

ANNUAL REPORT - 1999
WALLINGFORD FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

The following information was compiled by the staff of the Wallingford Fire Prevention Bureau to present an overview of the responsibilities and accomplishments during calendar year 1999.

Presented by:

***Fire Marshal Joseph P. Micalizzi Jr.**

***Deputy Fire Marshal Thomas A. Hanchuruck**

***Fire Inspector Richard B. Forman**

***Senior Clerk Laura Watson**

***Clerical Assistant Carol Boehlert**

WALLINGFORD FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

MISSION
STATEMENT

TO ACTIVELY PURSUE THE HIGHEST
STANDARDS OF LIFE SAFETY
WITHIN THE COMMUNITY
THROUGH EDUCATION, INVESTIGATION,
AND ENFORCEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1999 has been a year of change in personnel for the Wallingford Fire Prevention Bureau.

In April of 1999, the Town of Wallingford appointed a new Fire Marshal, Joseph P. Micalizzi Jr. Prior to his appointment, the Senior Clerk's position was vacated. Since his appointment, Fire Marshal Micalizzi has conducted interviews and Mrs. Laura Watson has been hired as the new Senior Clerk.

Although the Fire Prevention Bureau has maintained the highest caliber of quality inspections and services to the community, the new Fire Marshal has gradually made some administrative, policy and procedural changes to upgrade and improve operations in the Bureau. These upgrades will be outlined throughout the following report.

PLEASE NOTE: The format of the annual report will be by calendar year and will be issued in the first quarter of the following year.

PLAN REVIEW AND CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

The Plan review process is the foundation for all new construction projects and insures that both new construction and existing building renovations meet all applicable fire and life safety codes. This is also a necessary process in approving fire code violation corrections to insure they meet the code when corrections require alteration or construction to buildings.

All plan reviews are now being done directly by the Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal also does all inspections of newly installed fire protection equipment and systems for acceptance by the Building Department for issuance of a certificate of occupancy. This change insures continuity and awareness of building projects and has brought about a smoother and more streamlined plan review process for contractors and developers. They now know whom they have to contact and to what standards they will be required to meet. One person is responsible from start to finish.

A plan review office area has been established in the conference room at Central Fire Headquarters with an appropriate drafting table, bookcases and filing cabinets for centralized storage of plans and construction documents. Copies of codes and standards have been purchased for easy reference. This area is also used for construction project meetings with contractors, developers, architects and engineers. Prior to this, plans were reviewed at the individual inspectors' desks, which was inappropriate for large-scale plan review.

Some various construction projects that have been completed in 1999 or that are still ongoing in 2000 are;

1. Kohl's Department Store
2. Applebee's Restaurant
3. Chili's Restaurant
4. Bristol Myers, Squibb Daycare Building
5. Zoot's dry cleaning facility
6. Home Depot
7. Wallingford Energy Project
8. Wallingford Senior Citizen Center

In 1999 the Fire Prevention Bureau has completed several hundred site plans, preliminary, and construction reviews totaling several thousand pages of plans.

INSPECTION AND ABATEMENT

In the latter part of 1999, the Fire Prevention Bureau initiated a Target Hazard Inspection Program to help identify the most likely properties that sustain the highest rate of civilian deaths and injuries due to fire. As reported by the National Fire Protection Association and the Connecticut Fire Incident Reporting System, our communities residential properties have the highest incidents of property loss, injuries and deaths. This office has identified through the Tax Assessors Office data bank all multiple unit housing comprising of three unit apartment buildings or greater (318 structures) and has initiated inspections of these properties. These inspections will last through the summer of 2000 at which time this office expects to have all residential properties code compliant. Most targeted properties have not been inspected since prior to 1995. When this phase of the Target Hazard Inspection Program is completed, the next highest target hazard properties will be identified and inspected. In 1999, this office conducted 573 activities.

This program falls far short of the mandated annual inspections of all properties in the Town of Wallingford covered by the State Fire Safety Code. However, this office has determined that the most effective means of protecting life safety, while at the same time attempting to limit the town's liability for not inspecting all properties annually, and taking into account the limited manpower and time available to this office, that this program would best demonstrate a concerted effort to bring all structures up to code.

This office continues to do permitting and licensing inspections for various other types of occupancies as required and requested during the target hazard inspection program. Complaints from the public and referrals from other agencies are continuously handled on a daily basis.

In order to insure quality control of all inspections and permits, the Fire Marshal has initiated a system that requires the Fire Marshal to check and initial each inspection report prior to it being sent to the building owner.

FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

The Fire Prevention Bureau conducted seventeen fire investigations during calendar year 1999, eleven of which were accidental, two incendiary, and four undetermined. One arrest was made on arson related charges.

