

2009
City of Findlay
FINDLAY FIRE DEPARTMENT
Annual Report



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FINDLAY FIRE DEPARTMENT

MISSION STATEMENT

The Findlay Fire Department is committed to providing the highest level of service to our community in all times of disaster.

Our mission is accomplished by the dedication and preparedness of professional firefighters through fire suppression, rescue response, emergency medical service, fire prevention, life safety education and disaster mitigation.

FINDLAY FIRE DEPARTMENT
2009 ANNUAL REPORT
Thomas R. Lonyo, Chief

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Findlay Fire Department provides response to a variety of emergency situations including fires and explosions, rescues and medical calls, hazardous conditions (electrical, chemical, structural, etc.) and requests for special services.

A pro-active approach to reducing losses to life and property due to fire is the primary responsibility of Fire Prevention Bureau, which focuses on public fire safety education, code enforcement and arson investigation.

The Department's primary coverage area is defined by the Findlay City limits. Fire protection is also extended to facilities outside the City limits by private contract and through mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire departments. Findlay Fire Department maintains a Class 3 Public Protection Classification.

ORGANIZATION

Authorized staffing for the Fire Department consists of 74 full time professional firefighters and a non-uniformed administrative assistant. These personnel staff four stations located throughout the City.

Emergency response duties are assigned to sixty-nine of these firefighters, divided into 3 shifts of 23, with each shift covering a 24-hour period. Individual firefighters are organized into 4- to 7-man companies, supervised by a Captain. Each shift has four Captains reporting to a shift commander, or Battalion Chief. Shift personnel currently work an average of 50.4 hours per week and belong to the Local 381 Chapter of the International Association of Firefighters.

The remaining six Department personnel, the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief of Administration / Training, the Administrative Assistant, and three Fire Inspectors, handle administrative duties, training, record keeping, and Fire Prevention activities.

For more information, visit our website: www.ci.findlay.oh.us/Fire/Index.htm

ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The City of Findlay experienced one of the steepest economic downturns of the past century in 2009. The Fire Department, once thought to be exempt from mid-year budget cuts was not immune. As the economy continued to worsen and income tax receipts continued to decline, the Administration worked with IAFF Local 381 to develop a concession package which would in turn save the jobs of firefighters and prevented lay-offs. The concession package was agreed to and implemented by mid-year.

By fall of 2009, it was apparent that City Income Tax revenues were not stabilizing and instead continued to decline. City Council authorized through legislation ballot Issue #5 and requested from the constituents a three year, one-quarter of a percent increase in the City Income Tax. In October, eighteen layoff notices were delivered to firefighters and the Command Staff began restructuring plans which included the closing of Findlay Fire Station #4 on County Road 236.

IAFF Local 381 in cooperation with Findlay police officers conducted a door to door informational campaign throughout the City of Findlay. In addition, the City Administration, City Auditor, Acting-Police Chief Greg Horne and Fire Chief Tom Lonyo attended various service group organizations informing the public of the risks of not passing Issue #5.

On November 3, 2009 Issue #5 was passed by voters and layoff notices for all eighteen firefighters were rescinded.

PERSONNEL

The Department began the year with a fully staffed compliment of 74 firefighters. The Department witnessed eight retirements in 2009 including; Battalion Chief Patrick Ball, Captain Thomas DeFrieze, Captain Robin Cooper, Fire Inspector James Holmes, Firefighter Gerald Coppes and Firefighter Terry Coppes. In addition, Deputy Chief Thomas Jorgensen and Captain David R. Hover entered exit leave in 2009. Firefighter Robert Thomas also resigned from the Department to seek employment elsewhere.

None of the above mentioned positions have been filled to date reducing the staffing level downward from the authorized compliment of 74 to 65 firefighters. All apparatus continue to be staffed through the reduction of available Holivac slots.

The Department experienced a very high turnover rate in the Command Staff, leaving line firefighters to step up and fill these critical roles. Recognizing that the Department could only temporarily operate without a full complement of Officers, the 2010 Operating Budget includes promotional pay for five new Captains and one Battalion Chief. The Deputy Chief position will not be filled in the foreseeable future.

