

### FIRE DEPARTMENT



#### ***Mission Statement***

The Arlington Fire Department will strive for excellence in the performance of its duty and service to the community and the customers for which it serves. The Department is committed to finding superior methods for insuring the life safety and property conservation of its citizens from the ravages of fire and other disasters. Additionally, the Fire Department strives to contribute to the physical wellness of the community through emergency medical service.

#### ***Fire Department Role***

The role of the Arlington Fire Department has evolved over the past thirty years from a fire suppression response team to an all hazards approach to the safety and wellness of Arlington. This evolution has occurred throughout the fire service in the United States.

“America Burning”, a comprehensive white paper done on the fire service done in 1973, confirmed that the United States had one of the worst records of protecting its citizens from the ravages of fire in the industrialized world. It challenged the fire service to make America a fire- safe environment. Since that time the number of fires has decreased dramatically and the number of deaths from fire has dropped over 50%. America’s fire service went from a defensive fire suppression response to an active inspection and code enforcement role. In other words, the fire service began putting out fires before they started through a proactive fire prevention program. This has led to a revolution in the definition of a fire department. No longer was it measured by how much fire it fought and how much smoke it ate. The fire service looked for any way to contribute to the safety of its citizens. Most fire departments, including Arlington’s, took over the role of responding to the medical emergencies of the community during this period. Its firefighters were cross-trained to become emergency medical technicians and it assumed the role of emergency ambulance provider for the Town.

During the 1980’s and 1990’s, the fire service had the responsibility of hazardous materials mitigation thrust upon it. In 1980 an incident in the City of Somerville, Massachusetts in 1980 involving deadly chemicals spilling from a train tank car put the fire service in this country on notice: Fire departments would be expected to protect its citizens and the environment from the unexpected release of hazardous materials. The “fire” department became the “all hazards” department.

The diversification of the fire duties services does not mean that fire suppression is not an issue. As long as we have electricity running through wooden buildings we will always have fires. Firefighting is now,

and always will be, the most important role of the Arlington Fire Department. The men and women of this department are superbly trained to respond to all types of fire. To the untrained eye it may seem that firefighting is no more than “putting the wet stuff on the red stuff.” This assumption could not be further from the truth. Every fire, large or small, employs different tactics and strategy. Today’s firefighters have extensive training in chemistry and the physical sciences to protect the lives and property of the people they are sworn to protect.

During 2005, the department responded to 4,328 calls for assistance (graph submitted by AFD). This is a slight increase from 2004. Of these calls, 2,135 were for medical emergencies. The total property loss was \$816,900, up from \$567,200 in 2004. The following chart shows some of the types of incidents responded to and their totals:

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### Arlington Fire Department – 2005 Summary

Fires	129
Emergency Medical	2,135
Medical Assists	250
Alarms Sounding	577
Carbon Monoxide Activations	50
Water Hazard	87
Mutual Aid	61
Lockout / in	89
Electrical Hazard / Down Power Line	208
Motor Vehicle Accidents	120
Smoke Scare	152
Natural Gas Emergencies	65
Flammable Liquid Hazards	34
Hazardous Condition	160
Other	211



*The Arlington Fire Department responds to a fire on Yale Rd.*

In the spring of 2006 the Town expects to break ground on its first new firehouse in over 80 years. The new Park Circle station will house Engine 3 and is expected to be ready for occupancy in early 2007. Several capital improvements, including a diesel exhaust system and a new emergency dispatch public address system, were installed in all stations.

Arlington's emergency dispatchers moved into a brand new, state of the art dispatch center in the summer of 2005. This dispatch center will process calls for emergency assistance for Police, Fire and EMS for many years to come.

FF Thomas Dean, Sr. and FF Louis Deluca retired from this department in 2005, both with over thirty years service to the Town.

