

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fiscal Year 2007

In FY 07, consistent with previous years' experience, emergency responses again increased, this year by 6.7%: EMS emergencies increased by 6.3% to 3,780 and fire calls increased by 7.7% to 1,351. This is the first time we have responded to more than 5,000 emergencies in a single year. There was one fire fatality, with 2 civilians and 46 firefighters injured during these incidents. Fire Prevention activity increased due to more oversight time required at the construction projects on the three college campuses.

The three major concerns we have had relative to public safety in Amherst continue: first – the number of simultaneous emergency incidents we encounter strip our on-duty forces to zero almost daily. In these circumstances, we need to rely upon call and student volunteer firefighters to respond back to the fire station to provide coverage for incidents. Such situations occurred over 300 times in FY 07 and can only be solved by increasing the number of career firefighters on duty to a minimum of nine per shift. We continue to have the smallest career force in the state for our population range. The second major issue is the high injury rate to our firefighters – the highest in the State. This also relates to the call volume per firefighter ratio, also the highest in the State. The final concern relates to response times of ambulances and fire apparatus to South Amherst - it takes too long, practically speaking, and corroborated as by applying national standards for emergency medicine and fire safety. This situation only can be rectified by adding a fire station in South Amherst.

In a nine-day span between August 17, 2006 and August 26, we had three major challenging fires, which resulted in one civilian fatality and seven injured firefighters, including five who were trapped inside a burning structure during a roof collapse; and caused over \$2 million in damages. We needed to call in mutual aid for two of the fires, with ten neighboring fire departments sending assistance.

We continued to receive benefits from a \$500,000 federal grant (SAFER) received in November, 2005, which added five (5) new firefighter/paramedic positions to our department. This grant gradually requires Amherst to assume more of the salary burden over five years (this year the grant paid 75% of the salaries). In terms of personnel changes, Captain Gary Childs retired after serving with our department since 1972. Firefighter/paramedic Heidi Olmstead retired also. They were replaced by firefighter/paramedics Reed Frailey and Joseph Lagasse, both of whom came through the student and call forces. Jennifer Sell was promoted to Captain in March, becoming the first woman to be promoted in the career force. We have 31 paramedics on staff, with one student firefighter in training, to continue to provide the premier Advanced Life Support service in Western Massachusetts.

Our SAFE (Student Awareness of Fire Education) program in the schools completed another successful year under the guidance of Captain Tim Goodhind and firefighter John Ingram. This program has been touted by the State Fire Marshal's Office as one of the best in the Commonwealth. Amherst Fire personnel continue to seek ways to improve it each year, as with pancake breakfast initiated this year. In FY 07, we also began to train the elderly in fire and fall prevention.

Captains McKay and Olmstead continued to coordinate the tactical paramedic team, which interfaces with Amherst, State and UMASS police at civil disobedience events where medical assistance may be needed under less than ideal situations.

The Department's Technical Rescue Team, led by Captain Sterling and comprised of ten career firefighters, continues to improve their capabilities to handle confined space, high angle, collapse and other technical rescues each year. We have been attempting to secure structural collapse rescue equipment from federal and college sources for the past three years without success, so we will try to acquire this equipment through the budget process in FY 09.

Assistant Chief Zlogar and firefighter/paramedic Shanley led the Department's wilderness search and rescue team.

The Town and the firefighters' union created an EMS Training Committee in FY 07, to assist our EMS program in terms of training, continuing education, and a quality assurance program for our paramedics and EMTs so that we continue to render excellence in medical care.

Firefighter/paramedic Sell continues as a member of the County's child fire-setter invention group. Captain Johnson and firefighters Tebo and Gaughan comprise the Fire Department component of the Town's Fire Investigation Unit, along with a State police trooper and two Amherst police officers.

Firefighter/paramedic Martell took over from Captain Childs the membership on TRIAD to assist with installing signs for the "What's Your Number" project. Over 1,500 homes and businesses now have street number signs posted in front yards to allow police and fire personnel to find them more quickly in an emergency.