The Fire Department Receptionist Lisa DeGraff was laid-off in 2009. At this time, the Department's Administrative Assistant has assumed her duties.

SAFER GRANT-

In late 2009, the Fire Department prepared a grant request for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER). The Department submitted a request for six additional firefighters to replace the already depleted force. If awarded in 2010, the SAFER grant will fund the salary and benefits of six firefighters for two years. The total amount request for those two years, exceeded \$887,866.00

Awards should begin in early 2010 for those who nationally show the greatest need for staffing firefighters.

LONG TERM OPERATIONS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE – LTOPC

Across the nation, the Fire Service has realized that the economic downturn is not just short term in nature, but more likely a long term event. While jobless rates remain very high, it is doubtful that by the time the additional one-quarter percent tax increase ends the City of Findlay will resume collecting the same revenue witnessed in 2007.

This realization has led the Department to create the Long Term Operations and Planning Committee (LTOPC) with one goal, streamlining the effectiveness of a smaller Findlay Fire Department. Twelve members of the Department, in addition to the Fire Chief and a Council Representative, have met several times to discuss all operations of the Department.

The LTOPC established early on that a compliment of sixty-six firefighters was the absolute minimum number of firefighters to staff four fire stations and still maintain the City's ISO Public Protection Classification 3. The staffing of sixty-six firefighters will not come close to achieving the National Fire Protection Association's standard recommendation that four firefighters be staffed on each engine. However, in conjunction with the reduction of personnel, available Kelly, vacation, and holiday slots for personnel can be reduced accordingly. Fewer firefighters and fewer vacation slots will enable the Department to continue staffing four fire engines, two aerials, and a Command vehicle daily.

The LTOPC has identified three critical areas in which the Department must become more efficient. The most prevalent and critical area needing addressed is training. The Department will not replace the Deputy Chief of Administration and Training, creating a very large administrative hole. Through LTOPC discussions, it was agreed that the Battalion Chiefs will take on a greater administrative function and add to their command duties.

The three Battalion Chiefs job descriptions have been revised and reflect these administrative functions. Each Battalion Chief will be assigned a discipline in which the Deputy Chief had been responsible for and includes; EMS Administration and Training, Fire Training and Special Services which includes disaster planning and life safety.

By allowing the Battalion Chiefs to redefine their roles, the Department hopes to meet and enhance the training requirements outlined later in this text. This restructuring of the Command Staff will save the City over \$100,000.00 annually by not replacing the Deputy Chief position and is just one example of the effectiveness of the LTOPC.

The LTOPC and its various subcommittees are currently working on assisting the Battalion Chiefs identify training resources, scheduling and identifying specific roles for in-house instructors.

The LTOPC has also recognized the need to develop newly promoted Fire Officers and have focused on providing NFPA recognized courses to assist. Newly promoted Officers will now be required to be attend the following certified courses; Fire Officer I (80 hours), Fire Officer II (40 hours), Fire Instructor, and EMS Instructor.

In order to reduce the costs of sending these Officers to the Ohio Fire Academy, the Department is collaborating with the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association in becoming a host site for these training requirements. Planning is currently underway and it is likely that this training will occur in 2010 utilizing the Cube as a classroom facility for incoming instructors and classes. In addition to Department members, students from various parts of Ohio will come to Findlay and attend these courses.

LTOPC - OPERATING BUDGET

In conjunction with the aforementioned activities, the Department will continue to work towards efficiencies in the Operating Budget. The Department will concentrate on vendors who have typically supplied the equipment, maintenance, uniforms, testing of aerial devices in order to get the best quality product at the lowest cost. For example aerial device testing; typically performed by Underwriters Laboratory will be completed by another certified vendor at a significantly reduced cost. The Department will also continue to utilize electronic technology in order to reduce the costs of paper, ink, and copier maintenance.

