

**DEPARTMENT OF FIRE, EMERGENCY SERVICES,  
& CODE ENFORCEMENT  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2009**

**Fire Prevention, Investigation, Buildings and Codes**

**Accomplishments for 2009:**

The Fire Prevention/Fire Investigation Unit is charged with the responsibility to investigate all structure fires greater than Signal 20, and may be called to investigate any fire at the request of the on-duty Battalion Chief. Additionally, members of this unit are responsible for enforcement of the Property Maintenance Codes in the City of Albany, which include the inspection and posting of all uninhabitable buildings and apartments.

A vacant buildings court has been expanded to compel owners of such buildings to register and maintain these structures in accordance with the vacant building registry standard.

Block-by-Block Initiative has been continued and expanded during 2009.

Public Assembly Safety Details were established to assure that large capacity public assembly venues, such as the Palace Theatre and the Washington Avenue Armory, have pre-event fire-safety inspections, or full event fire safety details. We continued this in 2009.

Hazardous Buildings Preplan initiative was undertaken to identify buildings in the City that were high occupancy or that could be logistically difficult structures in which to fight fires.

Newly designed markers placed on city hydrants to assist firefighters in quick localization. These markers are especially valuable during winter months when accumulated snow often makes finding hydrants more difficult.

All schools in the City were re-inspected for alarm malfunctions.

Minority recruitment committee expanded to explore minority recruitment options that have been successfully employed in other cities within NYS. The Department has established an Explorer and a Cadet program to attract qualified minority fire department candidates.

A vacant building initiative, which was undertaken in 2006 to visually inspect all vacant buildings, including use of a fire department ladder truck for roof inspections, for the purpose of catalog creation. This was continued in 2009.

Fire Prevention Street Details – Fire Prevention, as well as line company personnel, have taken the message of Fire Prevention/Fire Safety to the citizens of Albany by use of information tables at key locations during certain times of the year. This method of information dissemination is routinely employed at all fire department details attended by the Fire Prevention Unit.

A Quality of Life taskforce which was established in the City of Albany, in 2002, to assure that all night clubs, taverns, bars, etc are routinely inspected during peak business hours for compliance with safety regulations, such as occupancy limits, hours of operation, legal use, clear exits, and fire-safety. This detail also regularly visits college areas within the city and monitors attendance and behavior at house parties.

Comprehensive ROP program established to inspect every 30 months each residential unit in the City of Albany.

Citizens' Protective Services Committee established in cooperation with Adult Protective Services, Child Protective Services, APD, Albany Housing Authority, Albany County Health Department, and other public service agencies.

To facilitate effective communication between Code Enforcement and the residents of the City of Albany, a Neighborhood Association Liaison Program has been continued in 2009. Each of the 33 Neighborhood Associations is represented by a Fire Prevention/Code Enforcement Officer whose responsibility it is to attend monthly meetings, provide relevant community-related information to his Associations, field and investigate complaints, and report results.

During the summer of 2006 a Vacant Building Initiative Drive was commenced. As part of this initiative a street-by-street canvas was performed to inventory all vacant buildings in the City of Albany. A comprehensive exterior inspection of each vacant building was performed including the use of a ladder truck to visually inspect all roofs. This was Phase 1 of this initiative. Phase II was begun in 2007 and consists of notification to owners to register and maintain their vacant buildings according to the vacant building registry standard. Phase III, court action for non-compliant owners, is underway and will continue in 2010. We are continuing to inspect these buildings on a semi-annual basis, and are currently re-surveying the City to identify any additional buildings that have become vacant in 2009.

In 2009 the Albany Fire Department Fire Prevention Unit continued its role as part of a multi-agency, community-based intervention program to address child fire-setting and juvenile arson. The objective of this program is to identify troubled children and youth that may be at risk of fire-setting behaviors, and provide intervention conducive to the reduction of repetitive fire setting by addressing the problems that support the behavior.

