

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WATCH HILL FIRE DEPARTMENT



*July 8, 2022*  
*Deputy Chief Jason Simmons*

## **ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WATCH HILL FIRE DISTRICT**

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today as Deputy Chief of the Watch Hill Fire Department. The last year has been one of tremendous transition as the Department has for the first in its over one hundred year history hired its first full-time career Chief of Department. Additionally, the Department was able to hire a new full-time Fire Marshal responsible for code enforcement, fire prevention and community fire education.

### **CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT**

At the recommendation of a consulting firm hired by the District and after an extensive and far-reaching hiring process the Watch Hill Fire Department hired the first full-time Chief in its 120-year history. Chief Dennis Reall Jr. comes to us as a well-respected and experienced retired member of the North Providence Fire Department where he served as a career firefighter for 32 years. Upon his retirement in 2018 Dennis was hired as Watch Hill's second paid firefighter where he served until his recent promotion to Chief. Dennis has a passion and understanding of the modern fire service as well as an appreciation of the long-honored tradition of volunteerism which has served the Watch Hill community for over a century. As we as a Department embark on this transition we are truly blessed to have found Dennis to lead us forward. We would like to welcome him, his wife Tracy and daughter Gemma to our community and wish him years of success

### **FIRE MARSHAL**

In addition Christopher Moore was hired as Fire Marshal. Chris comes to us after serving nearly 16 years as Senior Fire Safety Inspector for the State of Rhode Island Fire Marshal. Chris's primary duties include code enforcement, plan review and event safety. Chris' ability to help business owners and residents "navigate" the sometimes confusing aspects of the fire code in a friendly manner has been warmly received. Chris has very quickly earned the respect and admiration of fellow members and we look forward to working with him for many years to come.

### **EMERGENCY RESPONSES**

During the past year the Watch Hill Fire Department responded to a total of 181 alarms. These calls included the following:

<b>Residential Fire Alarm Activations</b>	<b>75 (15 caused by cooking)</b>
<b>Commercial Fire Alarm Activations</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Water/Boat Rescues</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Structure Fires</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mutual Aid to Misquamicut</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Brush Fires</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Carbon Monoxide Alarms</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>EMS Assist (ATV response)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>EMS Assist (Medical)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Motor Vehicle Accidents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Electrical Emergencies</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Car Fire</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Water Emergencies</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Mitigation of Other Hazards</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Propane/Gas Leak</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Helicopter Accident</b>	<b>1</b>

Fortunately, the structure fires which occurred within the District were quickly extinguished with minimal damage.

The majority of the fire alarm activations, both commercial and residential, were due to malfunctions of the fire alarm systems . The remaining causes of the false alarms were investigated and attributed to burned food on the stove and contractors failing to take the proper precautions before working near detectors.

As in recent years, residential and commercial alarm activations represent a majority of the calls to which our members respond. Several of these calls are caused by workers and contractors who have not taken the recommended action of covering a smoke detector while performing work. Please remind these workers to

take all necessary precautions while performing work at your property. The majority of our activations are caused by system malfunctions. Please make sure that your fire alarm system is properly inspected and maintained in order to avoid nuisance alarms.

Please bear in mind that such alarms often occur during business hours. In fact, approximately 50% of our calls occur during the period between 8 AM to 4 PM and approximately 70% of these calls occur during the period between Monday and Friday. This results in a loss of wages for our volunteers as well as decreased business production for those employers who allow their workers to respond from work.

In addition, the first arriving units often find these residences unoccupied and are unable to easily gain access. Full access is necessary to accurately determine and mitigate the cause of many of these alarms. We have found it helpful to have a caretaker or responsible party available to respond and assist at all hours. Please contact the fire department so you may provide the necessary contact information in the event of an emergency.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT RESPONSE**

One of the most important factors while responding to a potential emergency is a quick and efficient response time. A quick response may potentially be the difference between a major property loss or a loss of life.

As indicated in previous reports to the District, improperly marked houses and overgrowth of shrubbery often delay and hamper an effective response by the Fire Department. We ask you to again take the time to assess these factors at your own properties and make the necessary accommodations and modifications if necessary. Please feel free to contact the station if you require additional assistance in identifying and resolving these issues.

### **TENT APPLICATION AND PLAN REVIEW PROCESS**

The Watch Hill Fire Department in cooperation with the Board of Engineers has recently updated the application process and fee structure for tents as well as plan review for both new and existing structures. These fees are in accordance with all applicable statutes and in most cases mirror the recommended fee structure utilized at the state level. All necessary forms as well as an updated fee schedule may be found in the Public Information section of the Department's web site at [www.watchhillfire.com](http://www.watchhillfire.com). As always please feel free to contact the Fire Marshal with any questions on any of these processes.

### **SCBA REPLACEMENT**

The department's inventory of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) have reached their NFPA mandated life-expectancy of 20-years and are in need of replacement. The Board of Engineers has requested and the Finance Committee has appropriated the required funds for the purchase of twenty (20) Scott Brand SCBA which most closely match our current equipment. Because we have purchased spare SCBA bottles on a rotating basis over previous cycles we were able to reduce the overall cost of this project. Additionally because these units most closely match our existing equipment we will be able to easily train our members for their use in a timely and effective manner.

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

The Annual Karl E. Kenyon Smokey Bear Parade is scheduled for Thursday July 21st and is expected to make its way through the Bay Street area at approximately 7 PM. The Watch Hill Fire Department Annual Fire Prevention Open House is scheduled for Wednesday August 3rd. Please check the Fire Department website for important updates on these events.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many groups and individuals who have helped the Watch Hill Fire Department through this last year. Change can often be difficult but it is often necessary to move an organization forward to reach its true potential. I would like to thank the many members of the District Council for their time and effort to ease the department and its membership

through this ongoing transition. Your time and effort has not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

To Will Eglin and Andrew “Buck” Barber, at-large members of the Board of Engineers, thank for trusting the process and making sure that we covered all the bases when incorporating the needs and desires of our members when selecting a new Chief to lead our Department,

I would like to acknowledge each and every member of the Watch Hill Fire Department for their unending dedication during this sometimes difficult transition. You have once again proven that you are amongst the very best of our community and our residents and those who visit our village are indeed fortunate to have your professionalism and admirable work ethic is on display 24-hours and 7 days a week. We continue to inspire me even after my 30 years in the training department.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to mention Assistant Chief Scott Harold. After 26-years as a Chief Officer Scott has decided to turn in his white helmet for a yellow one and fortunately for us all will remain an active member as he watches his son Rees follow in his footsteps. Scott has served this Department in every capacity imaginable, often in difficult times but always with dignity and sense of purpose and reason. Scott, most recently served as Acting Chief and led us through the transition to a full-time Chief of Department. Throughout these years Scott has been a leader while also finding the time to establish himself as an exemplary husband to his wife Deb and an incredible father to Shelby, Rees and Emma. On a personal note, I would like to thank Scott for always being there for me personally. Your friendship is one I shall cherish forever.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Simmons

Deputy Chief

