

Scottsboro Fire Department

Annual Report FY 2013-2014

To the Mayor, City Council, and the Citizens of the City of Scottsboro

As always the fire department's annual report is opened with sincere appreciation to the city administration and citizens for continued support. The mission of the fire department could not be met at the quality level expected without the financial commitment and personal support of all these parties.

The fire department experienced an administrative transition this year with the retirement of Chief Chris White. Upon beginning my tenure as Fire Chief in February this year, we set out to further increase our public commitment to prevention and education, and also focus on opportunities for administrative improvement while continuing to advance on the professional, quality public service we have historically provided to the community. Part of that administrative transition is reflected in the submission of an annual report based on the fiscal year as opposed to the traditional calendar year. We believe a 12 month review in line with the fiscal year will provide a solid compare-contrast tool for department accomplishments and goals as they relate to the annual budget.

Administrative: Through an intense process of open and honest discussion with each member of the department, we identified the core values of the fire department and developed a mission statement. This process involved multiple individual and group discussions and brainstorming, ultimately resulting in a unanimous agreement by the department's officers on the following core values and mission statement.

Core values: Professionalism, Integrity, Accountability, Honor, Pride

Mission Statement: *“The Scottsboro Fire Department is committed to professional, quality public service by preserving the lives, property, and environment of the community through education, prevention, and protection; honoring the traditions of the fire service and training for the continually advancing dynamics of emergency services.”*

We also implemented a six-month informal evaluation and a self-evaluation for employees, in order to provide more regular feedback and offer each individual the opportunity for continual personal improvement. The Operating Guidelines and Procedures are in the final draft stage and should be implemented in the first quarter of FY14-15. The procedure of ensuring a department officer was available for all responses city-wide was also put into place, allowing the groundwork for incident command and accountability systems to be enhanced.

The department applied for \$245,000 in FEMA funding to replace aging firefighting and safety equipment. This grant application made it to the final stages of funding, but just recently was ultimately turned down by FEMA. As the next funding cycle approaches, we are reevaluating our needs compared to the funding priorities and will continue to pursue funding opportunities.

Response Analysis: The department made a total of 1971 responses to emergencies during the fiscal year. This is a slight increase from 1912 responses during FY12-13. The distribution of those responses is as follows.

- Firehouse One (Downtown) answered 989 emergency calls accounting for 50% of all responses.
- Firehouse Two (South Broad) answered 603 emergencies accounting for 30.5% of responses.
- Firehouse Three (Lakeside) answered 379 emergencies accounting for 19% of responses.

This indicated a slight increase in the percentage of responses by Firehouses Two and Three, but overall the distribution of calls is relatively stable in comparison to previous periods.

There were 95 fires which were suppressed throughout the period. This accounts for roughly 5% of all emergency calls and is an increase from 82 the previous period. Of those 95, 36 were some type of business or residential building fire.

A total of 174 responses (8.8%) were considered service calls. These include assisting other government agencies, investigating smoke scares or smells, assisting disabled or invalid citizens, or otherwise providing public assistance.

303 (15.3%) responses were made to false or 'good intent' calls. These are often times the result of an uninformed citizen 911 calls. Good intent calls have been consistently more common in our department and throughout emergency services with the influx of mobile phones.

False fire alarms accounted for 87 responses. These are typically the result of a malfunctioning alarm system and not malicious, normally resulting in no emergency found at the scene or being cancelled by the alarm company or owner.

Less than 2% of all responses were to other hazardous conditions, storm assessments or citizen complaints.

Emergency Medical Services accounts for 70% of all emergency calls with 1371 over the previous period. These include responses to vehicle accidents and specialized rescue situations. Of those, 690 were either Basic Life Support or Advanced Life Support provided to our citizens. Other responses included assisting ambulance crews, searching for lost or missing persons, and removing entangled patients from vehicles or machinery.

It should be noted that all emergency responses are reported as the type of situation found at the scene and not as the situation dispatched. Likewise, we have added information requirements to our reporting protocol in order to have more complete information for analysis in the future.

Rapid intervention is a primary factor in delivering adequate emergency services. Both fire suppression and emergency medical situations require quick action to reduce the loss of life or property. The average response time of the first arriving engine company to an emergency call inside the city limits is four minutes and forty-five seconds (4:45). This response time allows our personnel a good opportunity to help lead to a positive outcome for our citizens.

Property at Risk versus Fire Loss: The simple reporting of fire losses in a dollar amount does not give a comprehensive view; rather the fire loss as it relates to the total property at risk from a fire allows a much more quantifiable analysis. The total dollar value of property involved in actual fires (structures and vehicles) during the fiscal year was \$4,352,900. The total loss from fire during this same

period was \$1,725,905. Based on this, the department had a favorable impact upon the property at risk where a fire occurred by a value of \$2,626,995.