Firefighters are also testing new cotton uniforms and will continue to do so through 2010 from various vendors. The cotton uniforms are significantly cheaper; however do not wear as well as the Nomex product currently utilized by the department. If a vendor and product are found which are comparable, the department would consider switching.

It should also be noted that a majority of line items contained in the fire operating budget deal with contractual items. Any reductions, if any regarding contractual line items will be addressed in the upcoming labor negotiations in 2010.

LTOPC – FACILITIES & APPARATUS

As the LTOPC continues to move forward on the outlined agenda, facilities will also be addressed. Currently two of the four fire stations have exceeded fifty years in age. In 2009, the Department of Homeland Security authorized the Fire Station Construction Grant (SCG). Fire departments with shovel ready projects were eligible to submit for approval, grant requests to build and / or renovate fire stations. Although it is not anticipated this type of funding will be available annually, the Department missed an opportunity to submit plans for approval for the replacement of Fire Station #3 on Tiffin Ave. The City of Findlay should have the plans and sites in place should future funding be made available again.

As the LTOPC gains traction, I respectfully request that an Ad-Hoc Committee be formed by City Council. Future plans should be addressed on a semi-annual basis for apparatus, equipment, and facilities replacement. The Ad-Hoc Committee can keep abreast of long term fire department planning in order to avoid replacing large numbers of fire apparatus in a short time period. Fire Department capital requests are typically large scale when it comes to funding.

TRAINING

Emergency activities require expertise in areas such as fire suppression, medical care, equipment operation, technical rescue and chemical hazards, as well as a working knowledge of legal issues and governmental regulations. On the non-emergency side, the Fire Prevention Bureau deals with fire safety education, building plan review, code enforcement and arson investigation. All these areas require specific and continuing training, often mandated by State and Federal agencies.

Federal requirements including the Department of Homeland Security involve at least 24 hours of initial training. Once the initial training has been completed, firefighters must have at least 4 hours annually of continuing education. Federal requirements also mandate that new hire firefighters must complete a 144 hours of specialized training over a three year period.

The State of Ohio requires that firefighters complete 54 hours of continuing education in fire related topics. Firefighters are also required to complete 40 hours of EMS training every three years in order to maintain State certification. Fire inspectors must secure an additional 30 hours of training in the related field.

To meet the requirements of the Insurance Services Office (ISO), the department must have a combination of 14 single/multiple company drills of at least 3 hours each and two night drills of 3 hours each. Each member of the Department must also complete 3 hours of hazardous material training and 20 hours per month of monthly in-service training.

Each new recruit is also required to complete 40 hours of emergency driver / operator course and at least four, three hour training sessions on safe driving. FFD Officers are also required to complete 12 hours of officer training. In addition, ISO requires that each commercial structure is entered by FFD personnel and a pre-plan inspection completed twice annually.

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

Two firefighters, certified through the State of Ohio as Fire Safety Inspectors, make up the Findlay Fire Prevention Bureau. The public has come to view the Fire Prevention Bureau as its fire protection and safety experts.

While all perform fire safety inspections within the City, each inspector focuses on a specific facet of the operation. The three specialty areas are fire investigation, code enforcement and public fire safety education. The Department's two inspectors work closely with other agencies and with the public in carrying out their assigned duties.

Fire Inspector Matt Pickett assumed the duties of lead Fire Investigator for the Department. In addition Inspector Pickett focuses his efforts on code enforcement. Inspector Eric Habegger primary tasks are reviewing commercial plans, life safety

education, and code enforcement. Both Inspectors have taken on additional duties since the retirement of Inspector James Holmes.

FACILITIES

Fire Department operations are conducted out of four fire stations located within the City limits:

Station 1, 720 South Main Street, serves as Department Headquarters, as well as housing an engine and a ladder company, a rescue truck, and the Battalion Chief's vehicle. Station 1 provides first due response for the area south of Howard Street and west of the CSX Railroad. Station 1 was built in 1958.