In 2006, all City of Albany Elementary Schools were provided with the NFPA “Learn Not to Burn” curriculum and the training of staff by Fire Prevention personnel to effectively deliver the program. This program is a fire prevention and fire safety curriculum developed to provide a sequential, comprehensive program of instruction that delivers an ascending spiral effect of information, allowing for an increasing level of comprehension and complexity from kindergarten through the eighth grade. This program has been in place throughout 2007 and 2008, and had been continued into 2009.

The Captain and one Firefighter of the Fire Investigation Unit received training in Juvenile Firesetter Intervention at the State Fire Academy in Montour Falls. In addition, one Firefighter has attended the “Public Fire and Life Safety Educator I” course at the Academy. This training will help facilitate the delivery of fire safety information to the public. One Lieutenant has also attended Electrical Fire Cause Determination I and II courses at the Academy, which will improve our ability to determine Origin and Cause of fires during our investigations.

In September 2009, the Albany Fire Department participated in SUNY’s first annual Campus Fire Safety Day. Officers from the Fire Investigation Unit and the Operations and Training Division, in conjunction with the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) and SUNY officials helped set up and coordinate the event, which included a live burn in a burn pod constructed by OFPC, which was then extinguished by AFD line companies. Attendance of SUNY students was high, and the rate of fire spread made a graphic impression on the students. It is expected that this event, which SUNY plans to repeat annually, will help raise the students awareness of the danger of fire and ultimately reduce the number of fires in both on and off campus housing.

In 2009, the “K-3” Fire Safety Education Program was initiated. This Program provides Fire Safety education in a classroom setting, and has been very well received by the schools. In the spring of 2009, 4071 children in 27 Public, Private and Charter Schools grades Kindergarten through third received this education. This Program is continuing this fall; as of 11/30/09, 1392 K-3 students have received this education.

**FIRE PREVENTION & INVESTIGATION**  
**Unit Data (01/01/2009 – 11/01/2009)**

Firehouse Tours	40
Fire Prevention Lectures	6
Robot(s) Fire Prevention Details	40
Fire Extinguisher Safety Training	3
Juvenile Fire-Setters – Intakes	34
Juvenile Fire-Setters – Educational sessions	13
Evacuation Drills	70
Day Care Inspections	22
School Inspections	29
Capacity Counts	47
Albany Protective Services Taskforce	2
Palace Theatre Fire Safety Inspections	46
Quality of Life Details	43
Protective Service Cases	
Adult Protective	20
Child Protective	7
County Health Department	3
Fire Investigations	
Structure Fires Investigated	105
Accidental	74
Incendiary	17
Undetermined	14
Second Alarms	9
Mutual Aid	2
Vehicle Fires Investigated	19
Accidental	10
Incendiary	4
Undetermined	5
Court/Grand Jury Testimony	8
Investigation Hours	812

## DIVISION OF BUILDINGS AND CODES - 2009

<b>Revenue</b>		
Residential Occupancy Permits		\$160,670.00
Inspection Fees (Final's etc.)		\$38,200.00
Commercial CO's, Sprinklers		\$43,094.86
Building Permits		\$625,937.70
Sidewalk Barricade Permits		\$33,275.00
Vacant Building Registry		\$110,250.00
Fines (Court, Stop Works)		\$128,736.00
Elevator (Registration/Permits/Licenses)		\$104,932.41
Electrical Permits		\$178,308.74
Plumbing Permits		\$205,101.95
Licenses - Electrical and Plumbing		\$157,180.00
Misc. (Copies)		\$1,301.25
<b>Total Revenue Collected (1/1/09 - 12/14/09)</b>		<b>\$1,786,987.91</b>
<b>Inspections - Buildings</b>		
Construction - Building	2435	
Plumbing	1961	
Electrical	2265	
<b>Total Buildings Inspections (12/1/08 - 11/30/09)</b>		<b>6661</b>
Number of Court Cases	269	
<b>Permits Issued - Buildings</b>		
	<b>Permits</b>	<b>Estimated Work Value</b>
Building Permits	2260	\$ 139,255,321.08
Plumbing Permits	974	\$ 18,187,284.00
Electrical Permits	939	\$ 16,969,850.36
<b>Total Permits Issued &amp; Estimated Construction Value (12/1/08 - 11/30/09)</b>		<b>\$ 174,412,455.44</b>

