



Newsletter

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June, 2009

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This is one of a series of newsletters from the Fort Washington Fire Company No.1 in an effort to keep the citizens and taxpayers of Upper Dublin informed about the many and varied activities carried out by our organization. Anyone may opt out of receiving these e-mailed newsletters by clicking on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of this Newsletter. In each newsletter we will endeavor to provide information that is informative, useful and even entertaining.

This Month Around The Fire House

In May the Fort Washington Fire Company responded to 57 Alarms, averaging 15.6 responders per call, totaling 403 responder hours.

For All of 2008 the Fort Washington Fire Company responded to 627 Alarms, averaging 18 responders per call and totaling 4662 responder hours

For a multi-year comparison visit our website under Activities/Statistics.



Profile Of The Month — Tom McDonald

By Denny Zwicker

Each month we profile one of the many Volunteers that make up the Fort Washington Fire Company.

There are few events better for a volunteer fire company than to receive an application from an experienced firefighter who has put down roots in the community. Sometimes referred to as 'keepers' these men and women add to the depth of the company and bring with them the greatest of attributes – experience. Tom McDonald, former member of the Cheltenham Hook and Ladder Co., moved his family to Dresher a few years ago and joined our fire company in 2007. He fit in quickly and when the siren blows, can usually be found onboard the first engine out of the Burn Brae station.

Born in 1970 and raised in Cheltenham, Tom is the youngest of 11 siblings, including identical twin brother Chris, also a firefighter. A happy, close-knit family, Tom and his siblings had the benefit of parents who were always nearby. His father, a family physician, built the family's home to include the office from which he practiced. Tom's mother, who met his father when she was a student nurse, was a stay at home mom who got ample opportunity to practice her nursing skills on her energetic brood.



Profile, Continued

When asked what he remembers best about his folks who are both now deceased, he says "they never missed a game". All eleven McDonald kids played on sport's teams and every night their parents jumped into separate cars and made sure that at least one of them made it to each child's game. Tom remembers that some nights were so hectic, they could only spend 10 minutes before moving on to the next event, but they made sure that each child felt special. It was clearly a special childhood for Tom and his siblings.

Following in the footsteps of their father and grandfather, all 7 McDonald boys graduated from St. Joe's Prep. Tom went on to Temple University where he earned a degree in Marketing. Following college, he worked for a credit card company as a credit analyst and eventually became manager of their Fraud Unit. In 2000, Tom joined Tyco Fire Suppression and Building Products. Tyco is the largest manufacturer of fire suppression systems in the world. While his title is Risk Manager, Tom's real job is trouble shooting, often requiring cross-country trips.

In 1988 Tom and twin brother Chris followed their older brother Dave into the fire service when they joined Cheltenham. Tom swears that his first 'working fire' was a dog fire. It's not as bad as it sounds. Apparently, the dog's owner found a tick on her pet's back. She tried rubbing alcohol to draw the tick out. When that didn't work, she tried holding a lit match to the tick, briefly setting a clump of the dog's fur ablaze. The fur quickly went out but not before the frightened pooch dove under a bed. We all know the end of this story. Thankfully, both the owner and her dog escaped unharmed but the house sustained serious damage to the second floor.

Tom's most memorable fire to date occurred shortly before he left Cheltenham for a move to Delaware. He remembers being dispatched on the second alarm to a 100-year-old multi-story

factory in Rockledge. As his truck turned the corner, Tom and his crew were amazed to see the telephone poles lining the street fully ablaze and siding dripping off of nearby houses, all from the heat generated by the spectacular fire.

Of course with 3 young firefighters living in the same house there are bound to be some humorous memories. Tom recalls he and his brothers responding to a call many years ago in the dead of night. For whatever reason, one tried to pass the car keys to the other, in the pitch black, and they dropped onto the grassy front lawn. Rushing last out the door, Tom saw his brothers on their hands and knees desperately trying to find the keys. Spying a fellow firefighter passing by, Tom jumped in his car and left his brothers still crawling around the front lawn.

