

CITY OF MILTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



2010 ANNUAL REPORT

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2010 was a good year, with relatively few real challenges to the City of Milton Fire Department, and afforded a great opportunity to consolidate accomplishments of the previous year, placing the department in a very stable position for coming years. While emergency response activity was down somewhat from the prior year, members remained quite busy with many ongoing projects, including fitting out the new fire station to complete all design features. This new facility, dedicated and occupied on September 11, 2009, offers greatly improved capabilities of which the department has taken great advantage throughout the year.

EMERGENCY ACTIVITY

After a number of major, noteworthy incidents in 2009, 2010 was a year of relative calm, with very few incidents requiring more than the response of the initial alarm assignment. The total number of emergency calls decreased by over 6%, down to 1,475 calls, from 1,572 the previous year. This decrease reflects a slowing in the past few years of the overall 4.3% average annual activity increase over the last 10 years.

In keeping with the long standing trend, Rescue calls this year made up an increasing majority of our emergency calls, now totaling 1,194 calls, or 81% of our annual emergency activity. Rescue calls include: medical emergencies such as strokes, heart attacks, falls, etc.; all vehicle accidents including those that involve entrapment requiring forcible extrication with specialized hydraulic tools such as the "Jaws of Life"; and rescue calls like a child locked in a vehicle, elderly who have fallen and need help back into bed, and even the occasional animal rescue. In 2010 the department responded to 1,020 medical rescues, 126 vehicle accidents, and 48 other rescue calls.

Fire responses, while always a relatively small portion of our total emergency activity, are our primary responsibility, and actually are the segment of our responsibility that requires the greatest resources, in terms of equipment, training and personnel. Although the vast majority of fire related incidents are quickly handled by the on-duty crew, we must always respond with the capacity to bring the full capabilities of the department to bear rapidly to effect rescue, protect exposures, and quickly bring a well-developed working structure fire under control. As we can never know when the next "big one" will occur, we must constantly maintain the readiness necessary to manage that incident. This includes continuous training of personnel and maintenance of vehicles and equipment to ensure that all is ready at a moment's notice. This year we responded to 232 fire related calls, amounting to 16% of our total responses. These included 23 structure fires, 8 vehicle fires, 10 brush or wildland fires, 156 false alarms or good intent calls, and 35 other fire related calls, such as illegal burning.

Our smallest category of emergency response, hazardous condition calls, make up only 3% of our emergency activity, but represents potentially the most dangerous aspect of our operations to both our members and the public. These include: natural and liquefied petroleum (LP) gas incidents; electrical problems such as downed power lines, arcing lines, and transformer fires; fuel leaks and spills, and all other hazardous conditions such as chemical releases, train derailments, building collapse, and terrorist acts. These incidents potentially involve very dangerous agents, present almost endless complexity, and often require responders to begin operations with very little information in a very dynamic environment. In 2010 the department responded to 49 hazardous condition calls, including 21 gas incidents, 14 electrical incidents, 4 fuel leaks or spills, and 10 other hazardous condition calls.

On 97 occasions last year, we were dispatched to an emergency call while one or more units were already assigned to a previous call (concurrent calls). This means that over 6.5% of our emergency calls were received while we were already responding to, or on the scene of, a prior emergency call. On seven occasions one or more of the concurrent calls occurred in conjunction with mutual aid provided to another jurisdiction. On two occasions another department was requested to respond to an incident within our jurisdiction while our resources were committed to another call. In every case, however, an appropriate response was made without undue delay, and no calls have gone unanswered.

On several occasions Engine 23 was required to respond to a medical emergency in place of Rescue 23, which was managing a previous call. These incidences of concurrent calls occasionally results in instances in which Engine 23 is forced to respond to fire calls with fewer than its normal crew complement of four firefighters, creating extreme functional difficulties in addressing the immediate needs on the fireground.

MUTUAL AID

The maintenance of effective mutual aid agreements is a crucial element in our overall ability to meet the needs of our citizens. While we are able to manage the vast majority of emergency calls with on-duty personnel, supplemented when necessary by the recall of off-duty personnel, incidents do arise wherein the resources of the City of Milton Fire Department alone are not sufficient to manage the situation. In these situations we must call on the support of surrounding fire departments to develop a coordinated response structure. During calendar year 2010 the department provided mutual aid to other departments on 39 occasions, and received mutual aid on 11 occasions, amounting to 2.6% and .75% of total calls, respectively. The number of incidents in which mutual aid was provided remained constant while the number of incidents in which mutual aid was requested and received decreased from the 2009 total of 21 instances.