Assistant Chief Zlogar is the Town's Emergency Manager (formerly Civil Defense Director). He is responsible for coordinating Homeland Security issues for the Town. In FY 07, he began a project, directed by Town Manager Shaffer, to update the Town's emergency plans.

Firefighter Adair and firefighter/paramedics Theilman, Dion and Szewczynski continue in their capacity as our mechanics, saving the Town thousands of dollars repairing our vehicle fleet, which numbers 24 vehicles and 6 specialty trailers.

Assistant Chief Zlogar and firefighter/paramedics Roy, Sell and Martell are members of the state Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team, quartered in Chicopee. This team responds to all hazardous materials emergencies in Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties with equipment provided by the Commonwealth.

Our call and student volunteer firefighters continue to function as a vital element of our Fire Department. We could not provide the level of emergency services for the Town without them, especially when all of our career on-duty members are committed to emergencies.

The citizen-based Fire Station Study Committee completed their work in FY 07. They recommended that a new sub-station be built in South Amherst to bring response times in line with the recommended national standards. As our 1928 Central Station has reached the end of its useful life, they also recommended that it be replaced. The Joint Capital Planning Committee now will need to align these recommendations with other Town needs and with

recommendations from the new Comprehensive Plan before as they prepare their recommendations to Town Meeting.

The Hadley Route 9 reconstruction project began, and once again we experienced minor delays with our ambulances traversing to and returning from the Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton.

Firefighter/paramedic Bill Klaus continued to be assigned solely to fire prevention duties. At any given time approximately 50 construction projects are ongoing, which require Fire Department oversight for Fire and Building Code compliance. Even with his assistance, we continue to be overwhelmed in this area. There now is more coordination between Inspection Services and the Health Department with regard to plan review and inspections, with the hope of streamlining the process for businesses.

As a result of the tragic nightclub fire in Rhode Island in 2004, the Massachusetts legislature now requires fire sprinklers in all nightclubs, bars, dance halls and similar entertainment venues with an occupancy of 100 or more. This law created significantly more workload for us as we have many businesses that fall within these parameters.

Amherst continues to have the smallest career firefighter contingent in the State for our population range (28,000-40,000) and is one of the busiest departments in terms of emergency responses and fire prevention activities. Every year the workload seems to increase. The mental and physical stress this level of activity produces with so few people to carry it out is reflected in our high injury rate. Statewide and national statistics reveal that we should have a minimum of 16 staff on duty around the clock, yet we have 7. The increasing number of simultaneous emergency calls is presenting a public safety crisis, when we have few if any resources remaining to answer the next call. Town Manager Shaffer has been able to engage University officials in meaningful talks surrounding payment for fire and EMS services. We hope this leads to Amherst College and Hampshire College agreements in FY 08 so that the minimum staffing of the Fire Department can be increased without tapping Amherst taxpayers to do so. The result will be to secure additional resources required for improving the public safety for all the citizens of Amherst and its firefighters.

The people of Amherst need to be recognized for their continued fire-safe practices and for the cooperation we receive daily during emergencies and inspections. Amherst firefighters are to be congratulated for their selfless dedication to duty and for ensuring our safety each day as well as delivering quality emergency medical care to Hadley, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury as well as here in Amherst.

Reports on fire and inspection statistics, emergency medical services, Department training, and the Call and Student Forces follow. This material was authored by Assistant Chiefs Mike Zlogar and Lindsay Stromgren, Captain Tim Goodhind, and Call Deputy Chief Edward Mientka, Jr.

