. While the patient compartments of the units remain the same as the existing Horton units, the motor and transmission were downsized, according to Logistics Battalion Chief Robert Robinson.

"We wanted to standardize the layouts, but we wanted a smoother ride," he said.



TRAINING/ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EMS Continuing Education

By Michael Gerber

In December, the Department's Advanced Life Support providers heard from a range of speakers during a continuing medical education class. U.S. Army Lt. Col. Scott Campbell spoke to the medics about treating patients with autism. Campbell, who has a son with autism, has been teaching first responders and military personnel about autism for several years. His talk included videos, personal stories, and advice for fire department personnel who may interact with patients or patients' family members with autism.

Other guest speakers included Jennifer Miller, a supervisor with the City's detox facility, and a cardiac nurse who spoke about patients living with a left ventricular assist device (LVAD). AFD Paramedic Mario Weber reviewed some case studies on respiratory emergencies and Dr. Joseph Marfori, the medical director, provided an interactive session on EKGs using the Department's recently purchased TurningPoint response cards.

Active Violence

By Michael Gerber

In the fall, all operational members of the department attended active violence training organized by a committee of Department subject-matter experts. The class addressed various aspects of responding to active shooters and other similar incidents, including communications, law enforcement procedures, and medical treatment of victims. These trainings will continue as the nation, region, and City adapt to new thinking in the way fire and EMS address these incidents, including finding ways to protect the safety of Department personnel while still providing medical care as quickly as possible.

FIRE NEWS

Six Alarm Fire

By Andrea Buchanan

When a six-alarm fire caused \$6 million in damages to a warehouse at 801 South Pickett Street on Labor Day, the Alexandria Fire Department knew where to turn for help. As always with fires that size, firefighters from neighboring jurisdictions came to supplement the more than 50 Alexandria firefighters and medics on the scene. But for a significant fire, the investigation into the cause can sometimes be as time-consuming and difficult as extinguishing the flames. So Alexandria Fire Marshals requested assistance from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Agents arrived while the fire was still smoldering, and the ATF National Response Team (NRT) came the next day.

The NRT is composed of veteran special agents who specialize in post-blast and fire origin-and-cause investigation; forensic chemists; explosives enforcement officers; fire protection engineers; accelerant detection canines; explosives detection canines; intelligence support; computer forensic support; and audit support. The teams worked alongside investigators from the AFD Fire Marshals Office to reconstruct the scene, identify the origin of the fire, interview witnesses, and sift through debris to obtain evidence. The origin and cause investigation was concluded on Tuesday, September 10, 2013.

Although fires of this magnitude are rare—this was described as the largest in the area since the events at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001—the ATF team was able to integrate seamlessly into Alexandria’s investigation, in no small part, because AFD Assistant Fire Marshals Andrea Buchanan and Russell Furr serve as Task Force Officers with the Northern Virginia Regional ATF Task Force. This is just one example of how local, state, and federal agencies work and train together in the region, leading to a stronger response both before, during, and after significant incidents.

350 S Van Dorn Street Fire

By Russell Furr

On the afternoon of August 27, a worker in apartment 420 at 350 South Van Dorn Street called 911 to report that there was a fire in the apartment. When the first Alexandria Fire Department crew arrived, they found the apartment filled with thick smoke and fire. A second-alarm was requested due to the intensity and location of the fire. Crews were able to extinguish the fire, which had extended into the ceiling, before it spread to any neighboring units. One firefighter was treated for a medical condition on scene and no injuries were reported.

The AFD Fire Marshal investigation found that the fire was caused by the ignition of a material being used by a contractor working inside of the apartment at the time of the fire.

Five individuals from the apartment were relocated with the assistance of Red Cross. Additionally, the building property manager decided to keep the entire building unoccupied due to residual smoke odors and the remaining residents were also relocated.



AFD on scene at the 350 S. Van Dorn St. Fire.



A small portion of the team assembled to investigate the origin and cause of the fire.

FIRE PREVENTION & LIFE SAFETY TIPS

FIREPLACE OR WOODSTOVE INSTALLATIONS

- Contact Alexandria Department of Code Administration (703.746.4200) to get required permits prior to installing a woodstove or constructing a fireplace in your home.
- Check the manufacturer's recommendations to ensure the stove you are installing is the proper size for the area you are heating. Always ensure any appliance you purchase is listed by one of the testing laboratories, including Underwriters Laboratory (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM).
- When selecting a stove, ensure that the space where you are installing the stove will have a 36 inch clearance from any combustibles.
- If you are not installing the stove on a non-combustible floor, install an approved floor protection device that extends 12 inches beyond the stove on the sides and back and at least 18 inches from the side where the wood is placed into the stove.

