

# 2010 Year End Report Fire Marshal Office

## General Information

The Deputy Fire Marshal responded to 105 calls for service. These included fires, EMS, public service, and public educations. He is credited with 285 hours of training that includes fire marshal, hazardous materials, EMT, and other specialty training. The year was completed with the conviction related to an arson and insurance fraud scheme.



This year, we added an inspector/investigator on each shift. This will help some with the minor incidents or when the Deputy Fire Marshal is not available. Firefighter Abernathy, Firefighter Dodd, and Firefighter Hagler all completed the Fire Inspector and Fire Investigator Training through the Fire Marshal Academy. These two classes were very intense training covering legal aspects of the job, proper interpretation of the building code and fire code, burn patterns, evidence collection, and courtroom presentation. The three did not add to the daily operations of the Fire Marshal's Office, they would only help when staffing levels in Operations will allow them the opportunity.

## Fire Inspections

The office continued to move towards a paperless filing system. With the application of the Mobile Computer and the VPN, the Deputy Fire Marshal can now access sprinkler and hood suppression reports in the field. This has eliminated the large files and making it easier to review the reports should someone have a question about a property.

The office conducted inspections or contacted 165 properties for fire code violations. During the year, only two properties were condemned. One property was posted because it was vacant, unsafe, and insecure. The other was found that they installed an exit door and wall assembly without a building permit and did not meet the code. Once the egress issue was corrected, the business was allowed to reopen.

There were 459 Fire Code Violations noted. Some of these violations are noted below:

## Building:

- 12 – Address not posted
- 7 – Smoking regulations not meet
- 5 – Interior finish not maintained
- 4 – Occupant load not posted
- 4 – Fire lane shall be maintained
- 3 – Fire doors not inspected and maintained
- 3 – Smoke detectors not maintained or installed
- 2 – Building or portions of the building condemned
- 2 – Decorative artwork or walls coverings not complying with the regulations
- 2 – Fire lane obstructed
- 2 – Multi-family occupancies with open flame or LP gas storage in violation
- 1 – Change of use with the building without a proper Certification of Occupancy
- 1 – Day care needs to update the emergency plan and train employees
- 1 – Day care could not provide fire drill log



## Commercial Cooking

- 8 – Commercial hoods requiring cleaning
- 7 – Commercial cooking appliances unsafe or condemned

## Fire Sprinkler Systems

- 47 – Fire sprinklers systems not inspected, tested, or reports not sent to the Fire Marshal's Office
- 27 – Fire sprinkler reports reviewed that found violations that needed correction
- 3 – Fire sprinkler heads obstructed
- 2 – Fire department connection not maintained

## Fire Alarm Systems

- 30 – Fire alarm systems not inspected, maintained, or reports sent to the Fire Marshal's Office

## Fire Extinguishers

- 18 – Fire extinguishers not inspected or tested as required
- 13 – Fire extinguisher shall be provided

- 5 – Fire extinguisher obstructed
- 4 – Fire extinguisher not mounted
- 2 – Fire suppression system that required to be inspected, tested, and reports sent to the Fire Marshal's Office

### Electrical Systems

- 28 – Use of extension cords, or flexible wiring in violation
- 10 – Clearance from electrical equipment not approved
- 9 – Electrical hazards exist
- 9 – Open junction box, wall outlet, wall switch, or electrical connections
- 5 – Electrical multi plugs
- 2 – Electrical power strips not in compliance or overloaded

### Means of Egress

- 33 – Exit lights and egress lighting needed to be inspected and tested
- 26 – Emergency exit path obstructed or a hazard
- 22 – Exit lights not illuminated
- 13 – Exit doors locked or improper locks
- 8 – Exit path not illuminated

### Storage Issues

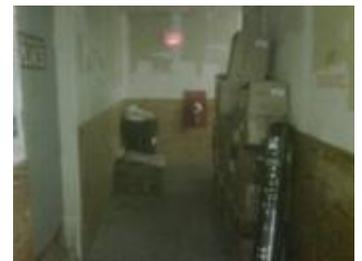
- 11 – Waste accumulation is a hazard
- 6 – Vacant and insecure properties
- 3 – Storage of combustible near heat source

### Hazardous Materials

- 3 – Materials Safety Data Sheets not available or up to date
- 3 – Hazardous materials spill requiring clean up
- 2 – Improper containers or improper markings on hazardous materials containers
- 1 – Filling portable containers in a vehicle prohibited

### Additional problems that were noted by the Deputy Fire Marshal:

- 1 – Abandon refrigeration appliance
- 3 – Building permit required
- 2 – Business license required



Three businesses were charged with fire code violations. All three were for failure to have the hood fire suppression system inspected or tested as required.