EQUIPMENT ISSUES

Vehicle maintenance issues presented some very serious challenges throughout the year. Our department maintains a rather small fleet of somewhat aging apparatus, and it seems that age and hard service have combined this year to result a high number of vehicle failures, resulting in extended time out of service. Our front-line fire engine, Engine 23, is a 1998 Cyclone II Pumper manufactured by Emergency One Fire Apparatus in Ocala, Florida. Our second-due fire engine is a 1986 Pierce Suburban Pumper, with open "jump seats" and limited capabilities. Our reserve engine is a 1979 Pierce Telesqrt with 50' ladder, an older vehicle with very limited capability. Our front-line rescue, Rescue 23, is a 2001 Super Lynx Midi-Pumper manufactured by Emergency One Fire Apparatus in Ocala, Florida. This is backed up by a 1984 E-One Mini-Pumper with minimal reliability. With this very limited depth and redundancy of our fleet, if one piece of front-line apparatus is out of service, we must continue to operate with the next piece of apparatus, leaving us with somewhat limited capabilities and without second-due or backup apparatus to respond to any additional or subsequent calls.

Owing to this situation, it has long been our policy to restrict our availability to provide mutual aid to surrounding departments whenever front-line apparatus is out of service. This policy means that our department's rapid response capabilities are not available to assist surrounding departments during these periods. While in normal years this occurs only rarely, and generally for short periods of time, during 2010, according to Santa Rosa County Emergency

Communication Center records, we were unavailable for automatic mutual aid 20 times, for a total of 75 days. These periods included 17 days in June while Rescue 23 was out of service for pump repairs, 21 days in September while Rescue 23 was out of service with a blown engine, and 14 days in December while Engine 23 was out of service awaiting replacement of a custom machined bracket for a belt idler. Although at no point was our ability to respond to an emergency within the city diminished, during these periods we did not enjoy our full capabilities and could not provide support the surrounding departments. Given the age of our front-line apparatus, this trend poses some serious concerns, and must soon be addressed through a schedule of programmed replacement of apparatus in order to avoid lapses of service capability.

ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Having moved into our new fire station in September of 2009, much time was spent in 2010 carrying out finishing details throughout the building and adjusting operations to make the most of design features in this state of the art facility. Secure wireless internet and integrated computer connections were established throughout the building, allowing vastly improved computer access and data processing to support all fire department operations and training. Modern audio/video projection systems were installed within the classroom to allow all types of media presentations to be offered. A new radio antenna was installed on the hose tower to support a VHF base radio station located in the watchroom.

The diesel generator formally located at the city's wastewater treatment plant was installed within a new enclosure, with a hospital rated muffler, to provide complete backup power for the fire station during hurricanes and other power outages. In conjunction with the generator installation, a new 1,500 gallon diesel storage tank was installed to provide fuel for the generator and also augment our current 530 gallon vehicle dispenser, providing a reliable supply of fuel for all fire department operations.

The installation of the hoist and trolley system in the hose tower was reworked to afford an adequate means of raising and hanging fire hose to dry once it is washed after each use. This system is integral in allowing us to maintain our fire hose, a staple of our operations, through many years of service. The original installation was not adequately attached to the building's structural members and began to fail during routine use within the first year. A more substantial track was constructed and secured to the tower's structural members to support the hoist. The upper platform was reconfigured to afford additional room for handling the hose, and the hose racks were remounted to provide a much more stable platform for drying hose.

Advancements in training have also been made over the past year. Firefighter Scott Snowden, assisted by the other members of B-shift, constructed a fire sprinkler training prop adjacent to the rear driveway that allows members to get hands-on training in working with activated automatic fire sprinklers. This prop, which consists of fire sprinkler piping and a variety of actual sprinkler heads, can be supplied with water from a fire engine to create the same water flow that would occur during a fire in a sprinklered building, providing the only opportunity to practice the rather intricate task of "wedging" a sprinkler head. Through an EMS grant from the State of Florida, the department acquired a fully jointed, properly weighted "Rescue Randy" training mannequin. This mannequin, which weighs nearly 200 pounds, allows for realistic search and rescue training without subjecting another member to the risks of serving as the "victim."