Tom has seen his fair share of action since joining Ft. Washington, most notably the recent Purdie Lane and Ft. Washington Ave. fires. He is also active in fire prevention and enjoys the annual school visits, especially to Queen of Peace elementary school which his 3 kids attend and where wife, Eileen teaches honors math.

Like his siblings growing up, Tom remains devoted to sports, coaching his children's T-ball and soccer teams for the UDJAA and UD Soccer Club. When asked where he finds the time to be so active in his community, Tom says simply that he makes the time, it's that important. Supported by his wife, also active in volunteer work, Tom plans a long career with the fire company. Encouraged to join Ft. Washington by old friend and fellow Cheltenham alumnus, Senior Firefighter Jerry Smith, Tom says in fact he would like to be Jerry Smith, still running fire calls at age 60 in remarkably good health. Now that's what we call a keeper.

Join Us, Become A Volunteer

The Fort Washington Fire Company is a 100% volunteer organization and is always seeking new members. We have several types of membership, which do not all involve fire fighting. All training and equipment is provided by the fire company.

Junior Members- Age 16-17.

Go through regular training and provide fire ground support functions, but are not permitted to operate in hazardous environments until they reach the age of 18. Many of our current members started as junior members.

Firefighters-Age 18 and up.

Respond to fire calls and undergo extensive training at one of the local fire academies as well as in-house training through the fire company.

Fire Police-

Provide traffic control and crowd control at emergency scenes as well as special events such as parades and carnivals.

Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary assists the Fire Company, by promoting sociability among members and aiding the financial and general well being of the fire company.

Associate Members-

Provide administrative support to the fire company. These administrative functions include, but are not limited to, accounting, clerical, computer networking and programming, facility management, etc

Flooding Advice By Ed Schuler

In light of the June flooding problems in some areas of our community, here is some advice from PECO on what to do if your basement becomes flooded before re-energizing gas or electrical appliances. To view the PECO Flyer go to:



www.fwfc.org:2020/Newsletter_Archives/2006/July_2006/Peco_Flooding_Advice.htm

Training Notes

By Eric Clauson

FWFC members have been participating in a PA Fire Academy High Rise Fire Fighting Class. While we do not have any "sky scrapers" in our area, we do have numerous mid-rise office buildings that present unique challenges. This class is 16 hours in length and covers topics such as standpipe operations, building mechanical systems, case studies of high rise fires, ventilation and construction.

The class consisted of 2 classroom sessions taught by Richard Lockhart, Norristown Fire Department Battalion Chief, and Robert Drennen, retired Philadelphia Fire Department Battalion Chief. On May 18th, members traveled to the Montgomery County Fire Academy in Conshohocken to conduct live fire training evolutions in the high-rise component of the burn building. The class was divided into several

teams and everyone got an opportunity to stretch hose lines off a standpipe and conduct searches for victims. We will be going back to the academy on June 8th for additional training evolutions.

Congratulations to Chris Haggar and Robert Royal, who recently completed 50 hours each of Vehicle Rescue Training at Bucks County. Those yellow helmets will be gone soon!

Michael McSpadden is also close to completing a 146 hour Fire Fighter 1 course through Bucks County. Upon completion, Mike will be another FWFC nationally certified fire fighter and will also be certified in CPR, First Aid, introduction to incident management and hazardous materials awareness level.

2009 Scholarship Award

By John Reilley

The Memorial Committee of the Fort Washington Fire Company No. 1 offers a \$1000.00 annual scholarship to promote advancement in education and community service. The scholarship is open to those members who are high school seniors in good standing with the fire company. Applicants are required to maintain a 3.0 grade point average and are asked to submit an essay entitled "Why Volunteering is Important to Me". They also document their scholastic achievements, both academic and extra curricular and submit a list of the colleges to which they applied. Letters of recommendation from leaders within the students' high school are also submitted. Applications are judged independently and the name of the firefighter/scholar is announced at the fire company's June business meeting. The recipient's name is then forwarded to their high school for well-earned recognition.

This year's Scholarship Award Winner is Christopher Haggar. Chris joined the Company in 2007 at the age of 16 and will be attending Shippensburg University in the fall.



