

## **ANNUAL REPORT - 2001**

### **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 2001.**

#### **Presented by:**

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

**\*Fire Inspector Richard B. Forman**

**\*Senior Clerk Laura Watson**

**\*Clerical Assistant Joyce Fretts**

**WALLINGFORD FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU**

**MISSION**  
**STATEMENT**

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

## INTRODUCTION

Calendar year 2001 has proven to be a very challenging and a very productive year. In 2001, this office performed well in excess of **889** 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 **889 inspections** 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 can’t be tracked or recorded in “Firehouse”.

The adoption of an updated inspection software package called **Firehouse © 5.0** is complete and the office personnel are becoming proficient in its use. This office uses this software package to create violation and abatement letters and to track inspections. Most of the statistics represented in this report are tracked and summarized through Firehouse © program. In 2001 we replaced one outdated computer with a new unit. This was planned through our capital expense budget.

In July of 2001 the Office of the State Fire Marshal in conjunction with the State Attorney’s Office revamped a number of directives to local fire marshals. Directive # 3 eliminated a three-part notification process for abatement letters to one notification and then referral for prosecution. This change should streamline the abatement procedures and allow for quicker prosecution of non-compliant building owners. In turn we were required to change all our abatement and referral letters in our computer system. This was achieved smoothly and efficiently by our Senior Clerk, the Fire Marshal and our Network Administrator.

The retirement of the Deputy Fire Marshal in August of 2001 required that a replacement be hired. That process has taken place and as of the writing of this report a formal letter of hiring has been sent to a Wallingford Fire Department member who has been selected as the top candidate. His date of hire will be February 14, 2002 and he will start attending the certification class on February 20, 2002. He will not be completely certified until November 6, 2002 at which time he may be certified as a fire inspector. The testing, interviewing, and selection process was a joint effort between the Town Council, Personnel Office and Fire Prevention Bureau.

## **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. In the year 2001, the Fire Marshal performed **98 inspections for certificates of occupancy** and **118 plan reviews** for new and existing buildings comprising of thousands of pages of blueprints examined, hundreds of site plans, and many meetings and consultations with contractors, developers, architects and engineers.

## **INSPECTION AND ABATEMENT**

In 2001, the Fire Prevention Bureau conducted 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. This phase of the Target Hazard Inspection Program is completed, and the next highest target hazard properties have been identified as mixed use residential with business and/or mercantile and are being inspected. In 2001 this office conducted **481 inspection activities**.

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.

## **FIRE INVESTIGATIONS**

The Fire Prevention Bureau conducted **twenty-one fire investigations** during calendar year 2001, 12 of which were accidental, 4 incendiary, 5 undetermined. **Four arrests** were made on arson and other 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 one has experience testifying in court as origin and cause expert. 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. Some of the services this office has provided to the general public in 2001 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 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders. This year we had the fifth grade county winner, Julia Czaplinski from Rock Hill School.
- ✓ “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. 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 have successfully completed a transfer of the property tax records onto our computer network. Our staff routinely references this database for owner information.

## **PERMITS**

Permits are issued to various agencies and commercial farms on 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 monitors and issues these permits. At times, it is necessary to schedule overtime assignments to monitor compliance with the Connecticut Fire Safety Code.

## **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. 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 ***39 Hazardous Material*** inspections in 2001.

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.

## **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*** 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 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 to 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**