TRAINING

As always, training remains a vital part of the fire department's normal activity. With the wide array of situations to which the department is called to respond, it is imperative that all members of the department remain current and proficient in all areas of firefighting, basic life support, technical rescue, hazardous materials, etc. In accordance with the department's annual training calendar, each member undergoes a minimum of 20 hours of in-service training each month. In addition to this company training, many members have participated in additional specialized training. All members of the department received recertification in CPR and First Responder or EMT as applicable.

With the availability of an excellent classroom facility, and a cadre of trained instructors, the department has begun to offer for-credit fire service classes internally, taught by members of our own department. In the first of these classes, Lt. Jim Custred taught Fire Service Course Delivery, and seven members of the department attended this course, obtaining the training necessary to attain Instructor Certification or completing tri-annual recertification requirements. Chief Reble and Captains Vinson and Devine all used this course to satisfy their tri-annual Instructor and/or Inspector Certification renewal requirements. Firefighters Peyton Blackledge and Daryl Auerbach both obtained certification as Emergency Medical Technicians, giving us at least four EMT's on each shift, and ensuring that all apparatus responds with at least one certified EMT at all times.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

While internal training is a crucial element of department operations, external public education remains a very important element of the department's overall fire prevention program. The department operates with a stated goal to, "Put ourselves out of business through fire prevention and public education." While a lofty goal indeed, the department does consistently see a positive impact from their efforts toward educating the public. We would like to think that the reduced number of emergency calls this year is at least partly attributable to our success through public education. The department attempts to offer a diversified public education program in an effort to reach all age groups throughout the community. Fire Prevention is taught through school programs, station tours, fire drills, fire extinguisher demonstrations, fire prevention classes, informational displays, and our Fire Safety Puppet Show. During 2010 the fire department conducted 26 school classes, reaching 811 students, 4 fire extinguisher classes, reaching 86 persons, 1 fire drill, reaching 35 students, and 32 other programs, including station tours, reaching 3092 people, for a total of 63 programs reaching 4024 people.

Among these programs were: *Fire Extinguisher Selection and Use* classes held for Santa Rosa Health and Rehab, Covenant Hospice, and Santa Rosa County School System Food Service Employees; *Marine Fire Safety* conducted for USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 1-8, and the United States Navy Sea Cadet program; our *Fire Safety Puppet Show* at the annual Public Safety Night aboard Navy Housing Whiting Pines and at the Christmas with a Firefighter at the new fire station. Station Tours, which were once a major portion of our public education program, had been almost entirely curtailed due to the condition of the old fire station. With the occupancy of the new facility, with full handicap accessibility, we have resumed a regular program of station tours and again make this a vital part of our program, providing a memorable and impactful learning experience for school aged children.

Our department provides Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid Classes to target groups and the general public. With the new classroom facility in the new fire station, we have been able to increase this program to offer a regular schedule of public classes, and again offer the program to all city employees. We generally offer CPR and First Aid to the public on the first Saturday of each month, and will gladly arrange special classes for groups that desire such training. Through the department's Training Center, headed by Lieutenant Randy Hendrix, 124 individuals were taught CPR, including 66 city employees, and 30 were certified in First Aid.

FIRE PREVENTION AND LIFE SAFETY

The City of Milton Fire Department is also responsible for enforcement of the Florida Fire Prevention Code and Life Safety Code. Chief Reble serves as Life Safety Officer and Fire Official for the City of Milton. With the slow economy, development, and the resulting demand for inspections of new construction and new business had dropped off considerably. In 2010 this activity rebounded slightly. Chief Reble conducted 47 Life Safety Inspections, 24 follow-up Inspections, 31 construction related inspections, 5 pre-plan inspections, and 49 plan reviews, totaling 156 inspections and reviews, up nearly six percent from the previous year's activity.

INTO THE FUTURE

The work of the past year has put our department in a strong position, confident of our ability to meet the demands of serving the residents of Milton. The new fire station facility provides us with the resources that will be needed to sustain our high level of service for many years to come. While the department must soon look to replace Engine 23, our 12 year old first-due pumper, with a similar apparatus, and Rescue 23, our 9 year old first-due rescue vehicle, shortly thereafter, we find ourselves generally well equipped to meet the continued demands of protecting the lives and property of our citizens well into the future.