

2012 Fire Department Annual Report

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Overview

2012 was a very eventful and emotional year for the Pullman Fire Department with some major personnel changes. One firefighter and one firefighter-paramedic, who replaced a retired Captain and a resigned firefighter-paramedic in 2011, were hired in January. Long standing Fire Chief Pat Wilkins, who retired in 2011, was replaced in February by Scott LaVielle as the new fire chief. Regrettably, Chief Wilkins passed away later that year as well as Fire Chief LaVielle unexpectedly chose to retire his position at the end of 2012. Captain Scott Van Ness also retired in 2012. However, due to budgetary reasons, the firefighter position was left open for the rest of the year.

The department's main challenge in 2012 was controlling overtime costs due to extraordinary injuries and surgery's to personnel. Injuries and surgery's amounted to 122 total shifts of overtime coverage compared to only 28 overtime shifts in 2011. This was an increase of 436% and these extra 94 shifts amounted to an increase of approximately \$85,000 in unforeseen overtime costs. Maintaining minimum staffing due to sick leave and injury/surgery consumed 59% of the overall overtime budget. Emergency calls for fire and medical service contributed 26% to the overtime budget.

2012 calls for service totaled 2940 responses. This is down slightly from 2011. Multiple and continuous back-to-back calls continue to challenge the department in providing essential services with limited staffing.

Emergency Medical Services

The department had 2206 medical responses which totaled 75% of the total calls for service. The department transported 87% of the time with 75% of the responses were dispatched as Advanced Life Support. The percentage breakdowns for medical responses were as follows: NE quadrant – 21%, WSU campus – 18%, SE quadrant – 18%, NW quadrant – 16%, SW quadrant – 10%, Pullman Regional Hospital transports – 11%, WCFD 12 – 4% and WCFD 4/Palouse – 1%.

Fire Suppression

The department responded to 734 fire calls for service. Of the 734 calls, 137 involved smoke and/or fire conditions for an estimated fire loss of \$864,045. Major losses were from three arson fires on the WSU Campus, one porch fire caused by a cigarette and a duplex fire caused by accidental cooking in the city. There were 510 non-emergent fire situations (e.g., false fire alarms, system malfunctions, accidental/unintentional activations, malicious alarms or good intent and service calls). The percentage breakdowns for fire responses were as follows: NE quadrant - 40%, WSU campus – 30%, SE quadrant – 13%, NW quadrant – 12%, and SW quadrant – 5%.

Grants

The department was very successful in writing and receiving two grants from FEMA for a total of \$556,550 for a new fire engine and a 2011 awarded grant for a breathing air compressor and vehicle exhaust system for both fire stations. The work on both stations was completed in 2012 but the new fire engine will not be delivered until 2013. The department replaced two ambulances in July 2013 with four wheel drive capabilities enhancing the winter response operations. One staff vehicle was also replaced for the fire chief.

Fire Prevention

In the 2012 calendar year, the Prevention Office activities have increased over last year. Site plans increased 46 % from 15 to 22; building plans increased 47 % from 19 to 28, fire inspection revenue increased 260 % from \$2,555 to \$6,635. Fire appliance inspections increased 44 % from 25 to 57 installations consisting of 49 fire suppression systems and 8 fire detection systems. Lastly, general business occupancy inspections completed were up 57 % from 267 to 468.

Public Education

The department conducted 18 First Aid and/or CPR classes in 2012. The use of an automatic electronic defibrillator (AED) was also taught in several of these classes improving the skill level of 185 citizens. The fire department also donated extra used defibrillators to City Hall, Transit/Public Works and Pioneer Center. The department continued to provide public education through tours at the fire station, fire extinguisher classes, fire alarm drills and safety talks at the Washington State University living groups and academic buildings. The department participated in the community activities of National Emergency Medical Services Week, 4th of July Celebration, Lentil Festival, Fire Prevention Week, Holiday tree lighting and the Annual Egg Hunt.

Training

Early in 2012 the training department had financial constraints placed on its budget in an effort to assist the overall fire department budget. Limited outside training opportunities were permitted for a majority of the year. Despite this constraint, the fire department continued to train and deliver the same level of services as it had for years before. Two of the department's newly hired full time members attended and graduated from the state fire academy. Both members excelled in their performance and represented the City of Pullman well and were awarded numerous awards and recognition by the instructors and by their peers. A new class of Reserve Firefighters were hired and trained exclusively with current department members. Class 2012-01 graduated their recruit school after their successful completion of the live fire training at the state academy. Locally, buildings were sought after and utilized to offer additional training opportunities. Buildings in the City of Pullman as well as on the WSU Campus were used numerous times for various types of training. In an effort to curtail future expenditures the training division has trained an instructor so that all our newly hired Reserve



Firefighters can receive their EMS certification based on in-house instruction. This will give our Reserve members a certification at the EMT level rather than at the EMR, which will serve the community better as well as add significantly to their education and experience. Many of the departments officers and were fortunate enough to attend a 2 day seminar by two well-known fire service instructors. All who attended left with a sense of energy as well as a handful of ideas to increase the services we provide. The members of the fire department did an outstanding job of maintaining their skills throughout the year. Their hard work and dedication to the public is evident in every emergency they respond to. The department's instructors also deserve high commands for the energy and dedication.