Station 2, 2610 North Main Street, was built in 1976. It houses an engine company and is first due in the area north of Howard Street and West of Crystal Avenue. Engine #6 a spare HME pumper is housed at this station. The unit is available to the Department; however it is currently not equipped. The Department will request the sale of this unit in 2010 through an Internet auction site.

Station 3, 1001 Tiffin Avenue, was located at the eastern edge of the City when constructed in 1958. Since then, the station sits in approximately the geographical center of the City. The station houses an engine company and the Department's water rescue equipment. It provides back-up to the other three response districts as well as primary coverage to the area east of the CSX Railroad, north of Blanchard Avenue, south of Crystal Avenue, and west of the Findlay Village Mall.

Station 4, 7047 County Road 236, is the newest station, built in 1997. The facility houses an engine company, a ladder company, a reserve engine; the Department's apparatus repair shop, and training facilities. Station 4 provides primary coverage for the rapidly growing eastern edge of the City.

Fire Station #1's concrete approach was replaced in 2009 prior to the arrival of Ladder #1. The approach was replaced with the assistance of the Engineering Department and members of the Street Department. The cost of the project was paid for out of the 2009 Capital Improvements fund with a total cost of \$ 7, 443.00.

APPARATUS

The compliment of firefighting apparatus and other vehicles assigned to the Fire Department consists of six 1500 gallon per minute pumping engines, one 2000 gallon per minute engine with a 75ft elevated ladder, one 1500 gallon per minute aerial truck with an 85 ft. platform, a 2000 gallon per minute 100 foot aerial, a rescue truck, a hazardous materials trailer, two water rescue units, 3 utility pick-up trucks, and 6 staff cars.

Sutphen Corporation delivered the newest truck to the Department in May of 2009. The new aerial device is a one hundred foot aerial platform. The truck was outfitted by

Department personnel and our sub-contracted mechanic. Department members spent a considerable amount of hours and days training on Ladder #1 and refining their operations of the unit and its new technologies.

The former Sutphen aerial was sold on an internet auction site and is no longer Department property. Old Ladder #1 was picked up and delivered to South Carolina. The Department has no pending apparatus purchases and no requests are expected for several more years.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES – 2009

Although the City's Capital budget was decimated by the economic downturn, several large capital expenditures were received on behalf of the Department in 2009. Information regarding these expenditures is included in the following paragraphs.

LIVE FIRE SIMULATOR

The Live Fire Training Simulator was acquired through the DHS Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). The Department purchased the unit at a total cost of \$334,900.00.

Department instructors were certified as operators and trainers by Fireblast, the unit's manufacturer. Fireblast was awarded the bid by the City and delivered a three prop live Liquid Propane Gas simulator to the department. With a very limited overtime budget in 2009, instructors were only able to provide a basic Fire Behavior class to department personnel. Additional classes will be provided in 2010 to members of the Department.

Bowling Green State Fire School has also expressed an interest in collaborating with the Department to provide off-site courses to various fire departments throughout the State. FFD instructors would provide classes to smaller fire departments for a cost. In addition, classes may possibly be provided to Hancock County Fire Departments if interest is expressed.

The Live Fire Simulator will provide hands-on live fire training to Department members, increasing their proficiencies and reducing the costs of sending members off site. The Simulator provides a safe environment to practice tactical operations such as fire attack, search and rescue, ventilation, self-escape, and confined space rescue. This style of training is preferred over utilizing old abandoned structures which require structural assessments, asbestos removal, and all other costly requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency.

MARCS RADIO PROJECT

The Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) project was hailed by the State of Ohio as an example of governmental cooperation in order to replace the City's antiquated radio system. Initially, the City of Findlay began looking to replace the outdated system with an individual stand alone radio system. The City of Findlay also

looked at upgrading and integrating the radio project with the Lucas County Dispatch Center, a state of the art P-25 system.