<b>Code Enforcement Inspections &amp; Certificates (12/1/08 - 11/30/09)</b>	
ROP Related Inspections	7,435
Complaint Related Inspections	5,649
Vacant Buildings Inspections	1,454
Commercial Inspections	13
Total Number of Inspections	14,669
Total Number of Violations Cited	26,025
Number of Court Cases (AFD & VAC)	1,316
Total Number of Units Inspected through ROP Program	9,168

## **ADMINISTRATION DIVISION**

### **2009 Accomplishments:**

- The Department was rated by “Fire House Magazine” as one of the top 150 busiest departments in the country. We have been rated as one of the top 150 busiest for the last ten years.
- Since 1995, all personnel have participated in the Department’s “Medical Physical Evaluation Program” for all firefighters. Full physicals were offered to all personnel who where due in 2009.
- Division continues to monitor leave time very closely and through the light duty assignment pool has reduced lost time.
- In December, Pierce Manufacturing was awarded the bid for a new 100’ Tractor Drawn Aerial ladder. This new ladder should be delivered in the late spring of 2010.
- The Division continued to work with A.P.D. and Hiterm of California in the setup and implementation of the N.F.I.R.S. Version 5.0 computer fire-reporting program. Reports submitted after January 1, 2010 will be written in this new version. In December of 2009 all members are being trained in this new computer records package.
- Alarm responses were adjusted to include a Fast Team on the first alarm. This included an extra engine and truck company.

- Members of the Training Division were used “safety officers” at any working fire in the City. Department certified five additional members to “Incident Safety Officer” level.
- Worked on a grant from the Albany Port commission for a foam tender.
- Applied for a “Fire Act” grant for the purchase of new turn out gear, safety harness systems, and Thermal Imaging cameras.
- Worked with area departments on bulk purchasing.
- Department purchased eighty-five sets of new turnout gear under a grant program.
- The Department offered seasonal flu and H1N1 flu shots to all members.
- The Department held a Captains exam in the spring of 2009.
- A grant application was sent in under the “Safer Grant” program in hopes of filling twenty firefighter positions. If awarded, this will bring staffing levels back to 260 members in the Department.
- The Department researched and found an aggressive tire for the apparatus that should would enable the apparatus to have better traction on hills during inclement weather.
- Meetings were resumed with A.F.D. and A.P.D. Command Staffs.
- Negotiations were started in November with the A.P.P.F.A. for the contract starting 2010.
- On December 4, 2009, ten new firefighters were appointed. This hiring will keep the Department at a strength of 240 members.
- Since 1994 the Department has formed Mutual Aid agreements with the surrounding career departments of Watervliet, Green Island, Cohoes, Watervliet Arsenal, and the Troy Fire Departments. During this time, mutual aid has been given and received with each of these departments.
- Developed a regional “Haz-Mat group with Albany, Schenectady, Saratoga, Rennselear counties along with private industry.
- Promoted one new Deputy Chiefs, one Battalion Chief, two Captains, and three Lieutenants.

## **RECRUITMENT EFFORTS**

- The Department recruited extensively for the future firefighter's exam. Packets of information were compiled and distributed to local schools, churches, ward leaders, Hannaford markets, Stewarts Shops, Albany Housing Authority, among other locations.
- Firefighters distributed pamphlets at several locations through out the city. An open house is periodically held at every firehouse before any exams.
- Recruitment staff made presentations at numerous neighborhood meetings.
- Notice of the exam was posted in the Times Union, Palace marquis, channel #18. and the Mayor's weekly radio program.