Training/Continuing Education: The complexities of firefighting and performing technical rescues or EMS procedures safely and effectively require continual training. Each month members of all ranks are required a minimum number of individual training hours, in addition to learning new skills and participating in company-wide drills. During the previous fiscal year, members logged 8929 individual training hours and participated in 22 company drills. These exercises and drills are performed in-house with a relatively low cost per hour ratio.

The Alabama Fire College is the certifying agency in the state for Firefighters. After each firefighter gains the minimum training, they are encouraged to pursue further development through additional state certification courses. During the period, we were able to have members participate in the following certification courses; Rope Rescue, Fire Instructor, Apparatus Operator, Fire Officer. Twenty-three different members attended and gained certification in 5 different courses. These certifications were at a cost of approximately \$2.42 per student hour.

We were fortunate to provide a modern tactics and strategy course to 35 members. This course was customized to our needs and operational capacity, which was an added benefit because canned courses are often based upon department sizes much larger than ours. The cost was \$29 per department member and provided a major benefit to both our younger and elder members.

Ten of our officers were able to attend Incident Command and Fire Service Leadership training conducted by nationally recognized authors and fire service leaders at a cost of less than \$50 per person. This offered considerable value to our leadership, considering these speakers and instructors are known across the nation and like seminars can cost up to \$300 per person.

Additionally, specialized courses were attended on Fire Investigations, Code Enforcement, Administrative Planning, and Instructional Techniques. Each member also completed the required training and skills verification for Emergency Medical Technician re-licensure and 3 employees increased the EMT Provider license to a more advanced level.

Public Education: With one of the new objectives identified by the mission statement being to improve public education efforts, there is little data to compare previous periods or the first few months of this fiscal year. We have changed the reporting procedure for public education contacts so that we can continue to advance in this area. Public education and fire prevention have proven to be to most cost effective way to combat the occurrence of fires and fire deaths.

Throughout the period, engine companies and other department members made contact with 983 school aged children in a setting to address fire safety. This is usually done through scheduled visits to schools and other programs or through group scheduled fire station tours. All members play an active role in helping educate children and cater the educational message to the age group.

Additionally, the department made at least 18 other official public contacts at events like the Catfish Festival, local Triathlons and baseball tournaments, and others. It isn't possible to accurately estimate the number of positive contacts made during these events, but we realize the legitimate value of being a part of community activities and being seen as public servants.

Fire Prevention: Fire prevention is as important as fire suppression, and we have continued to put additional focus on prevention efforts. The Fire Marshal reports 525 inspections were conducted over the fiscal year, some of which were re-inspections of former violations. Fire Marshal Bryant conducts all building plan reviews for the department as they relate to the fire code, and conducted 34 of those plan reviews during the period.

There were another 632 consults to the general public, business owners, local officials and others by the Fire Marshal. These contacts are hard to document and define, but are a vital part of maintaining working relationships with the community, be it civilians or others in public service.

Upcoming Goals: We have identified certain areas to improve upon throughout the organization over the next fiscal year. My first priority is to see full implementation of the Operating Guidelines and Procedures, including additional firefighter safety procedures. Additionally, we will continue to pursue federal grant funding and are actively looking into available private grants that are available.

With the achievement of putting Guidelines and Procedures in place, the training division will be able to focus on tangible and defined areas that we can advance. Training Officer Lockard has identified three majors areas for focus over the next year; scene management and communication, firefighter accountability and rescue,

and pre-incident planning. We will continue to meet ISO training requirements, but intend on matching our defined needs to meet the requirements of ISO. Plans are also being made for two state certification courses to be held in-house the first half of the upcoming year. We aim to have each eligible member certified in Aerial Apparatus Operations and also offer an Incident Safety certification.

A significant goal from Fire Prevention is to increase the number of educational contacts we have with the public. Additionally we are in the process of evaluating methods to increase routine fire inspections.

With considerable changes in the ISO grading process, we are looking to take steps to prepare us for an evaluation. We plan to conduct an internal assessment of how our services and the new requirements match, and developing a feasible plan of action that will allow the fire department to be in a position to lower the insurance rating.

In closing, I want to reiterate our appreciation for the continued support of the Mayor, Council members, and other city administration. Likewise, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the outstanding work done by the members that make up this department. I am continually impressed by and proud of their commitment to the department and community. It is because of their positive work ethic and customer service attitude that this department is successful.

Respectfully submitted,

Gene Necklaus, Fire Chief