Ultimately, the City created a committee which included the City Administration, City Auditor Robert Sprague, Hancock Regional Planning Commission Grant Administrator Lydia Mihalik, and representatives from Police and Fire to negotiate with the Director of Public Safety for the State of Ohio; an agreement which would allow the City to join the State of Ohio MARCS system. The City of Findlay not only wanted to place public safety into the MARCS system, but public works departments as well. The State of Ohio ultimately agreed to the City's terms of the project and is the first of its kind; bringing public works onto a statewide system designed for emergency personnel.

The project ultimately saved the City over \$1.4 million dollars in radio upgrades. The City of Findlay retained ownership of its FCC licenses. Had the City decided to purchase a stand-alone system, the cost would have exceeded 2.5 million dollars and would not have allowed City crews to communicate with outside agencies. A lease agreement was signed allowing the MARCS system to utilize Findlay's additional radio frequencies which were not only critical to the City being placed on MARCS, but the Hancock County Sheriff and County Fire Departments as well.

The City utilized State funding, EMA Grant money, FEMA money and various grants; in addition to a negotiated a subscriber fee waiver in order to fund the radio upgrades. The cost saving of this project allowed the City to divert the original capital expense to personnel in order to avoid layoffs throughout the City.

In addition, the City took advantage of radio savings through Motorola enabling the City to purchase additional Fire Department portable radios. The additional radios will ensure that every firefighter entering a hazard will have their own personal radio communications increasing firefighter safety.

The City of Findlay and State of Ohio collaboration will also ensure that City' units; both safety and public works will be capable of communicating with Statewide agencies during a large scale disaster or incident. This capability was not available during the Flood of 2007 when over two hundred responders converged on Findlay to assist with rescue and recovery operations.

EQUIPMENT

Expenditures for Fire Department equipment in 2009 were very limited due to the economic downturn, high unemployment rates and rising fuel prices. The Department has not requested any large purchase expenditures regarding equipment. A proactive approach in maintaining our current equipment with regular maintenance helps the Department avoid any new purchases. Any purchases in 2010 will replace un-repairable equipment the Department currently has in its inventory.

INCIDENT PROFILE

Call volume amounted to 1556 calls in 2009, a decrease of approximately 11.5 percent. There are no glaring reasons as to why the total run call decreased after a continuous climb since the early 1990's. Emergency medical (EMS) calls account for over 58% of the call volume. The amount of total fire loss experienced in the City of Findlay in 2009, totaled \$952,955.00.

One of the four fire stations is assigned primary responsibility, depending upon location, for each emergency call. Below are listed the primary responses made by each of the four stations:

- Station 1: 603
- Station 2: 329
- Station 3: 335
- Station 4: 289

The largest fire responded to was located at 211 N. Main Street where a multi-apartment fire destroyed two buildings including a long time Findlay business the Star Pawn shop.

The following information details the general categories of emergency calls and their percentages in relation to the total number of calls handled in 2009.

Number of Calls	Type of Calls	Percentage
44	Structure Fires	2.83
6	Vehicle Fires	.39
83	Miscellaneous Fires	5.3
198	False Alarms	12.72
905	Rescue / EMS Calls	58.16
147	Hazardous Condition (Spills, leaks, explosions, electrical)	9.45
173	Good Intent Calls	11.12
1556	TOTALS	100%

The significant activities of the Findlay Fire Department Fire Prevention Bureau for 2009 are summarized in the chart below:

FINDLAY FIRE PREVENTION	
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2009	
Activity	Number Completed
Inspections	346
Re-Inspections	116
Fire Suppression System Tests	52
Complaints	36
Building and Site Plan Reviews	30
Fire Investigations	45
Misc. Activities:	
- Meetings	60
- Interviews	278
- Code Consults	372
- Fire Follow-up Actions	187

2010 OUTLOOK

LTOPC

As stated earlier, there are no capital projects currently scheduled for 2010. The MARCS radio project should be completed by early spring and training on the digital communications system will be provided to department personnel. The department will continue to apply for grant applications in order to supplement purchasing activities.