## **CADET PROGRAM**

- 16 & 17 year old High school students assigned to firehouses. Students spend the day working and observing firefighters and ride with the company. Nine Cadets participated in the summer program, and four of these wish to attend further initiatives, including the EMT course offered at Abrooken (AHS)

## **EXPLORER POST**

- The Department is working to launch an Explorer Post (Fire) to begin January 2010.
- Albany Fire Department working on Statewide Diversity effort with DOS (Floyd Madison)

## **E.M.S. and TRAINING DIVISION**

The Training Division continues to expand and improve Training programs. The Division has a very successful year. Several new programs were developed. The Division strives to improve skill of our officers and firefighters. Safety is the single most important aspect of our operations.

- High-rise SOP Development & Training.
- Developed course in elevator operations.
- National Grid in to train members.
- Gave driver training (EVOC) to all members.

- Constructed Mask Confidence Simulator at Port of Albany.
- Rewritten and delivered training to all members on our SOP on high rise fires
- Purchased equipment to properly deal with high-rise fires, equipment issued to each Engine Company
- Enhanced our accountability system
- Building Construction Training (Lightweight & Truss)
- Held two Albany County HazMat Drills
- Two additional members certified to HazMat Advanced Tech
- Placed into service a 2-seat and 4-seat electric car for events & incidents
- Certified numerous public and private agencies in CPR
- Placed six new Paramedics “Online”
- Recertified 65 EMT’s and 26 Paramedics.
- Member of Exercise Planning Committee for a federally funded, radiological training exercise to occur in 2009 within the City of Albany (Empire 09)
- The Department had two Deputy Chief’s on the Department of Homeland Security “Threat Assessment Team”.
- Re-established participation with the Albany County Mental Health group for High Need Participants
- Successful audits of NYS DOH EMT Course Sponsorship, Operating Plan and CME based re-cert program
- Co-Sponsored and hosted a NYS Certified Lab Instructor Course
- Developed and began a NYS EMT course in Abrooken Vocational Center
- Re-Constructed the Albany Fire Department’s NYS Department of Health EMT Course Sponsorship
- Placed into service a state of the art “video on the desktop” training program for Fire, EMS, OSHA & Hazardous Materials Training.

- Purchased 9 computers for training at each firehouse
- Improved inventory control with the addition of a bar code inventory system
- Developed a Target Hazard Quick Action Plan for high hazard buildings
- Conducted numerous walkthrough of public and private buildings. Did walk through at Albany Propane.
- Preplan and target hazard assessment of Albany Rail Yard.
- Researched and placed into service disposable laryngoscope blades to reduce risk of infection to members and patients
- Received, via grant, and placed in service the Ahura First Defender chemical identification system (1<sup>st</sup> in the region)
- Three department members were elected to sit on the REMO Regional Council
- Firefighter CADET program renewed for 2009, eleven youngsters are participating in the program.
- EMT class concluded at Albany High School, five of the six participating students passed the New York State EMT exam.
- June 6<sup>th</sup> held a Citywide “Health Check” day in all of the firehouses.
- Three summer kids working out of Headquarters for the Summer Program.
- Developed new City wide Flu Protocol for the H1N1 flu virus.
- Placed in service a new twelve transmission device to communicated to area hospitals.
- Department started a new monthly “Safety Bulletin” issued to each firehouse.
- The Department coordinated the “Continuity of Operations” drill for all City Departments.
- Department participated in a drill at the Port of Albany on “Improvised Explosive Devices”.
- Department’s new boat was placed in-service on the river.
- Department provided E.M.S. coverage at City sponsored and non-City sponsored events.

- Training Division delivered new program on Ice Rescue.
- New York State Labor Department delivered program to Training Division staff of Asbestos.
  
- New York State Thruway Authority ran a drill for all members on how to operate on the Thruway.
  
