



Calendar Year

2014 Year-End Review

Austin Fire Department Accomplishments

Fire Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr

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Assistant Chief Richard Davis
Assistant Chief Doug Fowler
Assistant Chief Matt Orta
Assistant Chief Brian Tanzola
Assistant Director Dr. Ronnelle Paulsen
Assistant Director Jim Linardos
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Fire Department Budget

The Department's approved budget for FY15 was \$166.3M, an almost \$24M increase from FY14. The budget increase will allow us to continue improving service delivery to both our community and Department personnel.

The budget increase fully funds 36 firefighter positions previously paid for through the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant. Additionally, large-scale emergency events, such as the Halloween floods of 2013, have taught us a great deal. These additional dollars are invested in additional rescue equipment—including specialized watercraft, lift bags and stabilization struts—and other important personal protective equipment to handle such large-scale incidents. The added funds also allow us to increase our critical civilian support positions by 11, with five positions earmarked to support our administrative efforts related to the Consent Decree approved between the United States Department of Justice and the City of Austin. The remaining six positions were temporary employees who were converted to full-time status in the areas of building and equipment maintenance, human resources, accounting, and administrative support. The staff totals for FY15 will be 1,129 firefighters and 94 civilians.



PREVENTION – *Prevent fire deaths and property loss.*

SPECIAL EVENTS

We increased the total number of inspections by 33 percent, from 1,800 to more than 2,400. We also assisted in the creation of a single, on-line joint application utilized by all Austin Center for Events (ACE) agencies, helping streamline the daunting permitting process for special events.

MAINTENANCE AND TECHNICAL

AFD doubled the amount of hydrant flow tests from 250 annually to more than 500 to comply with new residential flow requirements for plan approval.

FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS (FPS) PERMIT PROGRAM

This requires all fixed fire protection systems to have an annual operational permit for each system (i.e., Fire Alarm, Fire Sprinkler, Smoke Control, Kitchen Hood, Clean Agent, Commercial Pain Booths, and Standpipe). Almost 1,000 permits have been issued to date. This program has been very successful in the infant stages, gaining an astronomical overall compliance through fire protection agencies.

ARSON INVESTIGATIONS

The AFD Arson Investigations Section, housed under the Prevention Division, investigates the origin and cause of fires which occur within the City of Austin and conducts the criminal investigation of any fire that is determined to have been intentionally set. Arson Investigators conducted 323 investigations in 2014, which culminated in a total of 122 arrests. For fires determined to be arson, the clearance rate (by arrest or exception) was 52 percent compared to the national average of 18 percent.

As part of their mission, AFD Investigators also identified 82 juveniles in 2014 who had been involved with an intentionally set fire. Of those, 45 participated in the Department's Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program (JFIP). This nationally recognized program is designed for children between the ages of three and 16, and focuses on assessing a child's risk for repeating the behavior through interviews conducted with both the parent and the child. Children and their parents who are characterized as having minimal to moderate risk of repeated fire-setting behavior are then provided with an age-appropriate educational experience led by our JFIP staff. Those children who are characterized as having a high risk of repeated fire-setting behavior are referred to professional counselors. To date, no child who has completed our JFIP program has been identified in a second fire-setting incident (a zero percent recidivism rate), which stands as a testament to the combined efforts of our Arson Investigations Section and staff.



In 2014, the Austin Fire Department received not one, but two new Accelerant Detection Canines: Smokey and Gunny. They were obtained through a joint agreement with the United States Air Force and the Austin Police Department. After completing their training, they will begin working with their new handlers, AFD Investigators, in early 2015.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION



No longer just a passing concern, the threat of wildfire now reflects a reality for the growing Austin community. Since its creation in 2012, the Austin Fire Department's Wildfire Mitigation Division has worked tirelessly toward not only diminishing the physical threat of wildfire, but also ensuring the entire area is knowledgeable and prepared for such an event. As we often say, it's not a matter of "if" the next wildfire will occur, but rather "when." To undertake an endeavor of this

magnitude requires shared knowledge, skills, information, and resources among multiple agency partners and community stakeholders. In 2014, the Division led the nation in hours dedicated to the "Ready, Set, Go!" wildfire preparedness for homeowners' initiative. The Department is also the national pilot for the "Ready, Set, Go! en Español" campaign.

AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES MEDICS RECEIVE WELLNESS MEDICAL EXAMS

The Austin Fire Department's Wellness Program increased its patient base by performing 450 medical exams on EMS medics. Their exams are based on Texas Department of Transportation guidelines for those who drive large apparatus as a normal part of their job. In addition, a fitness assessment was completed on each individual to provide feedback and information on improving their health and conditioning. By working together with our partners in public safety to improve everyone's overall health and wellness, we can be assured that each member of our respective teams is at their best when they arrive on scene.