Respectfully submitted,
Keith E. Hoyle, Fire Chief

6 YEAR STATISTICAL RECORD

	<u>FY 07</u>	<u>FY 06</u>	<u>FY 05</u>	<u>FY 04</u>	<u>FY 03</u>	<u>FY 02</u>
EMS RESPONSES	3780	3556	3340	3339	3300	3161
FIRE RESPONSES	1351	1254	1358	1367	1292	1333
TOTAL:	5131	4810	4698	4706	4592	4494
FIRE PREVENTION	2421	2996	2570	2320	2005	1911
FIRE LOSS IN	\$2,785,570	476,000	519,225	73,460	895,000	438,350

FIRE DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

Engine 1: 2001 Emergency One 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 2: 2003 Emergency One 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 3: 1995 Central States 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 4: 1999 KME 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 5: 1990 Emergency One 1500 gpm pumper
Engine 6: 1976 Maxim 1000 gpm pumper
Ladder 1: 1988 LTI 105 foot aerial platform with 1250 gpm pump
Rescue 1: 2006 Emergency One Spartan heavy rescue
Tanker 1: 1972 Military 6wd 1300 gallon capacity
A-11: 1997 Horton Ford ambulance
A-12: 2007 Horton GMC ambulance
A-13: 2003 Horton Navistar ambulance
A-14: 2004 Horton Navistar ambulance
A-15: 2001 Horton Navistar ambulance
R-1: 1985 Navistar stake-body truck
R-2: 2000 Ford F-350 4wd pick-up
R-3: 1993 Chevrolet 4wd pick-up
R-4: 1984 Chevrolet Military 4wd brush truck
R-5: 1997 Dodge van
R-7: 1995 Ford Crown Victoria
R-8: 2000 Ford Crown Victoria
X-1: 2007 Ford 500
X-2: 2005 Mercury Sable wagon
X-3: 2004 Mercury Marquis
X-6: 1998 Ford Explorer 4wd
Utility: 2001 John Deere ATV 4wd
2003 Arctic Cat snowmobile (shares trailer with above)
Trailer: 1992 FEMA COMMANDPOST
Trailer: 1997 Aerolite (SAFE program)
Trailer: 2003 state Mass Decontamination Unit
Trailer: 2004 state Mass Casualty Incident supply unit
Boat: 2004 Avon zodiac with trailer

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS continues as the component that generates the majority of our emergency traffic, and again in FY 07, we increased our responses, i.e. by 6.3% to 3,780 responses. With our new SAFER grant hires, we now have 31 career firefighter/paramedics, more than any other western Massachusetts Fire Department.

We continue to provide EMS to Hadley, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury, and these communities (along with UMass) pay a per-resident fee to us for this service. Over 28% of our total EMS activity goes to non-Amherst communities, and the additional stipend charges to non-Amherst responses enacted in FY 06 continue to increase revenue collection.

Normally we can staff only 3 ambulances simultaneously. Only a quarter of the time or less can we staff 4 ambulances with on-duty personnel. There were 1,572 double ambulance occurrences: 561 times with 3 units committed: 104 times with 4 ambulances tied up simultaneously and 19 times when our 5th or spare ambulance was engaged as well (the 5th ambulance usually is staffed by off-duty career firefighters). Nearly 40% of our total EMS calls required some sort of advanced life support (ALS) intervention. This is consistent with our experience since we expanded to ALS care over a decade ago.

Department EMTs, Intermediates and Paramedics train continuously during the year to maintain state certifications for the EMT level to which they are certified. Personnel take advantage of course work sponsored within the Fire Department and from outside sources, depending upon budgetary commitments.

In FY 05, we were selected by the Commonwealth to receive a "Mass Casualty" trailer for deployment anywhere in Western Massachusetts and beyond if a mass casualty incident occurs that requires an immediate source of medical equipment on an incident scene. The other trailer in Western Massachusetts is in Pittsfield. There are 10 such trailers located throughout the state.

FY 07 EMS RESPONSES

Amherst:	1,922
Belchertown:	44
Hadley:	739
Leverett:	75
Pelham:	69
Shutesbury:	55
Sunderland:	78
Amherst College:	94
Hampshire College:	65
<u>UMASS:</u>	<u>623</u>
 Total Responses:	 3,780

FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSES*

JULY 1, 2006 – JUNE 30, 2007

* Statistics include fire apparatus responses only. Ambulance calls are listed under the EMS section of the Fire Department report.