CHILD-PROOFING YOUR HOME

- Install a latch on your fireplace or woodstove doors to keep children from opening.
- Remove all combustible items from the fireplace/woodstove hearth; this would include newspapers, blankets or pillows.
- Install a fireplace gate in front of the hearth. This will keep toddlers and children a safe distance from the fireplace or woodstove.



PROPER DISPOSAL OF ASHES

- Ashes can stay hot for several days. When disposing, always place them in a metal container with a tight fitting lid; never dispose of them in a paper bag or cardboard box.
- Ashes should never be cleaned out of a fireplace or woodstove with any type of vacuuming device.

FIREPLACE AND WOODSTOVE MAINTENANCE

- Always ensure you completely open the damper before starting a fire in your fireplace.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene, charcoal lighters or any type of flammable liquid to light or re-light a fire.
- Place a fireproof rug in front of the fireplace to keep sparks or embers from reaching carpet or wood floors.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WHEN USING YOUR FIREPLACE OR WOODSTOVE

- Your chimney and flue pipe should be inspected before each burning season to ensure it is clear of debris, the surface is clean and there are no cracks or missing mortar.
- Installing a chimney cap will prevent debris, as well as small, fuzzy and flying animals, from entering your fireplace or home. Also ensure the top of the chimney is clear of tree limbs.

SAFETY TIPS FOR USE OF FUEL BURNING APPLIANCES

- Have your oil or gas furnace serviced and inspected each year before heating season, and never utilize an appliance that is questionable or in need of repair.
- When utilizing stand alone devices such as kerosene or LP Gas heaters, ensure you have a window or door slightly open to allow fresh air to enter the room.
- If you install any type of heater that burns a fossil fuel, contact your local building official to ensure the item is installed to the proper building code.
- Never cook on a charcoal grill or gas grill in your home, garage, camper or tent.

FALL 2013 RUN STATISTICS

	UNIT	EMS	SUP	TOTAL	2013 YTD	2012 YTD
Station 201	E201	114	217	331	1,319	1,336
	<i>Total</i>			331	1,336	
Station 202	M202	420	110	530	2,073	2,177
	U202	0	1	1	18	32
	<i>Total</i>			531	2,209	
Station 203	E203	166	190	356	1,347	1,255
	T203	38	225	263	947	478
	<i>Total</i>			619	1,733	
Station 204	E204	174	201	375	1,352	1,422
	*M204	93	31	124	707	904
	T204	27	336	363	1,414	1,393
	<i>Total</i>			862	3,715	
Station 205	E205	207	300	507	1,976	1,966
	M205	547	145	692	2,651	2,737
	<i>Total</i>			1199	4,703	
Station 206	E206	232	292	524	2,317	2,423
	M206	518	133	651	2,744	2,870
	RS206	47	98	1175	399	820
	<i>Total</i>			1320	6,113	
Station 207	E207	240	265	505	1,987	1,950
	M207	429	116	545	2,222	2,386
	<i>Total</i>			1050	4,336	
Station 208	E208	399	371	770	2,920	2,870
	M208	556	155	711	2,723	2,818
	T208	82	337	419	1,576	1,656
	<i>Total</i>			1900	7,344	
Station 209	E209	167	196	363	1,403	1,349
	H209	1	16	17	80	72
	U209	0	1	1	10	191
	<i>Total</i>			381	1,612	
Total			8193		33,101	

(*M204=M204,M213, M214)

ADMINISTRATION & LOGISTICS NEWS

Station 210 Update

By Matthew Bosse

Construction for Station 210 is ongoing and the building is on schedule to be completed early this summer. Station 210 will allow AFD to better serve the community by providing effective emergency response services for the Eisenhower corridor. The critical items now are pouring the first floor concrete slab on grade, and the first floor masonry wall installations which are both scheduled to be completed in January.

The station will also house the Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) Repair Shop which will be relocated from its current location at station 207. The station will be staffed with a medic unit, engine, air unit, and the ethanol response foam units. The Joshua A. Weissman Professional Development Center will continue to be used to conduct all recruit training as well as other training and professional development. The additional space will allow relocation of the EMS simulation lab from station 202 to the PDC East, creating a great learning environment for the majority of our EMS training.



ALEXANDRIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

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