PREPAREDNESS – Prepare for emergencies – Everyone has a part!

FEMA GRANT

In 2014, AFD successfully completed all requirements for the \$252,600 grant we received in 2013. Those included installing 1,046 smoke alarms in 397 homes, purchasing a state-of-the-art model Fire Safety Trailer for community and public education events, conducting 40 fire safety training demonstrations that reached approximately 12,228 people (7,745 adults/seniors and 4,483 children), and conducting four community outreach events specifically targeted to hearing-impaired individuals (reach: 100 people, installed 227 special smoke alarms).

CREATION, APPROVAL, AND LAUNCH OF THE COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)

After months of development and stakeholder engagement, the City of Austin and Travis County finalized and launched the region’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This plan provides a foundation from which effective and strategic community wildfire preparedness can emerge.

FIREWISE COMMUNITIES

In concert with our CWPP success, Austin now leads the state with 12 nationally recognized Firewise Communities, each with their own Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Austin/Travis County has been selected as one of 10 communities from across the country as a pilot “Fire-Adapted Community” to help lead the way for municipalities at risk across the nation.

LAUNCH OF THE FIREWATCH AMERICA SYSTEM

FireWatch America is in launch mode. Training on this new and innovative wildfire monitoring alert camera system began in December. The fire detection pilot project is scheduled to begin in November 2015.

PARTNERSHIP WITH TEXAS A&M

With City Council support, the Austin Fire Department is exploring possibilities and capabilities of using rescue robotics in emergency situations. We have a current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dr. Robin Murphy of the Center for Robot-Assisted Search and Rescue at Texas A&M. The purpose of our agreement is to institute a framework of cooperation to investigate the practicality of utilizing Unmanned Ariel Vehicles (UAVs) and other robotics during emergency response. It is our hope these applications could generate opportunities for enhancing multi-agency coordination.



STREETSMART FIREFIGHTER TRAINING DAYS

Since its inception, Education Services Division has supported the AFD/StreetSmart Firefighter Training Days, a program started by two Austin firefighters. The training is free to all attendees and instructors donate their time. Last year, there were three Training Days covering topics such as firefighter rescue, high-rise firefighting, hose deployment and advancement, ground ladder deployment, forcible entry, fire ground dynamics, Mayday incidents, and ventilation. More than 300 students representing 12 different departments from across Texas attended the sessions throughout the year.

RESPONSE – *Respond efficiently and effectively to emergencies.*

SHARED RADIO TEMPLATE

In the spirit of partnership and cooperation, we have shared our radio template with Williamson County and Hays County so all three counties can now operate on the same radio channels during a large-scale emergency. This will ensure more efficient operations across county lines and better service to the citizens of central Texas.

HAZMAT EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Austin Fire Department became the sole provider of hazardous material emergency response to all of Travis County.

AUTOMATIC AID

We expanded our formal commitment to include a seventh Emergency Services District (ESD): #8. Formal agreements are now in place between AFD and ESDs 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11.



SEVERE WEATHER RESPONSE

We continued to implement recommendations from the after-action report regarding the Halloween floods of 2013, including the creation of a standard model and template for standing up ad hoc, or “demand” resources for severe weather.

CHAPLAIN PROGRAM

The AFD Chaplain Program was created with a focus on a larger Public Safety Chaplain partnership with the Austin Police Department and Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services. Four new Fire Department chaplains visited personnel at their worksites and participated in special events.

EXPANSION OF PASS THE TORCH ACADEMY

The 2014 Pass the Torch Academy was the first expanded version of the original program with seven weekend sessions occurring from March through July. This program gives participants the chance to learn about their community, fire department, and emergency medical services response in a safe, controlled, and educational environment. The program also provides participants with insight into whether or not firefighting might be a career option for them to pursue.



NEW HUMAN RESOURCES DASHBOARD

Historically, the Austin Fire Department's Human Resources Section has sent out weekly reports, via e-mail, on Civil Service Vacancies and Status of Promotions. These reports showcase a variety of information including the total number of vacancies, current promotable positions, upcoming retirements, and personnel on military leave. To eliminate the need to distribute the reports this way and enable the HR Section to upload and update these reports quickly, an HR Dashboard was created in AFD's business intelligence solution, Qlikview.

IMPROVED PAYROLL PROCESS

The Payroll Banner Entry Reports System (PBERS) team was created to investigate methods for improving the AFD payroll process. They identified ways to increase productivity and sustainability within the Payroll Division, and make a positive environmental impact as well, reducing net energy, greenhouse gases, water consumption, solid waste, and paper and labor costs for a net annual savings (based on 143 lbs. per year of paper saved) of almost \$12,000. Our efforts were recognized as a "Best Practice" by the City's Office of Sustainability.