- Training Division delivered program on Radio Procedures and Tactics.
  
- New Ice Rescue suits were purchased.
  
- Trained Department on new Spinal immobilization protocol.
  
- Did basic Ladder refresher course for the entire Department.
  
- The Training Division issued the Homotro vehicle safety guidebook for hybrid vehicles to the Rescue Squad. Company drills were held on operations at incidents involving hybrid vehicles.
  
- Training Division presented drills on operations at “Large Box Stores”
  
- Paramedics given training on the new “King Airway” that the Department is now using. King Airway now in-service.
  
- Members received training in “accountability” procedures.
  
- All members received training in elevator operations.
  
- Training Division did twenty-five CME classes.
  
- Sponsored 73 American Heart Association Courses.
  
- Training Division held an Ice Rescue course during January and February. They also reviewed procedures at the Golf Course using the sled/snowmobile in case of an EMS call to Capitol Hills property.
  
- The Training Division participated in a preplan of 40 So. Ferry, AMRI at Corporate Circle, and the West Albany Rail yard.
  
- The Training Division renewed the following certificates
  - Narcotics Certification
  - Medical Course Sponsorship
  - EMS Operating Certification
  
- The Department provided Medic’s and Firefighters for details at two movies that were filmed this summer in the downtown area.

## **DEPARTMENT GOALS FOR 2010**

Below are some of the goals that the Command Staff and members of the Department would like to see come to fruition. Some of these goals could be difficult due to the fiscal situation in the City. All of us expect that it will be a couple of very difficult years ahead.

One of the biggest challenges next year will be our manpower. In a day or two we will be submitting our application under the S.A.F.E.R. Grant to F.E.M.A.. If this application is successful, it will fund twenty Firefighter positions.

- Create and expand a Citywide Threat Assessment Team with four AFD members.
- Continue discussion with other area Departments regarding joint purchasing of tools and equipment.
- Training Division to develop May Day class and build props as part of maze at the Port of Albany.
- Training Division to continue joint training exercises with Troy, Watervliet, Cohoes, Green Island and the Albany Airport.
- Repair Shop to continue ladder-greasing schedule and look at needed preventive maintenance on Engine Companies.
- Cross train with APD on the Communications Bus, Fire Scene Safety, Gang activity or other mutual issues.
- Develop bid specifications for two new Paramedic vehicles. These vehicles will be purchased during 2010. The Department is researching the purchase of two pick-up, crew cab type chassis with a removable body. This will allow us to remove the body after five to seven years and install it on a new cab and chassis. The removable body will allow us the added room for the expanding equipment carried by the paramedic rig and keep it out of the crew cab which is sometimes a safety issue. The crew cab will also allow us to have room to have the paramedic intern's ride safely with their paramedic preceptor.
- Develop bid specifications for new Pumper that is to be bid and awarded in 2010. There is also a Pumper listed in the 2010 Capital plan and it would be hoped to make this a two-pumper contract. This would allow us to save money over the process of two separated bids.

- Design reports for the new N.F.I.R.'s Incident Reporting Program. Members will begin using the new incident reporting system on January 1, 2010. There are a number of computerized reports that have to be developed to enable us to draw data out from our fire reports.
- Training Division will develop a program to deliver C.P.R. classes to the public.
- Training Division will offer C.P.R. classes to Department Heads and their staff.

## **FIRE PREVENTION/INVESTIGATION**

The City of Albany Department of Fire & Emergency Services Fire Prevention/Fire Investigation Unit is planning to have a more visible and influential presence at large venue public events. By use of reserve apparatus, updated fire prevention literature, banners, etc. we hope to draw larger numbers of people to whom we can disseminate potential life-saving fire prevention information.

In 2010 we anticipate a healthy increase in requests for fire prevention details. Our commitment to provision of fire prevention lectures and programs has produced a sharp increase for requests. Fire-safety education to both children and adults is probably the most effective method to achieve life-long fire-safe behaviors and a corresponding overall reduction in fire-related injury and mortality.