The Memorial Committee and Board of Directors of the Fire Company have made a long term commitment to the scholarship program and look forward every year to awarding the scholarship to a deserving individual who is committed to furthering his or her education and continuing to serve the community.



Station A
220 Summit Ave
Fort Washington PA
19034



Station B
Susquehanna and
Twining Roads
Dresher PA 19025



Fire Training Grounds
Twining Road

**We Hold drills each
Monday Night at 7 PM**

**Our Business Meetings
are held the 2nd
Thursday of each
month at 7:30 PM**

Contact Information
220 Summit Avenue
Fort Washington PA
19034

215-646-2555

Hotel and Motel Fire Safety

By Howard Schmuckler

When you travel, it is very important that you become familiar with your surroundings!

Before you make your reservations at a hotel (or motel) contact the staff at the hotel and ask if their rooms are equipped with smoke alarms and fire sprinklers. Also ask if the hotel complies with the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990, as this will assure that the hotel meets specific strict criteria. A list of hotels that do comply can be found on the United States Fire Administration website at www.usfa.fema.gov. If a property is not on the list, it does not mean that it is not fire safe; they may not have applied to be placed on the list.

Once you have arrived in your hotel room, read and become familiar with the fire evacuation plan. If a copy is not available in your room, request a copy from the front desk. Locate at least two exits out of your room, usually the door to the room and an outside window. Next, go to the nearest stairway in the hallway that is noted as your emergency exit plan, and then locate the closest stairway located in the opposite direction. The location of the fire will dictate which direction you will turn and which emergency exit you would use. Count the number of doors that are between your room and the exits. This will assist you in the case of an emergency if the hallway is dark or filled with smoke. Never plan to use an elevator in the event of an emergency, always use stairs, to escape. The elevator may stop at the floor where the fire is or fail to operate and trap you inside. Locate the fire alarms on your floor.

As soon as smoke or fire becomes

present, or the smoke alarm begins to sound, everyone should immediately leave the building. Time is essential, never stop to get valuables. Take the smoke alarm seriously and put your emergency escape plan into action immediately. In most cases you only have a couple of minutes to safely escape. Even if you think that the alarm is a false alarm, begin your emergency escape plan, because if there is a fire,



AP
Rescue workers wheel a victim to an ambulance while a fire burns through The Mizpah hotel in Reno, Nev.

you may not get a second chance! Call the fire department from a place outside of the building. As you exit, quickly close all doors behind you to slow the spread of the smoke or flames.

When the smoke alarm sounds, safely go to the door leading toward the exit. Feel the door and door-knob with the back of your hand and if it is hot to the touch, do not open the door, use the second way out; or if you are above the first floor, wait for help to arrive. Call 9-1-1, and advise the call taker of the fire, and the fact that you are trapped in the room. Even if you see that the fire trucks have arrived, call 9-1-1 and advise them of your location so the firefighters can quickly reach you.

Be very specific in describing your exact location so that they can relay the information to the firefighters. Do not panic, remain calm! While you are waiting for help to arrive, take bedding, towels, clothes or other objects to seal the cracks around the door and vents to keep dangerous smoke from entering your room. If you must remain in the room, signal for help by using a flashlight or waving a bright colored object. If you must escape through smoke, crawl low to the ground where the air is cleaner and cooler.

If the door is cool to the touch, carefully open it, but be prepared to close it quickly if fire or heavy smoke is present. If you are faced with smoke or fire along your escape route, retreat to another path or back into your guest room.

Never smoke in bed! If you are a smoker make sure that you smoke carefully, and properly dispose of the ashes and butts.

Fire safety is something that everyone needs to be aware of 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Do not wait until it is too late, practice fire safety every day!

The volunteers of the Fort Washington Fire Company bring this information to you. If you have any questions or comments about this article, or any other fire company issue, please feel free to call the Fort Washington Fire Company on their business line at 215-646-2555 or stop into either fire station any Monday night. Their Fire Prevention Committee is available to present programs upon request. Visit the Fort Washington Fire Company on our Web Site at www.fortwashingtonfc.org.