RESPONSES by CATEGORY

FIRES:

Structure:.....48
Vehicle:.....16
Rubbish:.....38
Brush:.....8
Other:.....22

Subtotal – Fires132

RESCUE: (includes vehicle accidents).....192

HAZARDOUS CONDITION:102

FALSE ALARMS:

Malicious alarm:51
System Malfunction:.....214
Unintentional:483
Good Intent Call:.....38
Bomb Scare:.....7
Other False alarms:.....5

Subtotal – False Alarms798

SERVICE CALL:36

OTHER CALLS:91

TOTAL FY07 FIRE RESPONSES:.....1,351

TYPE of ALARMS

RESCUE/VEHICLE ACCIDENT:.....137

STILL ALARMS:.....1,083

BOX ALARMS:50

RECALLS:.....3

Mutual Aid TO other communities:.....19

Mutual Aid FROM other communities:.....5

FIRE LOSSES & CASUALTIES

FIRE DOLLAR LOSSES: (includes contents)

Buildings & other structures	\$2,728,070
Vehicles & other equipment	\$53,400
<u>Other</u>	<u>\$4,100</u>
TOTAL	\$2,785,570

CIVILIAN FIRE INJURIES	2
CIVILIAN FIRE FATALITIES	1
FIREFIGHTER INJURIES	3

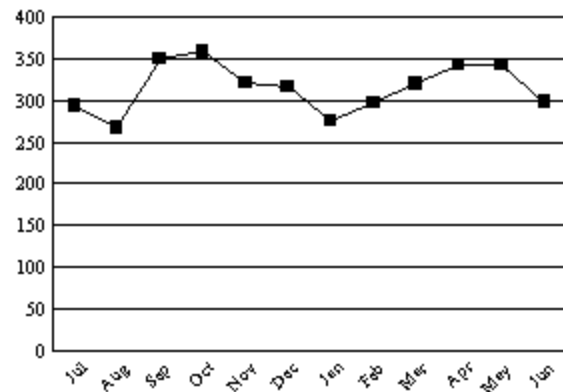
By Town	Fire	%	EMS	%
Amherst	1329	98.4	2711	71.7
Belchertown	1	.1	44	1.2
Hadley	2	.1	739	19.6
Leverett	4	.3	75	2.0
Northampton	7	.5	2	.1
Other	4	.3	7	.2
Pelham	2	.1	69	1.8
Shutesbury	0	.0	55	1.5
Sunderland	2	.1	78	2.1
TOTALS	1351		3780	

By Month	Fire	%	EMS	%
Jul	123	9.1	293	7.8
Aug	98	7.3	267	7.1
Sep	150	11.1	350	9.3
Oct	131	9.7	358	9.5
Nov	108	8.0	321	8.5
Dec	101	7.5	316	8.4
Jan	99	7.3	275	7.3
Feb	92	6.8	297	7.9
Mar	103	7.6	320	8.5
Apr	112	8.3	342	9.0
May	140	10.4	343	9.1
Jun	94	7.0	298	7.9
TOTALS	1351		3780	

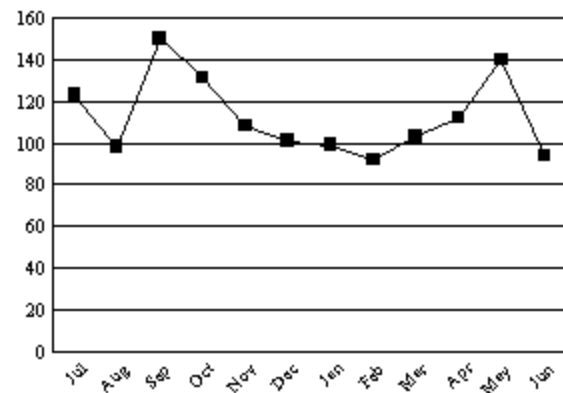
Breakdown by location within Amherst:

	Fire	EMS
Amherst (Town only)	806	1907
Amherst College	94	101
Hampshire College	132	65
UMASS	204	623
UMASS Fraternities/Sororities	93	15

EMS calls only (by month)



Fire incidents only (by month)