We will be required to inspect all public assemblies each year beginning in January 2010 and hope to have an accurate database of these businesses established before December 2010. During this inspection process, capacity limits will be re-evaluated and, if necessary, re-calculated and re-posted.

All current members of the Fire Prevention/Fire Investigation Unit will be NYS certified as full NYS Code Enforcement Officers and will have completed the training necessary for annual school inspections. Each investigator/CEO will be required by NYS to achieve 26 hours of in-service codes training annually. We hope to provide this by attendance in the annual New York State Building Official's Conference offered over a three-day period in Colonie, NY.

A plan has been formulated to rotate all FIU members through the NYS Fire Academy at Montour Falls for training in Electrical Fire Cause Determination I & II. An effort will be made to send investigators to Montour Falls for other training in Fire Scene Evidence Collection, Advanced Instruction in Origin & Cause Determination, Fire Investigation Photography, and Interviewing Techniques for the Fire Investigator. We are confident that with more training our investigators will demonstrate an improved ability to make accurate determinations of fire origin and cause, thereby reducing the

time required to fully investigate fire scenes and the associated overtime costs to the department.

Gradual replacement of vehicles in use by Fire Prevention/Fire Investigation should be considered. Most vehicles in use by this unit are aging and of high mileage, thus increasing the risk of mechanical failure. Fire investigations are often time-sensitive and require that an investigator be able to respond without delay for the purposes of evidence preservation/collection and to enable apparatus to return to service as soon as possible.

Goals set for calendar year 2010 focus on an improvement in delivery of services to the residents of and visitors to the City of Albany and include:

**EQUIPMENT:**

- Provision of age-appropriate fire safety information literature and programs to city residents.
- Improvement of the quality of life of city residents through aggressive enforcement of the NYS building codes and the Code of the City of Albany.
- Organized program of FIU vehicle replacement. Current fleet average in-service time average is 10 to 15 years and 95,000 to 130,000 miles per unit. Mechanical costs of frequent repairs to these vehicles will be, ultimately, resources squandered.
- Replacement of all FIU computers to faster more efficient systems.
- Access to an improved network that can facilitate faster transfer of information through the Internet.
- Purchase of five Canon EOS 5D Mark 2 SLR digital cameras, or the equivalent, and large capacity storage media to facilitate improved fire scene documentation.
- Purchase of a Canon XL H1A video camcorder supplied with hard case, tripod, and supply of HDVM E63PR mini DVD tapes.
- Digital Volt/Ohm meters (5)
- Clamp-on Ammeter (5)
- Circuit Testers (5)
- Five digital voice recorders and voice transcription program (Dragon Naturally Speaking Software or equivalent).

- Purchase of a Dell M6400 Covet Laptop computer (or equivalent) with 4GB memory upgrade; appropriate software, and transport case for remote location fire prevention presentations.
- Purchase of laptop-compatible Dell M409 WX projector (or equivalent) with transport case.
- Complete Juvenile Firesetting DVD library.
- Go For Safety DVD
- Custom “Albany Fire Department Fire Prevention” canopy with table and two chairs for use at Fire Prevention details.
- Improved inventory of Fire Preventions handouts, as well as commercially available coloring books, crayons, brochures, and other appropriate materials.

**FIRE PREVENTION/INVESTIGATION TRAINING:**

All FIU members should receive training in the following courses. These certifications will assist our investigators in producing a more investigation result and improve witness credibility:

- Basic Arson Awareness and Identification
- Advanced Instruction in Origin and Cause Determination
- Fire/Arson Investigation
- Fire/Arson Investigation Seminar
- Fire Investigative Photography
- Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Seminar
- Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I
- Interviewing Techniques for the Fire Investigator
- Fire Scene Evidence Collection
- Electrical Fire Cause Determination I & II

Other fire investigation training to be provided to unit members as manpower and scheduling permits.

