

To: Mayor Glenn Johnson and City Council

From: Mike Heston, Fire Chief

Date: May 8, 2014

Ref: 2013 Fire Department Annual Report

### Overview

2013 was an extremely busy year for the fire department. There were many staffing changes, successful grant procurements, improved ambulance billing processes, successful labor negotiations and EMS levy elections and a fire protection evaluation by Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau.

### Staffing

The major changes were at the administrative level. Operations Officer, Mike Heston, was promoted to fire chief on February 1, with the retirement of Fire Chief LaVielle after one year of service. Training Officer Ryan Scharnhorst was promoted to the Operations Officer in June. For budget reasons, the training officer position and a previous vacant firefighter position were left open.

### Total Responses

The department responded to 2081 individual calls which included 2895 total station responses where both stations were needed to respond to the call. Of the total station responses, station 1 responded 1684 times (58%) while station 2 responded 1211 times (42%). Concurrent or back-to-back station response calls occurred 765 times. The average response travel time in the city is just under 3:30.

### Emergency Medical Services

The department responded to 1447 individual medical responses in 2013 which included 2145 station responses totaling 70% of the total call volume. Patient transports happened 71% of the time with 43% of the responses dispatched as Advanced Life Support. Medical response percentage breakdowns were: WSU Campus – 23%, College Hill – 21%, Pioneer Hill – 17%, Military Hill – 15%, Sunnyside Hill – 9%, Pullman Regional Hospital transports (123) – 9%, WCFD 4/Palouse – 4%, WCFD 12 – 2%. Highlights for 2013 included the passing of the local EMS Levy in August by the citizens, streamlining the ambulance billing process increasing the revenue levels of billing and collections and the review and increase of the service fees for ambulance transport.

### Fire Suppression

The department responded to 634 individual fire related responses in 2013 which included 750 station responses totaling 30% of the total call volume. Of the 634 calls, 131 (21%) involved smoke and/or fire or hazardous conditions for an estimated fire loss of \$13,022,270. The major loss was the Grove Apartment fire. There were 503 (79%) non-emergent fire situations (e.g., false fire alarms, system malfunctions, accidental/unintentional activations, malicious alarms or good intent/service calls). Fire response percentage breakdowns were: College Hill - 41%, WSU Campus – 32%, Pioneer Hill – 14%, Military Hill – 9%, and Sunnyside Hill – 4%. Highlights for 2013 were the successful arson conviction for the Grove Apartment fire in July and a 10 year fire protection evaluation rating by Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau which resulted in a regression of the fire insurance rating.

### Fire Prevention

In 2013, Fire Prevention office activities increased over the previous year with several large construction projects consuming most of the time. The office reviewed 14 site plans and 22 building plans. Fire appliance inspections increased from 57 to 129 inspections consisting of 73 fire suppression systems, 33 fire detection systems, 8 kitchen hood suppression systems, and 15 miscellaneous inspections. Permit fees were adjusted in comparison with other city fire departments in August. This increased the revenue from \$6,635 in 2012 to \$7,425 for 2013. Occupancy inspections, hydrant maintenance and pre-fire plans continued to be performed by the fire crews throughout the city.

### Public Education

The department conducted 21 First Aid and/or CPR classes in 2013 improving the skill level and awareness of over 150 citizens and bringing in approximately \$7,000. The department continued to provide public education through tours at the fire station, ride-alongs, fire extinguisher classes, fire alarm drills and safety talks at Washington State University residence halls, apartment complexes, academic buildings and Greek housing. The department participated in numerous community activities including the National Emergency Medical Services Week, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Lentil Festival, Fire Prevention Week, Holiday tree lighting, Egg Hunt, Pullman Family Fair, Schweitzer Engineering Health Fair, Neill Public Library book reading and the Pullman High School football games as well as scheduled visits with fire trucks to local raffle winners at community fund raisers.

### Training

2013 was financially challenging for the training division. Funding for the state fire academy was cut along with numerous outside conferences and classes, including the EMS training budget. However, training in all areas of emergency response still continued and the members of the department met the challenge.

After laying off the Reserve Firefighter recruit class at the end of December in 2012 for budget reasons, it was determined in mid-May that our Reserve Firefighter numbers were below acceptable levels for adequate shift coverage. With approval from the Council, the 2012 recruit class was re-hired and trained at an accelerated pace, however only half of them chose to come back.

Training Officer Ryan Scharnhorst was promoted to Operations Officer in June but has had to perform both training and operational duties until a new Training Officer is hired in 2014.

The department's Technical Rescue Team was able to take advantage of a crane erected for the construction of a new building at Washington State University. High angle rope rescue team members climbed the crane to rescue a simulated medical emergency with the crane operator. The training was highly valuable and helped to facilitate a great working relationship with the local construction company and Washington State University.

The department was able to get one of its members, Firefighter-Medic Andrew Chiavaras, trained as a Senior EMT Instructor (SEI). This qualification will benefit the department as we can train all of our new Reserve's to be Emergency Medical Technicians with their initial training.

Working together with local law enforcement agencies and the hospital the department coordinated an active shooter drill in early October. The drill was a success overall and identified some areas of communication and planning that can be further fine-tuned. Strengthening the working relationships between all emergency responders was a large successful outcome to the drill.

Two members attended the National Fire Academy in 2013. Fire Chief Mike Heston attended the first year of the Executive Fire Officer Program and Firefighter-Medic Tony Nuttman attended the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist 1 course.

Firefighter-Medic Blake Richards attended the SWAT basic training course which allows him to be part of the Whitman County Sheriff SWAT as a medic in cooperation with local SWAT operations.

### Grants

Due to the hard work of the department's grant committee, the department was again successful in receiving a grant for electronic ambulance cots and computers for most of the fire and medical apparatus. Electrically powered hydraulic cots were placed in the rest of the ambulances to assist with patient lifting and to reduce the exposure to back injuries. The vehicle computers will be utilized for quick pre-fire plans access, business inspections and mapping. They will reduce the clutter and danger of loose items in the cab of the apparatus and thus keep responding crews safer in the event of a collision.

After hundreds of hours of meetings and project design, numerous visits to the fire truck factory in adverse weather by Captain Eric Reiber and Equipment Rental Division Supervisor Chris Arvas, and some factory construction delays, the new engine originally scheduled for delivery in the fall of 2013 will finally arrive in the early summer of 2014. The new engine will be a welcomed addition to the fleet and will replace the oldest engine that was built in 1985.

### Other Department Highlights

City management and labor successfully bargained a new contract with Local 1892 for the years 2012-2015 as well as signing up with the Northwest Fire Fighters insurance program. Council authorized the department to upgrade the vacant firefighter with a firefighter-medic in the next hiring opportunity. The fire department joined the police department in changing the entry level testing process to utilize National Testing Network for all future hiring processes to maximize the candidate pool.