### **Fire Prevention**

The Fire Prevention Division of the Arlington Fire Department issued 1,237 permits in the year 2005 totaling \$26,277. The division also coordinated the in-service inspection program. Fire companies inspected

over 200 buildings during their daily tours of duty during the summer of 2005.

The Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) investigated thirty structural fire incidents. Various causes included unattended candles, unattended cooking, electrical events, lightning, incendiary (arson), careless disposal of smoking materials, children playing with matches, and chemical reaction. The FIU also investigated eleven motor vehicle fires. Causes for these included incendiary, electrical/mechanical malfunction, traffic accident, careless disposal of smoking materials, and spilled fuel. In cooperation with the State Fire Marshal's Office and Arlington Police Department, the FIU was instrumental in assisting for the prosecution and conviction of a 2005 arson investigation.



The members of the Student Awareness for Fire Education (SAFE) program educated the elementary students of the Town in fire safety for the eighth consecutive year. The members of the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program (JFIP) counseled young, potential fire setters on the dangers of playing with fire. The JFIP educators, partnering for the fourth consecutive year with the Germaine Lawrence School, educated students who were identified as firesetters. These are only two of the programs that Arlington Firefighters volunteer to be trained in to protect their community

### **Training**

Lt. Kevin M. Kelley, Training Officer, is responsible for managing a comprehensive training program designed to meet the needs of all members of the department. The primary focus of the training division is to promote training necessary to allow the firefighter to achieve specific career goals. Firefighters are constantly evaluated and tested by the division to ensure proficiency in skills and retention of knowledge. This training includes inspections, classroom sessions, practical applications, and actual calls for service.

Every firefighter's career with the Arlington Fire Department begins at the Mass Fire Academy (MFA). Their knowledge, ability, and instincts are honed by the MFA's fire instructors during a rigorous schedule of training evolutions and a challenging curriculum. All firefighters graduate with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) certification of Firefighter I/II. The final result is a group of highly trained individuals, prepared to work as firefighters in one of three fire stations on one of four 24-hour shifts.

The training division strives to offer fire service personnel the complete and progressive training required to perform the job with which they are

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trusted: the protection of the lives and property of the citizens of Arlington. Courses have been hosted internally, bringing in MFA professionals as instructors. Private sector representatives delivered training to all members of the department. Captain Kevin Shaw, department EMS Coordinator, delivered all emergency medical service training in-house. The training division handles the development and delivery of all company-level drills, department-level training initiatives. In addition to new recruits, the training section is also responsible for continuing education and re-certification of EMT's.

In 2005, the AFD was able to obtain some real, hands-on training when the members were allowed access to the old Cable Television building on Mystic St. before it was torn down. The Firefighters were able to discuss forcible entry, roof ventilation, and roof operations and then practice those skills and techniques. The members were afforded another great opportunity when the MBTA Subway Division on Emergency Operations trained them inside the Alewife subway station underneath Thorndike Field. Several members of the department were selected to participate in a two-day, joint training exercise attended by the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Town Manager, department heads and the FBI. The purpose of the exercise was to bring all Town, State and Federal agencies together to train on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and then test it with a simulated terrorist attack in Arlington.

### ***Emergency Medical Services (EMS)***

The Arlington Fire Department continues to provide superior pre-hospital care to those with emergency medical issues. Fifty firefighters are currently trained to the EMT level, and all others are trained to the first responder level. This requires a significant commitment by the department to providing the best service possible.

Captain Kevin Shaw, department EMS coordinator for the past seven years, does the vast majority of recertification training in-house. Each EMT spends over forty hours a year in EMS training to refine older skills and to learn new skills and protocols.

The department is looking forward to the acquisition of a new Rescue vehicle early in 2006. This vehicle was custom made to the specifications of fire department mechanics and EMT's.

A comprehensive study will be done in 2006 regarding the future of EMS in Arlington. Recommendations on whether it is necessary, and or practical, to upgrade the Arlington Fire Department EMS to Advanced Life Support (ALS) from the Basic Life Support (BLS) service now provided will be addressed.