

**Falls Church
Volunteer
Fire Department**



Annual Report - 2003

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The mission of the Falls Church Volunteer Fire Department (FCVFD) is to aid in the preservation of life and property. This mission is completed in cooperation with the City of Falls Church government and the Arlington County Fire Department. During the calendar year 2003, the volunteers participated and contributed in a myriad of functions related to the public safety of the citizens of the greater Falls Church community. The following is a summary of the most significant activities for the year:

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

Hours and Emergency Responses

The FCVFD increased overall participation by 53% over year 2002. Members of the FCVFD contributed nearly 6,800 hours staffing units and supplementing the career staff during 2003. During these hours, members responded to 1,617 calls for assistance. In preparation for fire department activities, members participated in over 6,200 hours of fire and emergency medical services training. In addition to the actual emergency operations and public service aspects of the Department, members spent nearly 2,900 hours completing the necessary administrative functions to raise funds, maintain facilities, and perform other basic business tasks.

Membership

The FCVFD ended the year with 81 members on the rolls, including 15 members of the Auxiliary.

TRAINING

Firefighter I/II Course

The FCVFD conducted a Virginia State Certified Firefighter I/II course sponsored by the Arlington County Firemen's Association. Chief Evinger served as the lead instructor for the course and point of contact with the Department of Fire Programs. Captain Schomburg maintained the records critical to receiving certifications from the Commonwealth. Members participated in classroom and skills training on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and all day Saturday and Sunday for 4 months. Course topics spanned all aspects of firefighting, including hose streams, ladders, search and rescue, breathing apparatus, and live fire exposure. Ten Falls Church volunteers completed the 288-hour course to attain their certification as structural firefighters. In addition to the students, the FCVFD contributed heavily to the course by providing senior instructors, classroom facilities, and apparatus to support all phases of the training.

Hazardous Materials Courses

In conjunction with the Firefighter I/II course, the FCVFD participated in Virginia State Certified Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations courses that consisted of 40 hours of classroom and practical activities. The course prepares members to handle the initial stages of a hazardous materials release. Ten Falls Church volunteers completed the course to attain their certifications for hazardous materials response. ACFD

Firefighter William Bennett served as the lead instructor for the course. Firefighter Bennett is assigned to Fire Station 6 on the B-shift.

Aerial Driver/Operator Course

Members attended two weekend sessions of training in Winchester, Virginia, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. Three volunteers completed the Aerial Operator class that consisted of 32 hours of classroom and practical exercises using ladder trucks from a variety of departments in the Winchester area.

Emergency Medical Technician Recertification

Six members participated in the 32-hour EMT refresher class in order to recertify as Basic Emergency Medical Technicians. Two members attended two weekend sessions of training in Winchester, Virginia, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, two attended courses at Northern Virginia Community College, and two completed the course at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Training Academy.

Emergency Medical Technician – Intermediate Course

One FCVFD member completed Virginia and National Registry certification as an Intermediate Emergency Medical Technician. He completed this 390-hour advanced life support course at George Washington University. In addition to the standard certification, he also obtained certification in Advanced Cardiac Life Support and Basic Trauma Life Support-Advanced.

Emergency Vehicle Operator Course

Three members completed the 16-hour emergency operator course offered by the Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department. The course teaches defensive driving tactics for fire department vehicles in both emergency and non-emergency travel. It consists of classroom materials followed by practical evolutions in an obstacle course and on the road.

NFPA 1403 Live Fire Instructor Course

In order to prepare for instructing firefighters during live fire exercises, eight members attended courses at the Fairfax County and Arlington County Fire Training Academies. The courses were based upon NFPA standard 1403 that dictates specific criteria for selecting and preparing structures for training fires, resource requirements, and safety rules governing live fire exercises.

Critical Incident Stress Management

One member became a Critical Incident Stress Management counselor recognized by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. He obtained group counseling, crisis intervention, and peer counseling training in Virginia Beach and Ellicott City.

