

THE SIMSBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF MAY 12, 2014

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report Of The Fire Chief for the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. In my absence I thank Deputy Chief Mike Jepeal for presenting my report this evening. The Town of Simsbury and Simsbury Fire District continue to be supported by a well-trained and able bodied group of Volunteer residents that make up the membership of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. A tradition & service that started 70 years prior in 1944, residents have stepped forward to volunteer time and effort to be trained in firefighting, vehicle, swift water, high angle, confined space and trench rescue, hazardous materials incidents and other potential manmade or natural disasters that could impact our community.

I would like to share a few highlights of the past year:

Our current membership stands at about 100 active members, which include 9 junior firefighters. We are also supported by 35 members of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company's Ladies Auxiliary. During the past calendar year we accepted 7 new Junior Members and 10 new Probationary members. In addition we had one member retire to Honorary Life Member status and one who returned to active service after a brief retirement period. The tradition and strength

of our volunteer force is seen through the numerous 3rd generation firefighters who are proud to continue the family tradition of volunteering their service to the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. A notable highlight this past year was Paul Kelley stepping down as Captain having served at that rank for over 5 years. During this time Paul supervised both the West Simsbury and Main Fire Stations and was instrumental in overseeing the operational challenges during the rebuilding of the Main Station a few years ago. Paul remains active as a firefighter and I thank him for his continued dedication and service. Michael Brown was promoted to Captain to fill the vacancy that was created.

The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company participated in a test recruitment program that was sponsored by Connecticut and International Fire Chief's association and made possible through a Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Association grant. This Volunteer Workforce Solutions program was designed to use cutting edge geographic and demographic information in order to more precisely find and communicate to those who may be willing to volunteer their time as a firefighter. While the program had limited success in true recruitment numbers our participation resulted in a great deal of valuable information that will help in future recruitment efforts not only locally but state and nationwide.

For the first time in over three years we did not have to deal with any major storms or flooding in the area. However, we still responded to 668 calls for assistance from the community. In order to be prepared to handle each and every call in a swift, effective and professional manner it requires a great deal of training and preparation. Regular Monday night training drills are held

each week. In addition to regular Monday Night Drills our Training Division reported that during the year we had 10 members successfully complete the 160 hour CT State Firefighter 1 / Haz Mat Operational Certification , 2 members successfully complete the 100 hour CT State Firefighter 2 Certification, 4 members who successfully completed the CT Certified EMT training, 4 members who successfully completed Hazardous Materials Technician Certification, and 2 members who successfully completed the CT Rope Rescue Core training. We trained and licensed 6 new apparatus drivers over the year. In addition the Training Division hosted a State of Connecticut Haz Mat Operational certification class where 19 members became certified, and we also hosted a State of Connecticut Confined Space Rescue class where 5 member completed certification.

To aid in the development of firefighting skills through the use of realistic live fire training, improvements were made to our training building in Weatogue which included installing stainless steel wall and ceiling panels in the structure.

Firefighter development begins early through our Junior Firefighter program which is offered to Simsbury teens from the ages of 15 to 18. Through this program we instill the value of volunteering to the community, teach fundamental firefighting support skills and fire behavior theory which will help them to fully participate as a firefighter when they turn 18. In addition we support our members continued education through our academic leave program which allows firefighters who are attending school away from home to continue their membership and training when they return home for visits or summer breaks.

Beyond the training and readiness of our members, we rely on the support of equipment and apparatus to get the job done. Our fleet management program continues to excel with regular maintenance and preventative care being performed by the fire districts' full time mechanic. This program provides for timely work on our fleet and significantly reduces down time as this work is done on site. This past year we replaced our 30 year old and aging vehicle lift in our maintenance facility. The new lift can now accommodate the size and weight of our tower ladder and tanker truck for servicing. We continue to have a third party DOT safety inspection check of our apparatus and our aerial devices, ladders and hoses are tested annually and certified by an independent testing agency to ensure compliance to NFPA safety standards. Our pumps are also tested annually to NFPA standards to ensure optimum performance and reliability. In addition, each apparatus is assigned to a member who serves as an apparatus engineer and is responsible to conduct weekly readiness checks on our fleet and equipment. These checks, which are also a part of our ongoing maintenance documentation, ensure each and every apparatus is ready to respond fully equipped and functional. This past year purchasing agreements were signed to replace Engine 5 and Engine 6 which have reached the end of their life cycle. The two new engines are expected this coming fall.

In addition to our ongoing maintenance of equipment to maximize its value and life, we also look at new safety standards and technology that require us to upgrade or replace equipment sooner. Fire gear for our firefighters for example is inspected annually and is now required to be replaced every 10 years for our interior firefighters. At a cost of almost \$3,000 per set of firefighting gear we take seriously the care and maintenance of this equipment. Similarly our Air Packs which our firefighters must wear in hazardous atmospheres are at an age where we

need to plan for replacement which will also allow us to take advantage of new standards and technologies which help keep our firefighters safer. This replacement program has been identified in this year's capital budget through proposed funding over the next couple years which will allow us to replace all the packs at once which makes training, maintenance and use much easier.

Beyond responding to emergency calls and training we remain committed to the community through a number of company events. We continue to host the Simsbury Celebrates Torchlight Fire Truck Parade, participate in the June High School Graduation Ceremony by providing a color guard of members all of whom are alumni of the high school. We participate in the annual Memorial Day parades in Tariffville and the town center. We host the annual Fisherman's Breakfast on the opening day of fishing season serving several hundred fisherman and families. We also co-host with the Ladies Auxiliary the annual Fire Company Golf Tournament which raises funds for charities and helps support special equipment purchases by the Fire Company.

I can't thank enough the officers, firefighters and juniors members for the hard work, dedication and professionalism they continue to give The Fire Company, The Fire District and the community. I would also like to thank the members of the Ladies Auxiliary for their continued support of our members during emergencies. I wish to acknowledge and thank the employees of the Simsbury Fire District for the outstanding level of support given to the Fire Company through the Fire Marshall's Office, dispatching, and maintenance of our fleet and facilities. I thank the Officers of the Fire District and The District Commissioners for their continued

support and commitment to ensure our fire company is well equipped with the necessary resources to properly respond to emergencies and to do it safely. And finally I want to thank our tax payers for their continued support in funding the dollars needed for today's fire and emergency services.

In closing I remind the residents of Simsbury that our website at www.simsburyfd.org continues to report on the Fire Company and Fire District activities and provides valuable public information on fire safety and emergency preparedness.

Respectfully Submitted,

James A. Baldis, Chief of Department