



ALTON FIRE / RESCUE DEPARTMENT

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"Desire to Serve - Committed to Protect"

On April 12, 2009 the Fire Department experienced one of the worst fires since 1945. The fire was located at the Alton Bay Christian Conference Center and the initial tone came in at 4:45 pm on Easter Sunday. We had a very fast moving fire fueled by 40 mph winds. The men and women of the fire department fought a courageous battle working the head of the fire. They were, at times, unsure if they were going to be able to hold their positions; however, they did with assistance from many mutual aid companies. We were additionally concerned with drop down (spot) fires of which firefighting crews extinguished 22 of them. This fire was the largest fire the Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid Dispatch Center had ever dispatched; the fire went to 14 alarms with 52 mutual aid communities called in to assist us. If not for our Dispatch Center and the mutual aid agreements in place, this fire would undoubtedly been much worse and the cost could have been astronomical. The estimated value of properties destroyed was well over \$2.5 million dollars. I wish to publicly thank all the men and women of our department for a job well done under these very dangerous circumstances. I also would like to thank Chief Heath and his staff for their assistance with doing all the evacuations.

This year the Alton Bay Fire Station was re-roofed, new siding and windows installed, and painted. I hope everyone that travels by is happy with the way it turned out. The East Alton Station is receiving a fresh coat of paint on the outside and will have a new metal roof installed. This roof should last somewhere in the 50 year time frame. The Central Station got a face lift as well this year with paint applied to the exterior to match the Bay Station; the interior of the apparatus bays was painted including the ceiling and the floor - It looks great! All of this work was done through volunteer labor from our department members, except for the Bay Station. We have many more maintenance projects that need to be done and will tackle each as the budget allows. Projects we want to do include re-roofing the West and Central Stations as they leak; paint the exterior of West Alton Station; re-do the inside of the Bay Station. The inside of this building is in terrible disrepair. When completed, we hope to house our antiques in it. The antiques we have are our 1st two motorized pieces of apparatus; a 1917 Model T Soda acid Fire Truck and a 1930 Maxim. The Fire Department Association, over the years, has completely restored both pieces of apparatus.

Our Student Intern Firefighters live at our stations and continue to teach the Risk Watch Program to the children at the Central School. This program educates our youngsters on how to be fire safe as well as fire smart. These students respond 24/7 to Fire and EMS calls as their certifications are earned. We continued to train more people to various certification levels whereby allowing us to continue to provide the best of protection to our residents and travelers through our community. Many of our members don't even put in for countless hours used taking classes.

Regarding the Ambulance: we are very fortunate here in Alton as our ambulance funds itself! The income that this billing produces is used to provide emergency ambulance services at **NO COST** to the taxpayer; many towns spend thousands of

dollars to provide this service and do not receive revenues in return. We have funded all EMS consumables, truck repairs and expenses, vehicle fuel, EMS inoculations, lease payments for Ambulance replacement, payroll costs, EMS equipment and annual maintenance of it, EMS training, Summer coverage, defibrillators, and personal protective clothing for responders, and any other associated costs. The Fire Boat is used as an emergency medical transport unit; it gets used more as an ambulance than as a fire boat.

This past August former Chief Alan Johnson passed away after committing 17 years of service to our Town. We offer our condolences to his family and wish them all the best in the coming year.

Alton's Fire Department budget for 2009 was almost \$310,000.00. Our call volume is about 700 for 2009 so far with our cost per call averaging approximately \$440.00. Information is available; visit our website at www.Altonfire.org to compare costs as they relate to our fellow fire departments in the area. We continue to recruit new members to join our department. Our hope is to be able to maintain our call department but we can't do it alone. We need more of our Towns' people to get involved, as the old adage says "many hands make for light work". If we do not have more residents get involved, we will have to resort to a full time department and our budget will soar to more than three times what it is now, it could be in the one million dollar range. Our Five Year Plan is also posted on our website; be sure to check it out.

This year the task of fire inspections has been funded on a part-time basis; over 80 various inspections have been completed. Annual inspections are required in all public buildings, i.e. schools, daycare centers, summer camps, restaurants, motels, churches and other areas of public assembly. This year the State Law changed regarding inspections in schools; the law now requires two inspections be done, per school, in each school year. A fee schedule was adopted and approved by the Selectmen which will help to offset costs associated with the inspections; to date we have collected \$2,040.00. Some of the calls for inspections include woodstoves, generator installations, chimneys, oil burners, smoke detectors and CO detectors. Our Fire Inspector reviews plans and/or any site reviews sent to us from the Planning Department. He participated in the new Emergency Management Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan through the L.R.P.C. which includes comprehensive water resource mapping for fire department water supply locations throughout the town and is actively involved with the Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health relative to pandemic planning over the last year. We'd like to remind all residents to make sure they have working smoke detectors as well as CO (carbon monoxide) detectors installed in their homes. If anyone needs any assistance with placement of these units, please do not hesitate to call the Central Fire Station at 875-0222.

Lastly, I wish to thank the officer's and members of the Department for the hundreds of hours that they spend making the Department a better place, as well as the Town of Alton. I am proud to boast the quality of service for the dollars spent are unparalleled by our department. We strive to make Alton a better place to live for all our residents and vacationers.

Respectfully submitted,
Scott I. Williams, Fire Chief