EMS Bicycle Operations Course

Two FCVFD members completed the Arlington County Fire Department Bicycle EMS course conducted at the Fire Training Academy. The course consisted of 4 hours of classroom discussion followed by an afternoon of practical exercises. The practical exercises included rolling dismounts, emergency stops, bicycle control in tight spaces, simulated curbs, and a set of stairs to descend. The course enables the personnel to participate on bicycle-mounted emergency medical teams at large events such as Independence Day and the Marine Corps Marathon.

Wildland Firefighting Courses

Three FCVFD members traveled to Fort Pickett, Virginia, to receive training in wildland firefighting during the 2003 Wildland Fire Academy. Two personnel attended the Wildland Firefighter Training, Intro to Wildland Fire Behavior, and Intro to the Incident Command System courses. The third member completed the Wildfire Powersaws and Initial Attack Incident Commander course.

Indoctrination and Orientation

Throughout the year, FCVFD instructors conducted indoctrination and orientation training for recruits from Falls Church and the six other volunteer departments within Arlington County. Eight FCVFD recruits completed their indoctrination in 2003. Most of the training occurred at the meeting facility at Station 6 using Falls Church apparatus and equipment for practical evolutions. The orientation program consists of a comprehensive 2-tiered system that trains new volunteers in fire and rescue administration and operations. Topics range from cardiopulmonary resuscitation, cultural diversity, and Fire Department Organization to personal protective equipment, stretching hoselines, and placing ground ladders. Recruits must pass both written and practical exams before being permitted to participate in emergency operations.

Fireground Operations Simulation

During the weekend of August 2, the homeowners at 309 and 321 Grove Avenue allowed the Falls Church Volunteer Fire Department access to their vacant dwellings prior to their demolition. The construction manager, Suburban Builders, provided this unprecedented availability of two homes on the same street. Twenty-two volunteers from Falls Church and Arlington participated in fireground simulations and skills stations. In addition to the volunteers, career firefighters from Falls Church Station 6, Fairfax County Station 1, Fairfax County Station 8, and Fairfax County Station 10 were also invited to participate.

The skills practiced included roof ventilation, forcible entry through exterior doors, search and rescue, mechanical ventilation, overhaul techniques, self-rescue through plaster walls, hoseline advancement and use, and firefighter rescue drills. Low-visibility conditions were created using a theatrical smoke generator borrowed from the Arlington Fire Training Academy.

The incident simulations utilized hose, tools, and equipment from the FCVFD Reserve Engine and Utility. The Auxiliary to the Falls Church VFD provided food and beverages

during the event. In addition to the FCVFD units, the Cherrydale VFD Light and Air unit and the Arlington-Falls Church Volunteer Rescue Squad ambulance supported the drill.

Live Fire Scenarios

During the month of September, the Arlington County Fire Department received two apartment buildings near Bailey's Crossroads to use for live fire training. Four FCVFD members assisted the ACFD as instructors during the evolutions. The members assisted with setting up the fuel, igniting fires, staffing safety teams, and performing exterior support operations. Additionally, several FCVFD members participated in the drills while supplementing the career staff on the apparatus.

County Drills

In order to ensure proficiency and comply with government requirements for education, Countywide training is conducted on a monthly basis. FCVFD instructors organized and executed many of the drills. The drills in 2003 consisted of:

- February: Emergency Communications Center
Assistant Chief Clarke arranged for a tour of the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center. Members viewed the emergency call takers, dispatching, and methods used for tracking units.
- March: Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction
ACFD Lieutenant Salameh discussed the response to terrorism incidents, standard operating procedures, response equipment, and potential types of incidents responders could face.
- April: Health Information Portability and Accountability Act
ACFD Paramedic Konoza presented information regarding new federal regulations regarding patient care reports and confidentiality.
- June: House Fire Scenarios
Members participated in various fireground scenarios organized by Captain Schomburg. The evolutions were conducted at the Arlington County Fire Training Academy smoke house using a smoke generator to create low-visibility conditions. In addition to instructors and participants, the FCVFD reserve engine and utility provided hoselines, SCBA, and equipment.
- July: CPR Recertification
Firefighter/EMT Hamric conducted a recertification course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation for operational members.
- August: Hybrid Automobiles
Deputy Chief Schomburg researched and organized training on the new breed of automobiles that are growing in popularity, the hybrid. The training focused on tactical considerations and precautions to be taken when a hybrid auto is involved

in a motor vehicle collision or a fire. The FCVFD secured a hybrid vehicle from Bill Page Honda for demonstration purposes during the drill.