The LTOPC will continue to meet and discuss further efficiencies within the Department. Staffing shortages will continue to challenge the Command Staff and fire personnel. The LTOPC will attempt to provide a “leaner” fire department to the community in terms of personnel. However, it should be noted that a condensed department will need to focus on funding additional training to these personnel. The Department will look to invest in possible technologies which may supplement the loss of personnel.

The long term cost savings of a smaller department will exceed \$720,000.00 annually. As economic conditions permit the City should look to replace the depleted staff accordingly. If the Findlay Fire Department is to operate in the foreseeable future with these levels of staffing shortages, the operating budget should reflect the need for higher quality training and equipment which will essentially lighten the work load for personnel. Such equipment includes but is not limited to; light weight Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), thermal imaging devices and other various tools which will enhance firefighter safety.

Identifying opportunities to bring professional instruction to Findlay, which would otherwise be unavailable, is a goal for the Department. Reducing travel and meal reimbursements will be a cost savings to the overall general fund of the City. Opportunities through the Ohio Fire Academy, Ohio Fire Chief's Association, The University of Findlay, Owens Center for Disaster Preparedness and Bowling Green State University will be utilized to facilitate these courses on site for Department personnel.

The Department will also increase the training frequency in the Live Fire Simulator. Only one course could be offered in 2009 due to the lack of funding, however critical skills will be enhanced through live fire training in 2010. The simulator will be a valuable tool in reinforcing the basic skills of firefighters and provide a needed refresher in this arena.

STATION #3 CONCRETE REPAIRS

Repair to the rear approach of Fire Station #3 may take place in 2010. This project will complete an unfinished approach replacement which took place several years ago. It is expected that the City Street Department will provide a cost estimate and in addition will provide the labor. The Fire Department operating budget should be capable of absorbing the cost of the project.

FIRE PREVENTION

One critical area which will be addressed is that of Fire Prevention. The reduction in staffing Fire Prevention resulted in less code enforcement inspections in 2009. In 2009, one hundred and ninety less inspections occurred than in 2008. The Department will place a greater focus on prevention to offset the loss of firefighting personnel in 2010.

The LTOPC is currently working on integrating the department's Pre-plan inspection schedule with the Fire Prevention Bureau. Currently, fire suppression crews conduct pre-plan fire inspections of commercial structures. The pre-plan consists of a floor plan which is entered into the computer data base of the department. This information also includes chemical hazards, structural hazards, life safety egress, utilities and other pertinent information which is critical to firefighting operations. The Pre-plan program is a separate function of Fire Prevention's role and responsibilities and information is carried on Mobile Data Terminals located on the fire apparatus.

The LTOPC has held discussions with the prevention personnel and suppression personnel will now report any possible code enforcement issues to the Fire Prevention Bureau during crew's Pre-plan inspections. This will allow greater coverage of the commercial structures and augment the Fire Prevention Bureau. Bureau personnel will then follow-up with a visit to the commercial site to investigate any possible hazards to the public.

In addition, the LTOPC has also recommended that a Home Inspection program be made available to the public through various social service agencies in Findlay. Following the promotion of the third Battalion Chief in spring of 2010, the new Chief will

develop a program which will assist these agencies in providing home inspections to the elderly and disable members of the community. Fire suppression personnel will conduct the Home Inspections and identify safety hazards, check smoke detector placement and develop escape plans for these residents. Again, placing a greater emphasis on stopping fires before they occur will be a focus of the Department in 2010.

GRANTS

With the lack of capital funds available for the Fire Department, grant opportunities will again be sought in 2010. Funding through DHS Fire Prevention and Safety grant will be sought for public service announcements, a public carbon monoxide detector program and other life safety education material requested by the Fire Prevention Bureau. The Carbon Monoxide Detector program would be integrated with the new Home Inspection program mentioned earlier in this text.

The Department will also look to apply for funding through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) in order to construct improvements at Fire Station #4. These improvements would include an access drive and concrete parking lot to house the new fire simulator. A storage facility will also be requested to house additional tools and equipment which are utilized in training operations. The Department will also seek additional funding for two new thermal imaging cameras in 2010.