The office received fire suppression reports from 91 properties. These were for commercial cooking hoods or miscellaneous fire systems. Some of these required follow up with the business to make sure they were aware of some problems that needed to be corrected.

There were 53 businesses had a fire sprinkler system report submitted. Each property must have their fire sprinkler system inspected by a third certified party. Several reports were reviewed and found to have problems that required attention.

There were 33 properties where a fire alarm reports that were received. The focus from the office is on the hotels and city buildings.

The officer received and reviewed a total 270 fire suppression and detection reports that passed regulations.

This office followed up on 9 complaints in regards to fire code violations.

There were 11 construction plans reviewed prior to the building permit being issued. The office now accepts all construction plans in an electronic format. This saves space and allows plans to be saved to the preplan section of the intranet. This also saves on printing cost to the developer when revisions are made.

The office conducted 24 site inspections with the Building Official Office. These were done to make sure that the property was meeting the Fire Code regulations prior to opening. The two offices work closely on matters related to property maintenance, building code, and overall regulations on all types of buildings. By working together to resolve issues or problems, we are enhancing the safety of the City.



The office entered or approved 14 operational permits.

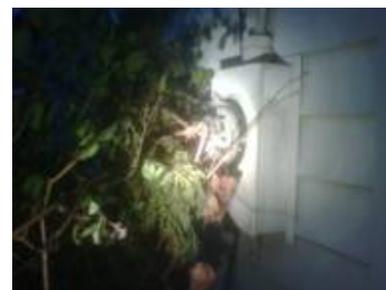
- 10 – Alarm permits
- 2 – Carnivals
- 1 – Fireworks display
- 1 – Open burning.

There were 56 false alarms citations issued, 5 failure to obtain alarm permit, and 2 failure to respond. There were 8 false alarm citations issued to Wal-Mart.

Fire Code Appeals Board met in 2010 to review the office and discuss some current events occurring. Part of this discussion was upcoming adoption of the 2009 International Codes. We covered some issues that were handled by the office and prevented appeal board from having to meet. There were no appeals to the board in 2010.

## Investigations

The office now has all investigative reports filed electronically. This saves space in the office and allows for quick access and printing. The office worked 44 cases ranging from fires, arson, fire code violations, bomb threats, possession of drugs, etc.



25 – Cases closed as accidental or no further action required

13 – Criminal cases cleared with an arrest

1 – Case Arson and Insurance Fraud

2 – Adults arrested

1 – Case Energy Diversion and Theft of Public Water

1 – Adult arrested

1 – Case Possession of Marijuana found at a fire scene

1 – Adult arrested

1 – Case Releasing a Hazardous Material, Fuel Oil

3 – Adults arrested

3 – Cases where individual was charged with Violations of Fire Code

3 – Adults arrested

4 – Cases Possession of Illegal Fireworks

2 – Adults arrested

2 – Juveniles arrested

1 – Case Setting Brush on Fire

3 – Juveniles arrested

1 – Case Possession of Tobacco

1 – Juvenile arrested

1 – Case Exceptional Cleared

Case reported as possible attempted arson

5 – Criminal cases inactive



This year the Deputy Fire Marshal investigated house fire at 313 Moorman Avenue. The Deputy Fire Marshal determined the fire to be arson and was able to arrest the occupants. After a three-day trial, Regina Hite was convicted of arson and insurance fraud. She is currently in jail awaiting sentencing. The office received investigation assist from Richmond and Hopewell on the night of the fire.



As part of our joint system of working with other jurisdictions, the Deputy Fire Marshal is called to assist other departments. This year the Deputy Fire Marshal responded:

- 3 – Cases in Chesterfield County
  - 1 – Arson
  - 1 – Accidental
  - 1 – Under Investigation
- 1 – Hopewell
  - 1 – Accidental
- 1 – Virginia State Police
  - 1 – Insurance Fraud



There were 19 parking citations issued for parking in fire department access lane.

### Fire Marshal Training

The personnel assigned as inspectors attended in-service courses that totaled 34 hours of training. The investigators hours total 83 man-hours of training.