- October: Sports Injuries

The athletic trainers from Yorktown and O'Connell High Schools presented information on the treatment of sports injuries. Members were provided an opportunity to practice airway stabilization, cervical spine immobilization, and patient packaging techniques using football and lacrosse equipment brought by the trainers. This drill was conducted at the City of Falls Church Community Center due to a lack of classroom space within the fire department facilities.

- November: Ladders

Assistant Chief Evinger conducted a review of ground ladder practices at the Arlington Fire Training Academy. Members participated in an interactive discussion of ground ladder uses, placement, selection, and safety. Following the classroom section, members practiced carrying, placing, and climbing 20, 24, and 35-foot ladders.

- December: CPR Recertification

Members participated in a recertification course in cardiopulmonary resuscitation at Arlington Fire Station 1.

Company Drills

The FCVFD conducts monthly training meetings to assist members with fire and EMS topics. The drills in 2003 consisted of:

- January: Water Emergencies

Chief Evinger reviewed typical operations associated with controlling water leaks in buildings. Water removal techniques, utility control, and safety considerations were discussed.

- February: Building Construction

Chief Evinger instructed about the five types of building construction, fire spread characteristics, and the collapse hazards of each.

- March: Search and Rescue

Chief Evinger reviewed fireground search methods, victim removal practices, and tactics for various occupancies.

- April: Firefighter I/II Skills Review

Members split into groups and reviewed hose lays, salvage covers, ground ladders, and forcible entry.

- June: Hose Dummy Construction

Lieutenant Holder led members in the construction of mannequins for use during search and rescue practices. The mannequins were constructed using old sections of hose, duct tape, and old clothes donated by members.

- August: SCBA and Hose Loads

Captain Holder and Firefighter Melnick reviewed self-rescue and buddy breathing techniques with the self-contained breathing apparatus and deployment of attack hoselines.

- September: Hurricane Isabel

Assistant Chief Evinger conducted a post-action evaluation of the situations encountered during Hurricane Isabel by fire department members. Specific incidents, operational challenges, and improvements for future severe weather events were discussed.

- October: Winter Fire Emergencies

Assistant Chief Evinger reviewed standard operating procedures, tactics, and common conditions encountered at carbon monoxide emergencies, chimney fires, and other common fire responses during cold weather.

- November: Winter Medical Emergencies

EMS Captain Fortner reviewed patient assessment and treatment protocols for common medical emergencies encountered during cold weather.

ACFD Small Tools Manual

Assistant Chief Evinger edited the Small Tools Manual for the Arlington County Fire Department Training Division. The project consisted of illustrating a 105-page reference manual that describes the basic operations of all hand tools and small powered tools carried on Arlington County Fire Department apparatus. Illustrations were collected through digital photography, scanning, and downloading items from the Internet.

Lancaster Fire Expo

In May, ten members attended one of the largest fire department trade shows in the United States in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Members took the opportunity to research the latest technology in tools, fire apparatus, and ambulances.

PUBLIC EVENTS

Memorial Day 3k Fun Run and Parade

Twelve volunteers provided emergency medical services during the annual Falls Church Memorial Day festivities. Members staffed the Utility, Chief's Vehicle, two Ambulances, and Reserve Engine throughout the day. Volunteer units participated in the parade and remained at the festival until the crowd subsided.

Cubmobile Race – June 8

At the request of the City Manager's Office, three volunteers staffed the FCVFD Ambulance for the annual Cubscout soapbox derby on South Oak Street.

Independence Day – Fairfax City Parade and Competition

The Falls Church Model T Ford, carrying two members, participated in the annual parade. Following the parade, the Reserve Engine and a team of four firefighters competed against other departments in the lay-a-line competition. Later in the day, a team of five members participated in the battle of the barrel competition making it to the semi-final round.