FIRE PREVENTION STATISTICS

Building Inspections

Home Inspections (Chapter 148, s26F and new construction)	338
Multi-family dwellings (Chapter 148, s26C)	237
Construction Plan Reviews	
1 and 2 family residential	74
Commercial and multi-family	45
Amherst College	27
Hampshire College	11
University of Massachusetts	86
Fire Protection System installations and alterations	145
Site Plan Reviews (Planning Board)	42

Life Safety Inspections

Restaurants	108
Nursing and Rest Homes	7
Health care facilities	28
Inns and Theaters	36
Fraternity and Sorority	38
Public Schools	32
Private Schools	23
Childcare	10
Public Buildings	2
Elder Housing	19
Other buildings	4

Inspections and Permits

Oil burner installations	143
LPG installations	72
UST removals	17
UST installations	1
AST installations	1
Tank truck inspections	17
Fireworks and pyrotechnic displays	4
Dumpster Permits	44
Total Open Burning Permits	740

Public Education Programs

Open House	1
SAFE	53
Community Programs	8
CPR and defibrillators	8

FIRE TRAINING

During FY 07, the Fire Department saw an increased emphasis on fire training, especially for the career firefighters. The new collective bargaining agreement included the creation of a “Fire Training Committee” consisting of both firefighters and a Chief Officer. The purpose of the committee is to identify topics and skills that the firefighters should be training on. This committee met for the first time in January 2007 and has met on a monthly basis since then. The committee created a list of training topics that should be covered over the next two years. Although the committee was only charged with creating recommendations as to what topics should be covered, they went to the next level and created plans to actually conduct the training on the first few topics. Part of this planning included deciding whether each topic could be taught to the firefighters while they were on-duty and available for calls, or whether they would have to be taught while the firefighters were off-shift. The first of these classes (both classroom and hands-on training) were conducted during the spring and early summer months and included topics such as vehicle extrication and high-rise fires. The committee will continue in FY 08 to organize training on topics previously identified.

The call and student firefighters continued with their weekly drills throughout the year, covering a wide variety of topics. Where applicable, they also participated in the same classes that the career firefighters were taking. Fourteen new student firefighters and two call firefighters completed the annual week of basic training in August, along with the eighteen returning members of the Student Force. The week included two trips to the Springfield Fire Academy for live fire training. An additional two call firefighters were also hired and trained during the fall months. Three of our new permanent force firefighters graduated from the Massachusetts Fire Academy’s twelve week recruit training program for fulltime firefighters.

As in past years, our members were able to take advantage of a wide range of course offerings outside of the Department, from both the Massachusetts and National Fire Academies. Seventeen department members traveled to the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland in September for a weekend of training on a variety of subjects.

Members of our specialized rescue teams also conducted their own drills throughout the year, including the quarterly, day-long drills for the Technical Rescue team. One member of the Department completed his training with the state Hazardous Materials Team and is now part of that response group.

During the upcoming year we will continue to conduct refresher training on key topics as identified by the Fire Training Committee, as well as conduct training on new equipment and procedures. The challenge will be finding the time for the career firefighters to conduct their training on-duty between calls, or to secure the funds for them to be able to train at other times.

AMHERST FIRE DEPARTMENT

Call Force

Fiscal Year 2007

As a branch of the Amherst Fire Department that serves to augment the Department's Career Force, the Call Force may be called in to respond to an immediate fire emergency or called to the station when full-time career resources are committed to fire or emergency medical calls. Fire apparatus primarily assigned to the Call Force is a 1988 LTI 105' aerial platform (Ladder 1), and a 1999 KME pumper (Engine 4).

During FY 07, Call Force personnel were dispatched to a total of 112 emergency responses. These included 50 box alarms and 62 other emergency calls, which included fire alarm activations, motor vehicle accidents, and emergency medical incidents. In addition, the Call Force was called into the station a record 149 times to provide fire suppression coverage for the Town. While in service, Call Force members responded to 52 emergency calls. The Call Force was utilized extensively during major fire incidents of August 16 (Emerson Court explosion), and August 25 (the Bank of America Fire). In addition, the Call Force saw a dramatic increase in mutual aid assistance provided to area towns, including Northampton, Greenfield, Leverett, Hadley, Turners Falls, and Spencer.