The Deputy Fire Marshal is the training coordinator for the Central Virginia Fire and Arson Association. This is a group may up of Fire Marshal from the Metro Richmond area. It is his responsibility to make sure that there are training classes available and that they receive approval of the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy.

## Pre-Incident Activities

The office handles a majority of the pre-incident planning for the department. The reports from the shifts are being entered into Firehouse. Then the reports are placed on the intranet. The information is then forwarded to the Emergency Communications Center to update their system. This year the Deputy Fire Marshal coordinated with the C.E.R.T members to update all the merchant information on the Boulevard. A majority of the businesses responded.

## Utilities Fire Hydrant Inspections

Utilities Department tested only 6 fire hydrants. This year the department received a donation from a citizen to purchase reflective hydrant band. These allow the fire department to find the hydrants in low light situations. The C.E.R.T., Volunteers, and Deputy Fire Marshal placed the bands on hydrants throughout the City. This project will continue until every hydrant is marked.

## Employment Background

The Deputy Fire Marshal was given the responsibility to conduct background checks on all employees and volunteers. This year there were 4 employment backgrounds and 11 volunteer applications reviewed.

## Hazardous Materials

The department responded to 45 reported hazardous materials incidents.

- 11 – Flammable or Combustible Liquid Releases
- 19 – Natural Gas
- 10 – Oil or Combustible Liquids
- 5 – Toxic or Chemical Releases



The Crater Regional Hazardous Materials Team was activated 2 times. The team responded to the City of a potential oil spill at Lakeview Park. The material turned out to be decomposing organic material. The other response was for an Ammonia leak at the Food Lion distributing center in Prince George. Some employees were exposed and one required transport.

The Crater Team received grant money from the State. This year the Deputy Fire Marshal coordinated the grant. The grant money allowed us to purchase a propane

heater and cooling chairs for rehab. The team purchased pipe leak kits, pneumatic drill, air compressor, and various other equipment.

### Hazardous Materials Training

Colonial Heights members of the Crater Regional Team contributed 224 man-hours of training. The Deputy Fire Marshal completed the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Chemistry of Hazardous Materials training. This was a two-week course to understand the chemical makeup of materials. This is the first step in obtaining Virginia Hazardous Materials Specialist Certification. The Deputy Fire Marshal attended the Virginia Hazardous Materials Association conference as an instructor. The topic was on the Right to Be There, covering the legal aspects of our response to an emergency scene and the persons Constitutional Rights. Firefighter Terry Schane was able to attend the conference through a grant the department received.

The team conducted two Virginia Department of Emergency Management Hazardous Materials Technician courses. The first was offered on a 40 hour workweek. The second was conducted on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays to accommodate the volunteers. We are proud to say that everyone passed.



The Deputy Fire Marshal continued to conduct training in Hazardous Materials to the basic law enforcement academy at Crater Criminal Justice Academy. This training is required by OSHA and Department of Criminal Justice for all police officers.

### Public Education

Public Educations are a very important part of the Fire Department. This allows for information to reach to citizens about fire prevention, the importance of smoke detectors, and what to do in case of an emergency. The department conducted 18 Public Educations.

A Shift – 4

B Shift – 5

C Shift – 6

Fire Marshal's Office – 3



The department conducted 73 car seat installations or checked. This is down from the 128 car seats checks in 2009. The reduction is from doing checks for City residences only. Below is the break down by shifts:

A Shift – 26

B Shift – 13

C Shift – 32

Fire Marshal's Office - 2

The department installed smoke detectors or replaced the batteries in 39 residential properties. Smoke detectors and batteries are provided free of charge to our residents. Having a working smoke detector increases your chance of survival by more than 50% percent. The department continues to push smoke detectors in ever home.



We installed, replaced the battery, or checked 4 carbon monoxide detectors. Carbon monoxide is a dangerous gas produced by the burning of a fuel such as natural gas. Because of the cost, we cannot provide the detector free of charge.

### Additional Information

This year the Deputy Fire Marshal coordinated with Riverside Regional Jail to provide labor help to make repairs around the stations. Building and grounds funds paid for the painting of the break room and dumpster fence at the Public Safety Building. The volunteer funds paid for the painting and repairs in Fire Administration, Station One, and Station Two. These projects got repairs done that were not previously funded.

