

ANNUAL REPORT - 2013

WALLINGFORD FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU



The 2013 Fire Prevention Poster Contest winners from left to right,

The following information was compiled by the staff of the Wallingford Fire Prevention Bureau in order to present an overview of our activities during the 2013 calendar year.

Presented by:

*Fire Marshal Carmen A. Rao

*Deputy Fire Marshal Brian R. Schock

*Deputy Fire Marshal John J. Andrews

*Senior Clerk Laura Watson

WALLINGFORD FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

MISSION
STATEMENT

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

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In 2013, this office performed **2,389** various types of inspections and activities. With the use of our Firehouse software, we will try to give an overview of these activities. Although we have tracked **2,389 inspections/activities** through the “Firehouse ©” inspection program, this figure does not reflect all the meetings, preliminary plan reviews, preconstruction conferences, zoning approvals, training activities, walkthroughs, open burning permits, blasting permits, and many more various activities and duties performed by this office that are not tracked or recorded in “Firehouse”.

Personnel: The Fire Prevention Bureau is staffed with 3 state certified members; two Deputy Fire Marshals, one Fire Marshal and 1 full time Senior Clerk.

Vehicles: The office has four vehicles: 2010 Ford Escape SUV, 2007 Chevy Uplander Van, 2005 Dodge Caravan that is used for Fire Investigations and a 2009 Crown Victoria which is a former Police Cruiser transferred from Public Works. Newer vehicles are usually more reliable and will cut down on maintenance costs throughout the year.

The life expectancy of a vehicle in the Fire Marshals Office is approximately 10 years, we are continuing with the vehicle replacement program implemented in 2011. This office will be looking to purchase a new vehicle in the year 2015 through the Capital Budget at a cost of \$25,000 to \$30,000 dollars.

Inspections and activities: The following pages will illustrate the types of activities performed by this office throughout calendar year 2013.

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 safety codes. This is also a necessary process in approving fire code violation corrections to ensure they meet the code when corrections require alteration or construction to buildings. In the year 2013, the Fire Marshal’s Office performed **80 inspections for certificates of occupancy** and **244 plan reviews** for new and existing buildings comprising of hundreds of pages of plans examined, site plans, and many meetings and consultations with contractors, developers, architects and engineers. We are continuing to work with Choate Rosemary Hall with the installation of fire sprinkler systems in the student housing. Five of the twelve buildings are sprinklered thus far.

INSPECTION AND ABATEMENT

In 2013, the Fire Prevention Bureau conducted **1,942 building inspections**. Unfortunately, from time to time it becomes necessary for this office to write **Administrative Search Warrants** and **Arrest Warrants** for owners of properties that are uncooperative or non-compliant. These warrants are required by state statutes and policy guidelines as outlined by the Office of the State Fire Marshal and State Prosecutors Office. This is a very time consuming and demanding process for our staff and resources and resulted in **0 court appearances** in 2013.

This office continues to conduct permit and licensing inspections for various types of occupancies as required and requested in addition to handling complaints from the public and referrals from other agencies and departments on a daily basis.

FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

The Fire Prevention Bureau conducted **22 fire investigations** during calendar year 2013, **17** of which were unintentional, **0** incendiary, **0** natural, and **5** undetermined.

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 some 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 in the field of fire origin and cause determination. 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 Connecticut State Forensic Laboratory.

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 staff provides training materials and audio/visual aids as well as giving **Fire Prevention presentations** when our office hours permit. The Fire Prevention Bureau also distributes monthly Fire Safety tips to schools, government television, the Town web site, Wallingford Public Library, Senior Center and Town departments. In 2013 we implemented the "**I Spot Something Hot**" program with the Fire Department personnel held Fire Safety assemblies for the First Grade students. Some of the services this office has provided to the general public in 2013 in addition to **6 Fire Prevention activities** include:

- ✓ Juvenile Firesetter program.
- ✓ Production of public safety announcements on local government television.
- ✓ Safety displays and fire prevention materials at town events.
- ✓ Fire Prevention poster contest for all 4th & 5th grade students.
- ✓ “Prevent Kitchen Fires” banners displayed on firehouses.
- ✓ “Fire Prevention Everyone/Everyday” banners displayed on North Main Street and at Town Hall.
- ✓ Distributed smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors to local residences in conjunction with the Fire Department and the Generosity of Local 1326, International Association of Firefighters.

PERMITS

Permits are issued to various agencies and commercial farms on the basis of individual need.

Open Burning 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. The Fire Marshal’s Office monitors and issues these permits. At times, it is necessary to schedule overtime assignments to monitor compliance with the Connecticut Fire Safety Code as required by state regulations.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The enforcement of hazardous materials regulations fall under the auspices of the Fire Marshal’s Office. Inspections and safety meetings are conducted with our local industries to help ensure that adequate levels of safety are met. 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. The Fire Prevention Bureau conducted **3 High Hazard** inspections in 2013.

OUTDOOR AMUSEMENTS AND TENTS

Inspections of outdoor assembly events including carnivals, outdoor amusements, open air tents and special events such as the Celebrate Wallingford are conducted with the State Fire Marshal and local building officials. The moderate summer season highlights these activities and approximately **8 tents and events** were inspected.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

State Certified Fire Marshal Personnel assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau are required to maintain a high skill proficiency level. Each certified member is required to achieve a state mandated minimum **90 hours** of continuing education within a three-year cycle. 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 to our towns' residents, visitors and business community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carmen A. Rao
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End of report

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