This year, the Call Force endured the departure of several members including Lt. Bill Sweet, Lt. Amy Lane, and Brett Morgan, who relocated out of area, along with Joe Lagasse, who was hired to the AFD Career Force. A hiring process and recruit training program resulted in five new members, including: Andrew Burgess, Jack Hart, Jacabo Roque, Peter Venman, and Andrew Welch. At the close of the fiscal year, 8 of our members were Massachusetts Registered Emergency Medical Technicians (2 qualified for AFD service), 11 members were qualified pump operators, and 9 qualified to operate our aerial platform.

A number of our members were active in specialized fire service and emergency medical programs. These programs included pump operator training, aerial qualification and ice rescue. Two Call Force members received specialized training as part of the Department's technical rescue team and several members attended National Firefighting Academy courses.

Call Force members were proud to again assist with the Department's annual National Fire Prevention Week Open House; fire protection and ambulance coverage during the 4th of July fireworks display; and with the annual Student Awareness for Fire Safety Education (SAFE) graduation. Other services included staffing for snow emergencies, providing fire watches, conducting open burning inspections, permit processing, and vehicle transport details.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward J. Mientka Jr. Deputy Chief

Amherst Fire Dept. Call Force

STUDENT VOLUNTEER FORCE

Thirty UMass student volunteer firefighters continued to supplement our career and call firefighters. During FY 07, 9 students lived at the North Fire Station, and the students had their pumper in-service at the station 113 hours a week (Monday-Friday: 6pm to 7am - Fridays at 6pm continuously until Mondays at 7am). The remainder of the week, they are on-call like our call and off-duty career firefighters.

The students responded to 211 fire runs during FY 07, an increase of 22% from last year. Their training is similar to that of our call firefighters. On daily shifts, training occurs for 90 minutes, with the entire student contingent training every Thursday night for 3 hours. We do not expect that they will function at the same level as our career professionals (as they are not paramedics and most are not EMTs, they cannot staff an ambulance), but they perform a critical ancillary service and sometimes arrive first at calls, as occurred a handful of times during the year. In these instances, it is important that they carry out their duties and control the incident until other help can arrive. They have consistently performed well for us.

Student firefighters staff one pumper; during actual fires, they also respond with a pick-up truck and extra self-contained breathing apparatus, spare air cylinders and firefighter rehabilitation supplies. They maintain our Command Board (accounts for locations of firefighters inside buildings) and usually bring an ambulance and a squad to the scene with extra personnel as well.

Student firefighters also attended other training facilities besides the instruction received here. Some of those sites were the State Firefighting Academy in Stow, the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and the Springfield Fire Department Training Center.

In April, 23 new student firefighters began training to replace graduating seniors. We should start FY 08 with somewhere around 36 students, but certainly will lose some to attrition, as we always do. Whatever prompts some students to elect to try to do this job often is tempered during the 72-hour "Wonder Week" training that occurs one week before the college semester begins in September. Usually some new students decide not to continue in the program and drop out during "Wonder Week"; others choose not to return.

Most remain with us, and some do go on to choose the fire service as their profession, as evidenced by the 13 former graduates who now are career firefighters in Amherst, as well as current Massachusetts fire chiefs in Athol, Westborough and Amherst (all three career chief officers in Amherst are Student Force graduates).

The annual "Randy Silveira Memorial Scholarship" was awarded to Lieutenant Mike Mallon. The \$1,000 award is made by the family of Randy Silveira, a 1981 graduate of the Student Force who exemplified character, caring and commitment to the student firefighters and the Town. Randy died in 2003 from cancer, and the memorial was established in his honor to reward the student firefighter who best emulated Randy's dedication to the student firefighters.

We look forward to another successful year with our student volunteer firefighters as they have served the Town every year since the program's inception in 1953. Without them and our call firefighters, the Amherst Fire Department could not provide prompt fire and EMS coverage to our citizens.