Independence Day – Falls Church Fireworks

Ten volunteer personnel staffed Reserve Engine and Ambulance 106 for the annual City of Falls Church Independence Day celebration at George Mason High School. Units remained at the school to assist the fireworks contractor and crowds following the display.

Independence Day – George Washington Parkway

In addition to the City of Falls Church activities, five FCVFD emergency medical technicians, along with representatives from other departments, assisted the National Park Service with emergency medical services along the George Washington Parkway.

Howard Dean Political Rally

In August, six FCVFD members staffed the Reserve Engine and Ambulance at the request of Falls Church Police for a political rally at Cherry Hill Park for Democratic Presidential candidate Howard Dean. The event drew approximately 4,000 attendees.

Arlington County Fair

Four FCVFD members contributed approximately 20 hours staffing the Arlington County Firemen's Association booth at the annual Arlington County Fair in August. The fair presented an opportunity to share fire prevention and home safety tips to hundreds of citizens. Recruitment of new members was also a priority at this event.

Vienna Halloween Parade

On October 29, the FCVFD participated in the Town of Vienna annual Halloween Parade with the Reserve Engine and Model T Ford. Seven personnel participated and received dinner at the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department.

Tuckahoe Anniversary Community Parade

On November 8, three members took the Reserve Engine to the 50th anniversary celebration of the Tuckahoe Elementary School. In support of the event, the unit participated in a community parade.

High School Varsity Football Games

The FCVFD was requested to provide emergency medical services by Bishop O'Connell and Yorktown High School at their home football games. Members staffed the Ambulance for 19 games, assisted 7 people, and transported 2 patients to local hospitals for further treatment.

Marine Corps Marathon

Three FCVFD members staffed a basic life support ambulance for 14 hours in support of the Marine Corps Marathon. Additionally, one volunteer participated as a member of an Arlington Fire Department EMS bike team.

ACPD Sobriety Checkpoint

In August, the Arlington County Police requested assistance from the FCVFD to provide lighting in support of a sobriety checkpoint. The FCVFD Utility assisted the Cherrydale VFD Light and Air unit for seven hours with two members participating. In addition to the lighting operations, members assisted with a medical emergency prior to the arrival of additional resources.

Old Tom Activities

In July, the 1918 Model T Ford chemical fire engine made a trip to Detroit, Michigan to participate in the 47th Annual Tour of the Model T Ford Club. The club was celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Ford Motor Company. President Melnick and his father made the 500-mile trip using FCVFD member Art DeCelle's personal vehicle to pull the antique in its trailer. During the 9-day journey, Old Tom was driven to numerous historic locations and judged against other Model T vehicles from around the world.

In addition to the Detroit trip, Old Tom participated in an antique auto show in Rockville, Maryland in October. The antique represented model year 1918 in an exhibit that included vehicles from each of the 100 years of production by the Ford Motor Company.

MAJOR INCIDENTS – EMERGENCY RESPONSES

Extreme Cold – January 23-28

During a period of extreme cold weather in January, the FCVFD Utility was placed into service using equipment from a vehicle that was out of service for repairs. EMT Kirby drove to the repair facility in Purcellville, Virginia to retrieve salvage equipment from the Cherrydale Light and Air unit to mitigate broken water pipe incidents. Seventeen FCVFD members staffed the utility for approximately fifty hours and responded to six significant incidents during the extreme weather. These incidents involved two highrise residential buildings, a used car business, the George Mason University Law Library, the Arlington Public Library in Shirlington, and the Arlington County Residential Programs Center.