State statutes require that the Fire Marshal or his designee conduct investigations to determine the origin, cause, and circumstances of all fires within his jurisdiction. Although many fires are determined by the Fire Department Officer on scene when the cause is apparent, it becomes necessary to call in state certified investigators when the origin and cause is not easily determined or when the fire appears to be suspicious in nature. All members of the Fire Prevention Bureau are state certified as experts in the field of fire origin and cause determination, and two have experience testifying in court as origin and cause experts. We also have the resources and training to coordinate with other investigative agencies such as the Wallingford Police Department, Office of State Fire Marshal Investigations Division, State Canine Accelerant Detection Unit, and when necessary, the FBI and/or A.T.F.

PUBLIC FIRE EDUCATION

Efforts to educate the public and make the citizens and visitors of Wallingford more aware of the dangers of fire in an effort to reduce injuries and property loss are paramount. This office alone can not provide the manpower and hours needed to educate the public without the cooperation of the Wallingford Fire Department. This office coordinates training and public presentations hand in hand with the Fire Department. Our inspectors provide training materials and audio and visual aids as well as giving presentations when our office hours permit. Unfortunately, our overtime budget restricts how much public exposure we may maintain after business hours. Some of the services this office has provided to the general public in 1999 include:

- ✓ In service training for local health care agencies, municipal departments, civic organizations, and local businesses.
- ✓ Production of public safety announcements on local government television.
- ✓ Safety displays and fire prevention materials at town events.
- ✓ Fair Plan and CFMA statewide poster contest for all 4th & 5th graders.
- ✓ “Smoke Detectors Save Lives” banners displayed on firehouses and public buildings.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Perhaps our most concerted efforts in the past year have been in the information management systems that have been incorporated and updated in the Fire Prevention Bureau. New hardware has been purchased and existing hardware updated to efficiently utilize the “Firehouse” program already installed in our machines, saving approximately six thousand dollars from the capitol expenditures program that would have been used to purchase a customized software package. This office has networked with the Fire Department to provide an overall property management system that will provide information, record keeping, generate inspection reports and violation notices, track ongoing inspections, pre-fire plan, and produce reports.

We are currently working with the Tax Assessor’s Office to transfer their property tax base into our system. Hopefully, when this is completed, the Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Department will have a complete database of every structure in the Town of Wallingford. This will certainly aid in future Fire Prevention Target Hazard inspection programs since we will be able to identify what building categories need to be targeted and where they are located.

All members of the Fire Prevention Bureau and Fire Department staff have worked diligently on this project and have devoted hundreds of man-hours. Even though it is still being fine-tuned, it appears that the program will meet our needs well into the future.

PERMITS

Permits are issued to various agencies and commercial farms on basis of individual need. Permits for vegetation management are issued to monitor fire safety conditions and air quality compliance. Blasting permits are issued to certified contractors where applicable for development of construction sites and the installation of utilities. Pyrotechnic permits are also issued for all special events and fire works displays in the public and private sectors. A certified member of the Fire Prevention Bureau accomplishes inspection and monitoring of these permits. At times, it is necessary to schedule overtime assignments to monitor compliance with Life Safety Codes.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The enforcement of hazardous materials “Right to know” regulations fall under the auspices of the Fire Prevention Bureau. Inspections and safety meetings are conducted with our local industries to help ensure that adequate levels of safety are met. This year approximately 126 local industries were surveyed and required to report the types, locations and amounts of hazardous materials used in processing. The Fire Prevention Bureau correlates, verifies and distributes this information to the Fire Department for the protection of emergency response personnel and the general public.

UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK PROGRAM

The Fire Prevention Bureau conducts on site inspections of all underground storage tank installations, certifications, abandonment and removals. The purpose of the inspections is to help ensure that applicable installation and maintenance standards are met. Approximately 45 tanks have been brought into the Department of Environmental Protection registry this year.

OUTDOOR AMUSEMENTS

Inspections of outdoor assembly events including carnivals, outdoor amusements, open air tents and special events such as the Taste of Wallingford, are conducted with the State Fire Marshal and local building officials. The moderate summer season highlights these activities and approximately 20 events.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

State Certified Fire Marshal Personnel assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau are required to maintain a high skill proficiency level. Each employee is required to achieve a state mandated 30 hours of continuing education yearly. The required training helps us stay abreast of a dynamic and constantly changing public safety environment. This year, as with years in the past, all members of the Fire Prevention Bureau have met their training obligations in a professional manner and are current on the latest information available. Also, outside training and seminars, as well as professional organizational meetings are an integral part of networking and staying abreast of ongoing changes in codes and legislation.

The Wallingford Fire Prevention Bureau will continue to monitor and assess the needs of our community to deliver services and public safety so richly deserved by our towns residents, visitors and business community.

To all of the citizens of Wallingford, thank you for your continued support.

Wallingford Fire Prevention Bureau

End of report