Hurricane Isabel – September 17, 18, and 19

Nineteen FCVFD members staffed three utility vehicles, the Cherrydale VFD Light and Air unit, and two basic life support ambulances for nearly 450 hours during the weather emergency. These units officially responded to 69 incidents that included downed trees on structures, downed utility wires, outside natural gas leaks, automatic fire alarms, and medical emergencies. These incidents required personnel to place barricades around downed wires, secure utilities on damaged structures, assess structural damage, and assist residents with locating alternative shelter. In addition to emergency responses, members staffing Light and Air 103 set up ventilation fans to cool critical electronic equipment in the communications room at the Arlington County Emergency Communications Center. Deputy Chief Schomburg coordinated all volunteer activities within Arlington County during the event. Following the hurricane, FCVFD units performed damage assessments in the City of Falls Church to identify hazardous conditions, road blockages, damaged structures, and utility outages. FCVFD members were requested to assist the Arlington County Office of Emergency Management with distributing bags of ice at Washington and Lee High School. The volunteer units provided floodlighting to the distribution area and also aided in unloading the ice from the tractor-trailer into Arlington County refrigerated trucks. In the days that followed, Chief Clarke attended a FEMA briefing with personnel from the City of Falls Church to identify Federal reporting and reimbursement procedures.

High Winds – November 13

During a period of unusually high winds, five FCVFD members staffed Utility 106 and the Cherrydale VFD Light and Air unit. Personnel contributed over 35 manhours and responded to 18 calls for assistance. Incidents included a person trapped in their vehicle by a downed tree, downed utility wires, and trees fallen onto structures.

Slim's Complex, Idaho Wildland Fire – August 22 to September 4

One member spent two weeks with the Virginia Department of Forestry Fire Crew #15 at a 26,000-acre wildland fire in Idaho. The crew constructed fire lines and deployed hoselines to extinguish spot fires while working with bulldozers and helicopters to contain the fire.

Structure Fires

Throughout 2003, FCVFD firefighters responded with the career staff to numerous working fire incidents. During these incidents, members performed a variety of functions with the career crews, including placing ladders, ventilating structures, hoseline management, and overhauling fire areas. In particular, volunteers assisted during the significant fires on Gordons Road, Shadow Walk, South Florida Street, Arlington Boulevard, and South Washington Street.

Arlington – Falls Church Volunteer Rescue Squad

The Arlington-Falls Church Volunteer Rescue Squad is an organization formed as a subsidiary to the Arlington County Firemen's Association. The Volunteer Rescue Squad

owns and maintains a basic life support ambulance that is staffed on weekends by fire department volunteers from throughout Arlington County. During 2003, Falls Church volunteers performed over 1,000 hours of service on the Arlington-Falls Church Volunteer Rescue Squad unit. During those hours, the ambulance responded to over 240 calls for emergency assistance. This unit supplements the career advanced life support ambulances by handling less serious emergencies, thus freeing the advanced life support units to respond to more life threatening situations. In addition to staffing the unit, the President, Chief, and Deputy Chiefs of the Volunteer Rescue Squad are FCVFD members.

Light and Air 103

The Cherrydale Volunteer Fire Department owns and maintains a unit to provide lighting and air cylinder replenishment at the scene of major incidents. During an emergency, staffing is obtained by use of pagers to call in volunteer members, including firefighters from the FCVFD. In addition to responses during Hurricane Isabel, FCVFD members responded to 10 incidents with Light and Air 103 spending nearly 70 manhours on emergency scenes in 2003. These incidents ranged from greater alarm fires to water leaks to police events. FCVFD members also frequently staffed the unit during training exercises and public events.

Canteen 106

The Auxiliary to the FCVFD maintains a stepvan equipped to operate as a mobile kitchen during extended incidents. The unit is capable of preparing hot or cold food and drinks. It is staffed exclusively by volunteers alerted by pager during large incidents. Recently, the Auxiliary has established a cooperative response with the Arlington Chapter of the Red Cross to assist at emergencies. During 2003, the unit responded to 8 incidents and also assisted during two training events.

FIRE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Career Day at GMHS

EMT Katz and a member from the Ballston VFD participated in career day at George Mason Middle School. The members spoke to 100 7th grade students about opportunities in both volunteer and career emergency medical services.

Vacation Bible School at Columbia Baptist Church

Four volunteer personnel took the reserve engine to Columbia Baptist Church during their vacation bible school. Members shared fire safety tips with approximately 300 children during the visit.

Scout Troop Education

During October, the FCVFD provided fire prevention education to Cub Scouts from Troop 681 in Falls Church. A total of 75 children and 60 parents and siblings attended the session at Fire Station 6. Volunteer Firefighter Art DeCelle coordinated activities that

included demonstrations of such common household exposures as flammable liquids, cooking, and electrical hazards. The scouts were introduced to firefighter protective clothing, hose lines, home fire escape programs, fire extinguishers, emergency reporting procedures, and fire apparatus.

In November, ten Girlscouts and their parents visited Station 6 where they received a tour of the station, fire prevention materials, and fire safety education from FCVFD members.

Girls Soccer Team Education

During December, members provided fire safety education to 15 members of a girl's soccer team. The children were shown a fire safety video and home escape plans were discussed.

Fire Prevention Week and Open House – October 7-12

Falls Church volunteer firefighters visited Saint James, Mount Daniel, and Thomas Jefferson Schools in the City of Falls Church to teach approximately 650 children in grades K through 4 about fire safety. In addition to FCVFD personnel, ACFD Battalion Chief Saulnier assisted with the school visit to Saint James.

The FCVFD hosted its annual open house to culminate fire prevention week activities. Citizens were invited to visit the fire station and obtain fire safety tips, learn about the equipment, and watch demonstrations of fire and rescue techniques. The demonstrations consisted of a vehicle rescue, aerial ladder operations, and fire extinguisher use. Sparky the Fire Dog was also on-hand to promote fire safety. The Falls Church Sheriff's Office performed child fingerprinting and provided safety tips throughout the day.

Operation Enduring Claus – December 15-23

Captain Brian Holder led the efforts to organize the annual Santa Claus visits to the Greater Falls Church area. The reserve engine was decorated and a chair prepared for Santa Claus to travel in style atop the hosebed. Santa's travels encompassed the entire City of Falls Church and other neighborhoods on the fringes of the City as time permitted. During the trips, FCVFD members handed out candy canes and fire safety literature to citizens. Dog biscuits were provided for our four-legged friends who frequently come out to visit with Santa too. This year, the FCVFD purchased and distributed over 5,500 candy canes and 200 dog biscuits. A total of thirty-two FCVFD members donated approximately 230 hours of service during the operation.

In addition to the evening rides, the FCVFD transported Santa to Cherrydale Fire Station 3 for a community event involving over 300 children.

FCVFD Meeting Hall

Through a lease agreement with the City of Falls Church, the FCVFD manages a meeting facility on the second floor of the fire station. In addition to being a classroom and meeting room for the FCVFD, public safety agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens reserve the room throughout the year. During 2003, the FCVFD

hosted 24 birthday parties for local children and 4 scouting events. Fire safety presentations and tours of the facilities are provided to children and parents during these events. The Arlington County Fire Department scheduled the room for 33 events and the Falls Church Police for 20 events.

PRESENTATIONS

Arlington County Volunteer Appreciation Reception

Chief Evinger was selected as one of Arlington County's Outstanding Volunteers for 2003. The ceremony was held at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association building in Ballston. In addition to Chief Evinger, several volunteers from the Department of Human Services, Police Auxiliary, Sheriff's Office, and Department of Parks and Recreation were recognized. County Board members presented the awards with approximately 200 people on hand. Nineteen FCVFD members contributing over 250 hours of volunteer service to Arlington County also received certificates recognizing their participation.

ACFRA Awards Banquet

During the annual Arlington County Fire and Rescue Association banquet, FCVFD officers and members received the following awards as selected by their peers:

- *Firefighter of the Year:* Firefighter Jimmy Smith
- *Rookie of the Year:* Firefighter Chris Becker
- *Instructor of the Year:* Assistant Chief Patrick Evinger
- *Officer of the Year:* Chief Jim Clarke

Arlington Inter-Service Council Man of the Year

The Arlington-Falls Church Volunteer Rescue Squad nominated Deputy Chief Schomburg for the Arlington Inter-Service Council Man of the Year. Chief Schomburg was recommended due to his heavy involvement in administrating the volunteer resources in the Arlington County Fire Department and representing the Rescue Squad during meetings with ACFD management.